



# **HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA**

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# UNIT-I

## THE AGE OF CONFLICT AND THE TURKISH CONQUEST OF NORTH INDIA

### WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA BETWEEN THE 10<sup>th</sup> AND 12<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

West and Central Asia are connected to India geographically across mountain barriers which demarcate India from Central and West Asia but do not pose an insurmountable barrier, like the Himalayas to the north. In consequence, nomadic and semi-nomadic hordes have constantly tried to enter India through these mountain passes, attracted by India's well watered plains with fertile soil, extending from the Punjab to the eastern borders of Bengal, its rich and flourishing cities and ports, and its fabulous wealth generated by the hard working peasants and skillful artisans, and experienced traders and financiers.

The rise of Islam, its conquest of West Asia and Iran, and its slow expansion into Khurasan, and Central Asia, particularly the fertile tract called Mawara-un-Nahar or Transoxiana, i.e. the areas between the rivers Amiv (Oxus) and Syr, led to a gradual contraction of India's cultural and political influence in the area, which was largely Buddhist. It also adversely affected India's over-land trade with China and West Asia. Trade from the sea-ports of Western India was also affected for some time. However, this trend was soon countered by the rise of Arab sea traders who revived and strengthened India's sea trade, both with West Asia and with the countries of south-east Asia and China. There is no reason to believe that the Indian traders were displaced from this sea trade, or kept themselves away on account of the growth of the sentiment in some quarters that travel across the salt-seas or beyond the areas where the munj grass grew would lead to the loss of one's caste. Thus, there is evidence of Indian traders living in the areas around the Persian Gulf and beyond, and of Indian Vajras and craftsmen being welcomed at the court of the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad.

There is also evidence of Arab traders settling down in Malabar. The powerful Rashtrakuta rulers who dominated western India, Malwa and parts of south India upto the 10th century, also welcomed the Arab traders, and even permitted them to build mosques for worship.

### DEVELOPMENTS IN WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA

The Abbasid Empire, which reached its zenith in the 9th century, comprised at its height the areas from the environs of Constantinople and Egypt to Central Asia and the Arabian Peninsula. It was thus the most powerful empire which arose in the area since the days of Darius the Great of Iran (5th century A.D.). However, its energies were spent more in fighting the heathen Turks of Central Asia, and expanding the empire towards the west, rather than making a serious bid for the conquest of India. The situation began to change from the end of the 9th century when the Abbasid Empire disintegrated, and a series of aggressive, expansionist states arose. These states were independent in all but name, but they accepted the nominal suzerainty of the Caliph who legitimised their position by granting them a formal letter or *manshur*. In course of time, the rulers of these states began to be called Sultans. Most of these sultans were Turks. The Turks who were nomads and lived in areas now known as Mongolia and Sinkiang had, since the 8th century, been infiltrating into the region called Mawara-un-Nahar (Transoxiana), which was the "transitional zone" between Central Asia and the lands of ancient civilisations in East Asia. The Iranian rulers of the area, and the Abbasid Caliphs, brought in the Turks as mercenaries and slaves, and recruited them as palace guards, after converting them to Islam. The Turkish military commanders quickly assimilated the Iranian language and culture which was dominant in the region. Even earlier, both Arabic and Persian had been the languages of the ruling classes, and Persian culture and administrative practices had influenced the Abbasids.

Thus, the Turkish immigrants became Islamized and Persianised. It was they who set the political agenda of the future, fighting both the Turkish tribes which had not converted, and expanding into India.

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The most powerful dynasty which arose in the region after the fall of the Abbasids was the Samanid dynasty (874-999) established by a converted Iranian noble from Balkh who was governor of Samarqand, Herat, etc. This was followed after sometime by the Ghaznavids (962-1186). Its founder, Alap-tigin, was a Turkish slave officer of the Samanids. The Ghaznavids were displaced by the Seljukids, and then by the Khwarizmi empire. The Khwarizmi Empire was destroyed by the Mongol, Chengiz Khan, in the 13th century. These empires fought each other, as also smaller potentates in the region whom they tried to subordinate. In this they were not very different from the various Rajput rajas who dominated different areas in India, and continually fought each other. However, in the fierce battle for survival in West and Central Asia, military efficiency was considered the most valuable asset. This led to the growth of a militarism which spelt immediate danger to India and its outlying areas—Zabulistan and Afghanistan which till, then, had not been converted to Islam.

The aggressiveness of the newly Islamized Turks was added to by a number of factors. They had at their disposal the finest horses in the world. These horses which roamed the steppes of Central Asia in wild herds, were bred by the Turks who were considered hardy warriors and skillful horsemen. These horses were imported into Arabia and India from time immemorial. Horses bred in India could not match the Central Asia horses in swiftness, nor could the Indians match the Turkish horsemen in their skill and speed of manoeuvre. Perhaps, developments in West and Central Asia limited the import of these horses into India. The mountains around Ghur were also rich in metals, particularly iron, and there was a tradition of production of war materials there, as also in many cities of the region. Thus, the Turks had a plentiful supply of horses and war materials, both of which were important for warfare in those times.

Secondly, there was a growth of what is called the 'ghazi' spirit in West Asia at that time. Iranian rule in Transoxiana and its neighbouring areas was being gradually replaced by Turks, including the nomadic Turks who were called Turkmen or Turkomans. Iranian and Turkish Muslim rulers of the area had to face the continuous pressure of the nomadic, non-Muslim Turkmens, such as the Guzz or Oguzz and other tribes living in Kara-Khitai, or the steppes of Central Asia. While defending themselves, the Turkish rulers were themselves making continuous raids into the Turkmen held Central Asian steppes for capturing slaves who were in high demand in the slave-markets of Samarqand and Bokhara. The responsibility of this defensive-offensive warfare devolved in part on the volunteers who were fired by the spirit of defending and spreading Islam. These volunteers were not paid regularly, and made up for their pay by plunder. These were the 'ghazis'.

The ghazi spirit which was first used for fighting against the non-Islamic Turks was later used against the "unbelievers" in India. Amongst the figures most closely associated with this movement, the first was Mahmud Ghazni whose "exploits" in India are well-known. The second was Sanjar, the Seljukid ruler, who suffered a sharp defeat in 1142-43 at the hands of the non-Muslim hordes of Gur Khan of Khitai (Central Asia). We are not concerned with Sanjar's life—he was defeated and imprisoned by the Oguzz or Ghuzz in 1152, escaped, but died soon after. It shows, however, the vulnerability of the Muslim Turks and of the Muslim rulers in general. During the period, even some of the most powerful Muslim states could not contend successfully against the non-Muslim Turks from Central Asia. Later, they succumbed to the Mongols.

On the positive side, some institutional factors helped in the growth of Turkish military power in Khurasan and Iran. The most important of these was the "iqta" system. The iqta was a territorial assignment which gave to the holder the right to collect from the peasants the land revenue and other taxes due to the state. It did not, however, imply the holder interfering with the existing land rights, or granting them any rights over the person, wealth, wives and children of the cultivators. In return, the holder was under the obligation of maintaining a fixed number of troops, and to furnish them to the sultan at his call.

This institution suited the Turkish sultans because it implied that the existing rights of the Iranian land holders, called the dehkans, would not be interfered with. Nor would the Turkish military leaders develop any hereditary rights in land, but would be completely dependent on the sultan who could deploy them as and where he chose. It was this highly mobile military force, dependent for its sustenance upon the backing and support of the ruler, which became the main instrument for further expansion of Muslim power under the aegis of the Turkish sultans.

## THE TURKISH ADVANCE TOWARDS INDIA: THE HINDUSHAHIS

It was only a question of time before these hardy, highly mobile, centralized predatory forces turned their attention towards India, the traditional land of gold.

We are told that it was only in 870 A.D. that Zabulistan was finally conquered by one Yakub who was the virtual ruler of the neighbouring Iranian province of Seistan. The king was killed, and his subjects were made Muslims. In 963 Alp-tigin, who had been the commander of the Samanid rulers in Khurasan, marched to Ghazni in south Zabulistan, and set himself up as an independent ruler. The Hindu ruler (Shahi) of Afghanistan, who are called Hindu-Shahis, tried to meet this emerging threat on their border by allying themselves with the former Samanid Governor of Ghazni, with the Bhatti rulers who dominated the area near Multan, as also with the Muslim amir of Multan across the Bolan pass. These rulers were willing to join Jayapal, the Hindu Shahi ruler, because they had been harassed by slave raids into their territories by the rulers of Ghazni. However, Jayapal's invasion of Ghazni failed, and the coalition built by him soon collapsed. Sabuk-tigin who succeeded Alp-tigin (977), carried the fight into the Hindu Shahi territories, and laid waste the frontier tract of Lamghan, i.e. Kabul and Jalalabad. In about 990-91, the Hindu-Shahi ruler suffered a decisive defeat. The 17th century historian, Ferishta, tells us that Jayapal was assisted in this battle by the Rajput rulers of Delhi, Ajmer, Kalinjar, and Kannauj. However, modern historians are doubtful of the veracity of this statement because it is not mentioned by any contemporary historian. Nor was Delhi an important state at that time. Ajmer had not been founded, and the rulers of Kannauj were in decline. Thus, Ferishta's account seems to be based on a desire to exaggerate the scale of the Ghaznavid victory. Following the battle, the provinces of Kabul and Jalalabad were annexed to Ghazni. The contemporary historian Utbi says, "from this time the Hindus drew in their tails and sought no more to invade the land (of Ghazni)."

The point to note is that by the end of the 10th century, the outer bastions of India, Zabulistan and Afghanistan, had been lost. An invasion of proper India was, therefore, the next likely step. In preparation for such an invasion the Yamini rulers of Ghazni had improved the road communications from Ghazni to Kabul and Jalalabad. Meanwhile, the Hindu Shahi ruler, Jayapala, had tried to make up for the loss of territory in the west by extending his kingdom towards the east. Thus, he overran Lohvara (Lahore) in 991. The local ruler was allowed to rule for sometime as a feudatory, but in 999, Lahore was annexed to the Shahi kingdom which now extended from Peshawar to the river Beas.

In 999, Mahmud ascended the throne at Ghazni, and vowed to conduct operations in India every year. After making initial raids against frontier outposts, in 1001 he marched against the Shahis. In a furious battle which was fought near Peshawar, Mahmud's forces consisted of 15,000 picked cavalry, a large corps of 'ghazis', and Afghans. Jayapal's army is estimated at 12,000 cavalry, 30,000 foot, and 300 elephants. It appears to have been a battle of cavalry, combined with skillful tactical movements. Jayapala was defeated and Mahmud advanced to the Shahi capital Waihind (Udbhanda or Peshawar) which was thoroughly ravaged. According to some accounts, Jayapala was captured and taken to Ghazni, but released after some time on payment of a large ransom. But this story appears to be a concocted one because we are told that following his victory, Mahmud made peace with the Shahi ruler, annexing only the territory west of the Indus. This would hardly have been likely if the Shahi ruler had suffered a complete defeat and been made a prisoner. However, Jayapala felt his defeat to be a great humiliation, and entered the funeral pyre a few years later. He was succeeded by his son, Anandpala.

Despite this set back, the Shahis were strong enough to pose a serious obstacle to Mahmud's further advance into India. The Ghaznavids had to fight two serious battles near the Indus before they could penetrate into the Punjab proper. In a hard fought battle in 1006 near the Indus, Mahmud conquered the upper Indus region. This gave him access to the Punjab. But Punjab proper remained outside his control till 1009 when in a decisive battle fought on the eastern side of the Indus in the plains of Chhachh, Mahmud triumphed over Anandapal, and followed his victory by over-running Nandana in the Salt Ranges to which the Shahis had shifted their capital from Waihind (Peshawar), after their earlier defeat. Mahmud also

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captured the fort called Bhimnagar or Nagarkot (to be distinguished from Nagarkot in Kangra). For some time, Anandapal was allowed to rule over the Punjab as a feudatory. But in 1015, Mahmud advanced upto Lahore and plundered it. Soon the Ghaznavid Empire extended upto the river Jhelum. Meanwhile, Multan which was ruled over by a Muslim ruler who had allied himself with Anandapal against Mahmud was also overrun. However, an attempt to conquer Kashmir in 1015 failed, due largely to inclement weather. This was the first defeat of Mahmud's armies in India.

Thus, the period from 990-91 to 1015 was a period of protracted struggle during which Afghanistan, and then Punjab and Multan were lost to the Ghaznavids. The way was now open for Turkish advance into the Gangetic plains.

## **RAJPUT KINGDOMS IN NORTH INDIA AND THE GHAZNAVIDS**

The middle of the 10th century saw the decay of two of the most powerful Rajput states which had dominated north and central India during the two preceding centuries. These were the Gurjar-Pratihara Empire with its capital at Kannauj, and the Rashtrakuta Empire with its capital at Manyakheta. The Gujarat-Pratihara Empire extended from the foothills of the Himalayas to Ujjain in the south and from Gujarat in the west to Monghyr in the east. It contended with the Rashtrakutas for the mastery of Gujarat and Malwa, and with the Pala rulers of Bengal for the mastery of Bihar and modern east U.P. In the north-west, its rule extended to Thaneshwar. It declined rapidly during the second half of the 10th century, remaining confined largely to modern U.P. In the meantime, a number of kingdoms rose up, the most prominent among them being the Chandels of Kalinjar and Mahoba, the Chauhans of Sakambhari in Rajasthan, the Paramars of Malwa, and the Chaulukyas of Gujarat. These, in turn, had many feudatories which sometimes helped their overlords, but more often conspired to become independent. Kashmir was under the powerful queen, Didda, who reigned for twenty-six years, and even murdered her grandsons to retain power. She had an old standing rivalry with the Shahis and hence forbore to give them any help in their struggle with Mahmud. Nor did any of the other Rajput rajas help Anandpal in his struggle against Mahmud, despite Ferishta's statement to the contrary.

After over-running the Punjab, Mahmud undertook three expeditions into the Ganga Valley. The purpose of these raids was to acquire wealth for his Central Asian campaigns, as also to destabilize the states in the area so that no coalition of powers against him could emerge.

Towards the end of 1015, Mahmud left Ghazni, marching rapidly along the foot hills of the Himalayas. Aided by feudatory rulers, he crossed the Yamuna and defeated a local Rajput ruler at Baran (Bulandshahr) in modern western U.P. Moving towards the pilgrim centre, Mathura, he was opposed by the Kalachuri ruler Kokkala II, one of major Rajput kings of the area. The battle was hotly contested, the Rajput ruler deploying a large number of elephants. His defeat was again the defeat of slow moving forces by rapidly moving cavalry forces. After plundering Mathura and Vrindavan, Mahmud moved toward Kannauj, the capital of the Pratihara ruler. The Pratihara ruler who was in a greatly weakened condition, sought safety by flight across the Ganga. After thoroughly sacking Kannauj, Mahmud returned to Ghazni, defeating several minor opponents on the way. This was the most spectacular and profitable forage into the Ganga valley made by Mahmud. He had by now also triumphed over his Turkish enemies in Central Asia, and extended his control over Iran. The Khalifa at Baghdad received his envoy, bearing tidings of his Indian victories, with marks of special honour.

The next two invasions of the Ganga valley by Mahmud, in 1019 and 1021, did not lead to any special gains. The first one of these expeditions was meant to break up an incipient Rajput coalition against Mahmud. At the instance of the powerful Chandel ruler of Bundelkhand, the Pratihara ruler of Kannauj had been displaced for his disgraceful failure to resist Mahmud. The Rajput ruler of Gwalior had joined, and help been provided to Trilochanpala, the displaced Shahi ruler of Punjab. Moving rapidly, Mahmud defeated the Shahi ruler Trilochandpal, and the Chandel protege at Kannauj, also named Trilochandpal. He then turned against the Chandel ruler, Vidyadhara, who is said to have fielded an army of 145,000 foot soldiers,



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36,000 horse and no less than 640 elephants. Despite skirmishes, no decisive engagement took place, neither side wanting to risk a show down. In 1021, Mahmud again over-run Gwalior, but an engagement with the Chandel ruler near Kalinjar was avoided. The latter, on his part, promised a nominal tribute.

These expeditions did not lead to the expansion of Mahmud Ghazni's territories beyond the Punjab, but they did succeed in making the upper part of the Ganga doab as a kind of a neutral territory in which no powerful king could establish himself. Negatively, it kept the Chandels from expanding their control over the area. The expeditions also ended, once for all, the attempt of the Shahis to recover their lost dominions.

The story of Mahmud's last plundering raid in 1025 across Rajasthan to Somnath is too well-known to be repeated here in detail. This expedition once again demonstrated the capacity of the Turks of swift movement over unknown and hostile territory, and a spirit of daring and enterprise rare even among the Turkish nomadic tribes of the times. To this was added the lure of gold, and the ghaza spirit of waging an all-out war against the enemies of Islam.

The military capabilities of Mahmud Ghazni can hardly be disputed. He was a bold warrior, and a leader who almost singly carved out one of the biggest empires in West and Central Asia. With the riches plundered from India he adorned his capital, Ghazni, with magnificent buildings. He also gave patronage to literary men and poets, such as Firdausi, and carried forward the Persian renaissance which had begun with the Samanids. But he built no lasting institutions which could outlive him. Moreover, his rule outside Ghazni was tyrannical. Thus, the Ghaznavid historian, Utbi, says with reference to Khurasan, the eastern part of Iran and the cradle of Persian renaissance:

"Affairs were characterised there by nothing but tax levies, sucking which sucked dry, and attempt to extract fresh sources of revenue, without any constructive measure." Hence, after a few years there was nothing more to be got in Khurasan, "since water had been thrown on her udder, not a trickle of milk could be got nor any trace of fat."

Thus, despite his political achievements and military exploits, Mahmud is remembered in India as a plunderer, and did not earn a good name for himself even outside India among his contemporaries. Painting him and Sanjar as the heroes of Islam was the work of later historians. The period of 150 years between the death of Mahmud Ghazni in 1030 to the beginning of Ghurid invasion towards the end of the 12th century was a period of great flux and confusion in north India. There was constant internecine warfare between the various Rajput principalities of the region, without any one of them emerging as a dominant power. Following the raids of Mahmud on Kannauj, the Pratihara power had collapsed, with the rise of small feudatories. It was only towards the end of the 11th century that a new dynasty, the Gahadvars, rose to power in the doab. The Gahadvars whose seat of power was the Varanasi area, constantly fought with the Palas of Bengal, and the Tomars of Delhi. Another dynasty, the Chahaman or Chauhan arose in Rajasthan whose later representative was the famous Prithviraj Chauhan. The Chauhans constantly fought with the Chaulukyas of Gujarat, and with the Paramaras of Malwa. Another powerful dynasty was the Chandelas of Khajuraho whose rivals were both the Paramaras of Malwa and the Gahadvalas of Kashi. Although the Gahadvalas over-ran Kannauj and also established their over-lordship over Delhi, the Rajput states, individually or as a group, were unable or unwilling to join hands to expel the Ghaznavids from the Punjab, despite the rapid decline of Ghaznavid power in West and Central Asia following the death of Mahmud. On the other hand, the successors of Mahmud were able to continue making debilitating raids into the doab as far as Varanasi. In consequence, as a modern writer

C.E. Bosworth says, the "temple treasures of India continued to be brought back to Ghazni... the flow of bullion continued to keep the economy of the Ghaznavid empire buoyant and the currency of high quality..."

Despite these plundering raids, the Ghaznavids were in no position to expand their territories in India. This process began with another turn in West and Central Asia politics, and the rise of the Ghurids.



## THE RISE OF GHURIDS AND THEIR ADVANCE INTO INDIA

The rise to power of the Ghurids at Ghur, a small isolated area located in the mountain fastness between the Ghaznavid Empire and the Seljukids, was an unusual and unexpected development. The area was so remote that till the 11th century, it had remained a pagan enclave surrounded by Muslim principalities. It was converted to Islam in the early part of the 12th century after Mahmud raided it, and left teachers to instruct the Ghurids in the precepts of Islam. Even then it is believed that paganism, i.e. a variety of Mahayana Buddhism persisted in the area till the end of the century.

The Shansbanis, who were originally a family of petty chiefs among many in Ghur, played a principal part in firmly planting Islam in the area, and by a policy of ruthlessness made themselves supreme there. By the middle of the 12th century they felt strong enough to intervene in Herat when its Governor rebelled against Sanjar, the Seljukid ruler. The Ghaznavids felt threatened and Bahram Shah captured the brother of the Ghurid ruler, Alauddin Husain Shah, and had him poisoned. In retaliation, Alauddin defeated Bahram Shah and captured Ghazni. For seven days, the city was turned over to plundering and destruction, with some of the finest buildings being razed to the ground. This earned for Alauddin Husain Shah the title of Jahan soz or "world burner", and marked the final decline of the Ghaznavids and the emergence of Ghur as the strongest power on the fringe of the Islamic world. The Ghurids were no longer content to be tributaries of the Seljukids, but assumed like them the title of al-sultan al-muazzam. Like their predecessors, the Ghurids constantly fought with the Seljukids for control of the prosperous areas of Khurasan and Merv. Like the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids too were unpopular in Khurasan on account of their financial levies, and found it difficult to maintain their authority there. This and the perpetual conflict with the Seljukids and the Turkish tribes across the Oxus were factors which impelled the Ghurids towards India.

In 1163, Ghiyasuddin Muhammad assumed the throne of Ghur. Recalling a Turkish tribal tradition, he appointed his younger brother, Muizzuddin Muhammad, ruler at Ghazna. This unique partnership enabled one brother, Muizzuddin, to engage all his energies for the conquest of India, and the elder brother, Ghiyasuddin, to concentrate on Central and West Asian problems.

Meanwhile, in north India, the Chahmans or Chauhans were trying to expand towards Gujarat and also towards Delhi and Mathura. As such, they had to bear the brunt of the plundering raids of Mahmud Ghazni's successors. The greatest of the Chauhan rulers was, perhaps, Vigraharaj who captured Chittor. It seems that he captured Delhi from the Tomar rulers in 1151, and extended his sway upto the Siwalik, i.e. the range of hills upto Delhi and Hansi which had been a bone of contention between the Tomars and the Ghaznavids. However, the Tomars were allowed to continue to rule as feudatories. Vigraharaja was a patron of poets and scholars, and himself wrote a Sanskrit drama. He also built many magnificent temples, including a Sanskrit College at Ajmer, and the Anasagar Lake.

The most famous among the Chauhan rulers was Prithviraj III who ascended the throne at Ajmer at the young age of eleven, in or about 1177. It is assumed that he took the reins of administration in his hands at the age of 16, and immediately commenced a vigorous policy of expansionism at the cost of smaller states in Rajasthan. The most famous expedition, however, was the one against the Chandelas of Khajuraho and Mahoba. As we have seen, the Chandelas constituted the most powerful state in the region, and which had a history of resistance against the Ghaznavids. The fight in which the famous warriors, Alha and Udal, died fighting to save Mahoba has been immortalised in the Hindi epics, Prithviraj-raso and Alha-Khanda. Since these were written later, the historical veracity of the account is doubted by historians. However, we can conclude that Prithviraj gained a significant victory against the Chandelas. Though he did not acquire additional territories, he came home after acquiring considerable booty.

Between 1182 and 1187, Prithviraj turned his attention towards his ancient rivals, the Chaulukyas of Gujarat. The struggle was long drawn out and it seems that the Gujarat ruler, Bhima II, who had earlier beaten off an invasion by the Ghurid ruler, Muizzuddin, defeated Prithviraj also. This forced Prithviraj to turn his attention towards the Ganga Valley and the Punjab. According to tradition, there was a long drawn-out tussle between him and the Gahadvalas of Kannauj, who had the most extensive kingdom in

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the area. The cause of this conflict is supposed to be Prithviraj's abduction of Sanyogita, the beautiful daughter of the ruler, Jai Chand, at her svayamvara and Jai Chand's subsequent defeat in battle. While historians are doubtful of the veracity of this story in the absence of any contemporary corroboration, the rivalry between the Chauhans and the Gahadvalas for control over Delhi and the upper Ganga doab was well-known, and may account for the subsequent attitude of the Gahadvalas.

The point to note is that by leading expeditions against all his neighbours, Prithviraj had isolated himself politically. This cost him dear when he had to face the Turkish armies of Muizzuddin Muhammad a few years later.

We have already referred to Muizzuddin's ascending the throne at Ghazna in 1173. His first expedition against India was launched in 1175 when he attacked and captured Multan which was under the Carmathians or Karamatis who were spread on the borders of India and Iran, and whose religious ideas formed a half-way house between Islam and Buddhism. The following year Muizzuddin captured Uchch. In 1178-79, he marched through Multan and Uchch to Neharwala in Gujarat. However, the Gujarat ruler inflicted a crushing defeat on Muizzuddin near Mt. Abu. We are told that the Chaulukyas had requested Prithviraj for help. However, his ministers declined to help, considering both the Ghorids and the Chaulukyas to be enemies of the Chauhans. Since Prithviraj was barely twelve at the time, he can hardly be blamed for the decision.

After the failure of his Gujarat expedition, Muizzuddin changed his whole plan of operations. Conquering Peshawar from the Ghaznavids in 1179-80, he marched on Lahore in 1181. The Ghaznavid ruler, Khusrau Malik, surrendered. He was allowed to rule at Lahore while Muizzuddin continuously expanded his control over the Punjab, including Sialkot, and also consolidated his control over Sindh upto the coast. Finally, in 1186, Muizzuddin removed the Ghaznavid ruler who was sent to prison in a fort and was put to death a couple of years later. The stage was now set for the conflict between the Ghorids and the Rajput rulers of north India.

## THE BATTLES OF TARAIN

After consolidating his position in Sindh and Punjab, in 1191 Muizzuddin attacked and captured the fortress of Tabarhinda which was strategically important for the defence of Delhi. Realising its importance, and without giving the Turks time to consolidate, Prithviraj immediately marched towards Tabarhinda. In the battle, Prithviraj attained a complete victory, Muizzuddin being saved, according to a contemporary account, by a Khalji horseman who carried the wounded Sultan to safety. After his victory, Prithviraj did not try to pursue the dispirited Ghurid army, either because he did not want to venture into hostile territory far away from his base, or because he thought that, like the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids, too, would be satisfied to rule over the Punjab. Thus, he treated the siege of Tabarhinda only as a frontier fight and was satisfied with capturing it after a siege of a few months.

That Prithviraj treated the struggle with Muizzuddin as only a frontier fight is strengthened by the fact that after his victory he made little preparations for a future contest with the Ghurid chief. The Prithviraj Raso accuses Prithviraj of neglecting the affairs of the state, and of being busy merry-making. This may not be true, but there is little doubt that he seriously underestimated the danger from the side of the Ghurids.

The second battle of Tarain in 1192 is regarded rightly as one of the turning points in Indian history. Muizzuddin had made careful preparations for the contest, disgracing many amirs who had not stood firm in the field of battle earlier. It is difficult to form a precise estimate of the forces on the two sides. According to the information of the contemporary chronicler, Minhaj Siraj, the army of Muizzuddin had 120,000 men fully equipped with steel coats and armour. The seventeenth century historian, Ferishta, places Prithviraj's forces at 3,000 elephants, 300,000 horsemen, and considerable infantry. These figures appear to be grossly exaggerated, perhaps to emphasise the challenge faced by Muizzuddin and the scale of his victory. However, we may conclude that the forces fielded by Prithviraj were larger than those brought to the field

by his opponent. Ferishta also states that on an appeal from Prithviraj, all the leading 'Rais of Hind' joined his banners. That, too, appears doubtful. As we have seen, Prithviraj had alienated all his powerful neighbours by his militaristic policies. Nor does Ferishta name any of the prominent Rais. Perhaps, Prithviraj's forces included many of his feudatories including Govindraj, the ruler of Delhi. This was a source of weakness rather than strength because these feudal levies lacked any central direction or leadership, unlike the armies of Muizzuddin.

The battle of Tarain was more a war of movement than of position. The lightly armed mounted archers of Muizzuddin kept harassing the slow moving forces of Prithviraj, and attacked from all sides when they had created confusion in his ranks. Prithviraj suffered a complete defeat and fled, but he was pursued and caught near Sarsuti or modern Sirsa in Hissar district. The historian Minhaj Siraj says that he was executed immediately. But according to another contemporary writer, Hasan Nizami, he was taken to Ajmer and allowed to rule. This is supported by numismatic evidence, showing coins of Prithviraj, with the words 'Sri Muhammad Sam' on the reverse. He rebelled after sometime, and was executed on a charge of treason. His son succeeded him, and continued to rule for sometime as a feudatory. Hence, there is no truth in the story that Prithviraj was taken to Ghazni and that blind-folded, he killed the Ghurid sultan with an arrow, and that he was then killed by his bard, Chandel.

Prithviraj is remembered as a great fighter and as a patron of poets and pandits. As a general, he had many victories to his credit. But as a modern historian, Dashrath Sharma, observes "his conduct on the battle field in the second battle of Tarain is a blot on his generalship as well as statesmanship."

## **TURKISH EXPANSION INTO THE UPPER GANGA VALLEY**

After the victory at Tarain the entire Chauhan dominion lay at the feet of the Ghurids. However, Muizzuddin adopted a cautious policy. He annexed the whole Siwalik territory, i.e. the area up to Ajmer, and Hissar and Sirsa in modern Haryana. He placed Hissar and Sirsa under his trusted slave, Qutubuddin Aibak. Govindraj, the Tomar chief of Delhi, had died in the battle at Tarain. His son was, however, installed at Delhi as a vassal. Prithviraj was reinstated at Ajmer, as mentioned earlier. Muizzuddin then returned to Ghazni.

This arrangement was bound to be tentative. It was untenable if the Ghurids were to confine themselves to Punjab and its immediate neighbourhood. If, however, the Turks were to expand into the upper Ganga valley, Delhi was too strategic to be left in alien hands.

Rebellions both at Ajmer and Delhi decided the issue. To quell the rebellions in Ajmer against the son of Prithviraj who had accepted Turkish vassalage, Aibak pressed on to Delhi in 1192, and occupied it. Delhi now became the main base of Turkish operations in India. The Tomara chief was retained for some more time but removed from the throne in 1193 when he was found to be involved in some treasonable activities. Ajmer was also occupied after defeating Hari Raj, the brother of Prithviraj, who had been leading the Rajput resistance. Hari Raj entered the funeral pyre to atone for his defeat. A Turkish governor was now placed in charge of Ajmer. Govind, the son of Prithviraj, was displaced and forced to move to Ranthambhor.

Having consolidated their position in the Delhi region, the Turks were now poised for attack on the Gahadvalas of Kannauj, reputed to be the most powerful kingdom in the country. In 1194, Muizzuddin returned to India. The areas of Meerut, Baran (modern Buland-shahr) and Koil (modern Aligarh) in the upper doab which had been under the control of the Dor Rajputs, had been occupied by the Turks shortly after the battle of Tarain. Although the Dors had offered stiff resistance, and the area had great strategic value, Jai Chand, the Gahadvala ruler, had not come to their help. Earlier, in a false sense of security, he had rejoiced at the defeat of Prithviraj at the hands of Muizzuddin, and the event was celebrated at his court.

In 1194, Muizzuddin advanced towards Kannauj and Banaras with 50,000 horsemen. The battle was fought at Chandawar in the modern Etawah district. As usual, contemporary literary works indulge in gross exaggerations. They place Jai Chand's army at 80,000 men in armour, 30,000 horses, 300,000 infan-

try, 200,000 bowmen and a host of elephants. Jai Chand, who is not known to have been a great warrior, suffered a disastrous defeat. After great slaughter and plunder, the fort of Asni (Fathehpur district) which contained the Gahadavala treasure-house was plundered. Varanasi, which was the early capital of the Gahadavalas, was also plundered, and large number of temples destroyed. Kannauj was finally captured in 1198.

The battles of Tarain and Chandawar laid the foundations of Turkish rule in the Ganga valley. Apart from sporadic uprisings, there was no large scale resistance in the area to Turkish rule. However, it took the Turks another fifty years to stamp out all opposition, and to consolidate their hold over the area. To protect their southern and western flanks, as also to provide future bases of operations, the Turks tried to conquer the strategic forts between Delhi and Malwa. Thus, in 1195-96, Muizzuddin occupied Bayana fort. Gwalior, which was a most powerful fort, was besieged, but it took a siege of a year and a half before the ruler could be persuaded to hand over the fort. A little later, Kalinjar, Mahoba and Khajuraho were wrested from the Chandel rulers of Bundelkhand who were the most powerful rulers of the area after the Gahadavalas.

Efforts at expansion beyond the upper Ganga valley and eastern Rajasthan were made in two directions—Gujarat in the west, and Bihar and Bengal in the east. In the west, Muizzuddin's slave invaded Anhilwara in Gujarat, largely in retaliation of the Rai having aided earlier a Rajput rebellion which had forced Aibek to take refuge at Ajmer till he was rescued by an army sent from Ghazni. The Rai was defeated and Anhilwara occupied, but the Turks could not hold it for long. This showed the limits of Turkish power in India—they were still not strong enough to keep hold of places far away from their base of operations, Delhi. The conquest of Bihar and Bengal by Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji was a special case which we shall deal with separately.

Muizzuddin suffered a sharp reversal in 1204 when he was defeated at a great battle at Andkhui near the river Oxus by the pagan Kara Khanid Turks of Samarkand. In consequence, he lost control of Merv and most of Khurasan. Rumours of Muizzuddin's death led to a rebellion by the Khokhars in the Punjab. Muizzuddin marched to India to suppress it.

We are told that Muizzuddin wanted to renew the conflict with the Kara Khanids of Samarkand, and that a boat bridge had been built across the river Oxus for the purpose. However, on his way from the Punjab, Muizzuddin was killed on the banks of the river Indus (1206) by a band of Karamatias which, as we have seen, were a fanatical sect which had absorbed many features of Hindu/Buddhist beliefs and which Muizzuddin had persecuted in his life time.

## **MUIZZUDDIN MUHAMMAD AND MAHMUD GHAZNI**

There has been a tendency to compare Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam with Mahmud Ghazni. It has been argued that Mahmud Ghazni was a better general than Muizzuddin because, unlike the latter, he never suffered a military defeat. However, the fact that Muizzuddin could recover and take lessons from his defeats, and change his entire approach showed both a dogged tenacity of purpose and a grim sense of political realism. Thus, after his defeat at Anhilwara in Gujarat, he changed his entire approach towards India, shifting the axis of attack from Rajasthan to the Punjab. The speed and skill with which he recovered from his defeat at the hands of Prithviraj in the first battle of Tarain showed his mettle.

Both Mahmud Ghazni and Muizzuddin used religion for their essentially secular purposes, when it suited them to do so. For both, the wealth gathered from India was important for furthering their Central and West Asian ambitions. However, it would be wrong to consider Mahmud as a mere robber and plunderer in India. It was he who breached the outer defences of India by ousting the Hindu Shahis from Afghanistan, and by conquering the Punjab, he provided a secure base for future Turkish expansion into India. Thus, Mahmud laid the foundations on which Muizzuddin built. However, both worked in completely different circumstances.



Both enriched their capitals with fine buildings, and patronised poets and learned men. However, we know little about their administrative achievements. As we have shown, both were unpopular in Khurasan for their financial rapacity and exactions. Little is known about the nature of Ghaznavid administration in the Punjab. Muizzuddin had no time to form any new administrative system in India. Perhaps, he made little change in the existing administrative system, leaving his commanders to levy tribute or taxes through the existing channels as best as they could.

## CAUSES OF THE DEFEAT OF THE RAJPUTS

The causes of the defeat of the Rajputs and the success of the Turks should not be seen merely in the context of the events following the succession of Muizzuddin bin Sam at Ghazni in 1173, or his first entry into the north western parts of India (Peshawar) in 1181. As a modern writer, A.B.M. Habibullah, rightly observes, the success of Muizzuddin was “the consumption of a process which extended over the whole of the 12th century”. In fact, the reconnoitering activities to obtain a foot-hold in Hindustan outside Sindh had begun at least a century earlier, with the rise of Mahmud Ghazni.

The conquest of Afghanistan and the Punjab by Mahmud Ghazni breached the outer defences of India. It enabled hostile forces to stage their forces in the area, and to make forays into the vital areas of India at will. Thus, India was tactically put on the defensive. It is to be noted that during this entire period, the Rajput states of the area showed a singular lack of understanding or strategic insight. Thus, no effort was made by them to join together to oust the Ghaznavids from the Punjab even after the death of Mahmud, when the outbreak of internal struggles among his successors led to the loss of their control over most of West and Central Asian territories. On the other hand, even in their weakened conditions, the successors of Mahmud remained tactically on the offensive, raiding Indian territories in Rajasthan upto Ajmer and beyond, and the Gangetic areas upto Kannauj and Varanasi. All the credit that the Rajput rajas of the period could take was their success in repelling the raids of hammira who had become “the cause of anxiety to the world.”

This lack of strategic consciousness may be explained by lack of political unity, or by the absence of a dominant power in northwest India. This should not, however, be confused with size or resources. In terms of size and resources, many of the Rajput principalities of the time were superior, both in terms of population and revenue resources, to almost any of the successor states which arose in West and Central Asia after the downfall of the Abbasid empire. Except a few fertile regions such as Khurasan, Transoxiana, Khwarizm, much of the terrain in the region was mountainous or arid and inhospitable. Moreover, it had been thoroughly plundered for long by the Ghuzz tribes across the Oxus. On the other hand, the tracts under the control of the Rajputs, outside Rajasthan and Bundelkhand, were very fertile and productive. In terms of human resources or population, too, the Rajput-held areas were in an advantageous position. These were the reasons why in any battle, the number of human beings and other trappings of war on the side of the Rajput rajas were far larger than those at the disposal of the Turks. Thus, it would be misleading to think that on account of the working of the inequitable caste system, the Rajput rajas were not able to find sufficient soldiers to man their armies. In fact, it is erroneous to think that the Rajput armies consisted only of Rajputs. Warrior groups such as the Jats, Meenas or groups called “kuvarna” (lower castes) in later sources, were not excluded from the armed forces of the Rajputs.

Nor was the defeat of the Rajputs due to their lack of a martial spirit, courage or bravery as compared to the Turks. War was a sport for the Rajputs, and their prolonged resistance to Turkish inroads, as compared to the easy defeat of another ancient civilisation, the Iranian, and their success in a number of battles against the Turks, does not betoken any absence of a martial spirit.

Nor is there any reason to think that the Turks had weapons which were superior to those of the Rajputs. It has been argued that the Turks used iron-stirrups which enabled them to use spears without the rider being thrown off the horse as a result of the impact. However, the use of the iron-stirrup which is supposed to have come for China or Korea was spreading in India from the 8th century, though we have no



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means of knowing how widely it was used. The Central Asian horses were superior to those born or bred in India. In recognition of this, since ancient times, there had been a lively trade in horses, both by sea and land, between India and the countries of West and Central Asia. The trade in horses had not stopped with the rise of Islam. In fact, colonies of Muslim horse-traders had existed in distinct places in north India during the 12th century. That is why, we are told, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji was able to proceed all the way up to Purnea, pretending to be a horse-trader, before he attacked the Sena ruler, Lakshman Sena.

The question arises, what then were the factors responsible for the defeat of the Rajputs and the victory of the Turks? First and foremost, although the Rajput forces were not inferior in numbers, or in the quality of their mounts and weapons, they were definitely inferior in terms of organisation and leadership. The large Rajput armies which faced the Turks did not have a unified command, being brought to the field and led by their own feudatory rulers. It was difficult to manoeuvre such heterogeneous forces. Moreover, the Rajputs gave greater weight to men than to mobility. The Turkish warriors were used to quick movements, of rapid advance and retreat, and of shooting arrows while mounted. The Rajput forces tended to be a heavy, slow moving mass, centred on their elephants. They were beaten by swift cavalry forces which attacked their flanks and rear. While elephants themselves were not a source of weakness, what mattered was how they were used. They provided stability, and were most effective when combined with skilled and highly mobile cavalry. The Turks were reputed to be the most skillful horsemen in the world. Also, they were used to manoeuvre together because the Turkish sultans were accustomed to maintaining large standing armies. The troops were either paid in cash, or by means of the iqta system to which we have referred to earlier. Many of the Turkish commanders were slaves who had been brought up by the sultans and trained for warfare. This was specially so among the Muizzi sultans of Ghur. While as an institution slavery is hardly to be commended, in the immediate context, it provided the Turkish sultans with a body of commanders who were totally loyal and devoted.

We have little knowledge about the internal organisation of the Rajput armies at this time. It has, however, been assumed that there was a sharp decline in the number of soldiers in the standing armies maintained by individual Rajput rulers. This, in turn, has been linked to the growth of “feudalism”, or a process by which administrative authority, including the collection of land-revenue and maintenance of the army, was delegated more and more to a body of hereditary land-holders, called samanta. These samantas were difficult to control, and were always eager to set themselves up as independent rulers whenever a suitable opportunity arose. The social structure of the Turks was different. However, among the Turks tribal loyalties were an ever present source of danger, and there were constant attempts on the part of local commanders setting themselves up as independent rulers. That is how both the Ghaznavid and the Ghurid, and others, such as the Seljukid and Khwarizmi empires arose. But as long as any of these empires existed, they were more highly centralised than any of the Rajput states. This, again, was on account of the working of the iqta system, each commander or amir being not hereditary but dependent on the will of the sultan for his position.

We should be careful not to allow our criticism of the Rajput social system to cloud our historical judgement. It has been suggested by an eminent modern historian that on account of the caste system, and the working of the feudal system which was hierarchical in nature, the Indian people watched with “sullen indifference” the fate of the Indian governing classes, and that in consequence, the towns fell like ripe fruits, that only the forts put up some resistance, but they felt helpless when the enemy controlled the countryside. This is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of medieval polity in India and elsewhere. According to K. S. Lambden, among the states in West and Central Asia at the time, “patriotism was an unknown virtue. All the sultan expected of his subjects was that they should pay their taxes and pray for his welfare, while they expected from him security and justice. The state did not demand, or receive, the loyalty of the common man.” The situation in India was little different. Loyalty was accorded to caste, clan, village or city, and to the defence of hearth and home. The question of religion we shall discuss separately. As far as forts or fortified towns were concerned, their defence, again, had to be combined with a mobile cavalry force. This was a deficiency with the Rajputs, as we have already noted.

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To what extent religion was able to provide a bond of union between peoples divided on the basis of tribe, clan, caste, ethnicity etc. and between them and the ruling groups is a matter of debate. There is little doubt that Islam did provide a strong bond of unity between different groups and sections, and imbued them with a strong sense of a mission and fighting spirit. In their operations in India, this was combined with an equally strong spirit of gain through plunder. The Islamic spirit of equality and brotherhood was certainly a positive point, but it did not extend to the social sphere. Both the Turkish and Rajput societies were hierarchical, one based on racial and family superiority, and the other on clan. Among both of them, power and office were the monopoly of narrow sections. However, on balance, there was greater social mobility among the Turks than among the Rajputs. Thus, an ironsmith established the Saffarid dynasty which ruled in West Asia for some time before the rise of the Ghaznavids. The Hindu concept of *achhut* (untouchability) and banning a section of the people from entering temples were negative phenomena and a source of weakness. It is true that Hindu society had developed other methods of bringing the "outcaste" sections into the stream of Hindu religions consciousness, viz. through wandering sadhus, and Brahmins who presided over their religious rituals. However, these could not bridge the gap between the Rajput ruling classes and the masses.

Finally, the lack of a strategic perspective on the part of the Rajputs which put them tactically on the defensive, to which we have referred earlier, and which led to long term disadvantages has to be seen in the perspective of the prevailing Indian cultural ethos. Al-Biruni, the noted scientist and scholar, who spent ten years in India and interacted with the Brahmins and studied Sanskrit, noted the deep insularity of the Indians, remarking "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation but theirs, no kings like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. Their haughtiness is such that if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan or Persia, they think you both an ignoramus and a liar."

It was this sense of insularity which restricted the Indians from going to West and Central Asia, and bring back knowledge of its sciences, its peoples and governments. We do not find an Al-Biruni among Indians to study foreign lands. The *kali varjya*, or ban on the Hindus travelling in countries where the *munja* grass did not grow or crossing the salt seas, though disregarded in practice, was an index of this attitude of growing insularity. After the break-up of the Kushan Empire, and the gradual decline of Buddhism in West and Central Asia, India became more and more inward looking. This neglect and ignorance of the outside world, and loss of a strategic perspective, led to long term repercussions of which the Turkish conquest was, perhaps, the first, but not the last consequence.

Thus, the defeat of the Rajputs by the Turks have to be seen in a long-term perspective. It was the result not only of weakness in their military organisation and leadership, and of a defective understanding of military tactics. It was rooted also in the defective social organisation which led to the growth of states which were structurally weak as compared to the Turkish states. Finally, the Rajput sense of insularity which was rooted in the Indian cultural ethos, did not enable them to develop a strategic perspective whereby, through military and diplomatic means, potential invaders could be kept away from the natural defence parameter of India.

# UNIT-II

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

### ESTABLISHMENT & TERRITORIAL CONSOLIDATION (1206-1236)

By the time of Muizzuddin Muhammad's death in 1206, the Turks had by individual efforts been able to extend their sway upto Lakhnauti in Bengal, Ajmer and Ranthambor in Rajasthan, upto the boundaries of Ujjain in the south, and Multan and Uchch in Sindh. However, they had many internal difficulties to face, and their empire remained more or less stationary for almost a hundred years. The internal and external difficulties faced by the Turks were numerous. First and foremost they had to deal with the efforts of some of the ousted rulers, particularly the Rajput rulers of Rajasthan and Bundelkhand, and neighbouring areas, such as Bayana and Gwalior to regain their former possessions. While the struggle with them had many ups and downs, depending on the strength and cohesion of the two sides, the Rajputs never came together to try and collectively oust the Turks from India. Nor were there any serious uprisings against the Turks in the Ganga Valley or the Punjab (with the sole exception of the Khokhars during the reign of Muizzuddin). Hence, it would hardly be correct to term these isolated battles by individual Rajput rulers to regain their possessions as "Hindu reaction" to the Turks.

Secondly, the Turks had to spend a lot of time and energy in dealing with factionalism in the Turkish nobility which led to recurrent spells of political instability at the centre. Some of the Turkish rulers tried to carve out their own independent spheres of authority. Thus, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji and his successors tried to keep Lakhnauti and Bihar free from the control of Delhi. There were strong separatist tendencies in Multan and Sindh also. For some time, there was a struggle for domination between the nobles at Lahore and Delhi. On and off, some of the powerful governors (iqtdars) also tried to defy Delhi. Thus, regional factors asserted themselves.

Finally, during this period, there were important changes in Central Asian politics which affected India. Immediately following the death of Muizzuddin, the Ghurid Empire broke up. Muizzuddin's favourite slave, Yalduz, succeeded him at Ghazni, while another slave, Qubacha seized control of Multan and Uchch. Qutbuddin Aibak, who had been deputizing for Muizzuddin at Delhi, was invited by the Turkish amirs at Lahore. Aibak marched to Lahore and ascended the throne there. Although both Qubacha and Aibak had married two daughters of Yalduz, they struggled against each other, particularly for the possession of the Punjab. But Aibak succeeded in keeping his control over Lahore which he made his capital. After some time, Khwarizm Shah, the ruler of Merv, which was the most powerful state in Central Asia over-ran Ghur and Ghazni. But before the Khwarizm Shah could consolidate his position in Ghur and Ghazni, and think of moving towards India, he had to face an even bigger danger, the Mongols.

As is well known, the Mongol ruler, Chengiz Khan, erupted into Transoxiana and Khurasan in 1218 and, in course of time, the Mongol empire extended from China to Saxony in Central Europe. The Mongols devastated the towns and cities of Central and West Asia which offered resistance to them levelling some of them to the ground after slaughtering almost all the men there, except artisans who, along with women and children, were enslaved. But the Mongol conquest did not have negative aspects only. The unification of Central and West Asia under Mongol aegis enabled trade and merchandise to move freely, and gradually towns and town-life began to revive. However, we are concerned here only with the impact of the rise of the Mongols on the Delhi sultanate.

In 1218, after conquering North China, Chingez turned against the Khwarizm Shah who had offended him by putting to death some Muslim merchants who had received a safe conduct from Chingez for carrying on trade. The Khwarizm Shah suffered a setback in a brush with Chengiz's advance guard. Afraid of a

defeat when faced with the main armies of Chingez, he evacuated Transoxiana, and then retreated to the West. Samarqand and Bukhara fell to the Mongols after resistance, and suffered the fate reserved by the Mongols to those towns which resisted. However, Prince Jalaluddin Mangbarani, the son of the Khwarizm Shah, continued to resist in Ghur and Ghazni. Chingez pursued the prince, and inflicted a sharp defeat on him on the bank of the river Indus in 1221. The prince escaped across the river with a handful of followers. Chingez loitered around in the neighbourhood for three months, then decided to complete the conquest of Khurasan. He then returned to Mongolia and died in 1227. This was followed by internal troubles among the Mongols, giving the Turkish rulers in India time to consolidate the Sultanat.

The rise of the Mongols and the deprivation of the support and backing of the well trained Ghurid army were important factors which prevented the early Turkish rulers of Delhi from trying to further expand their territories. On the other hand, the end of the link with Ghur and Ghazni after the death of Muizzuddin (1206), saved them from involvement in Central Asian affairs, and enabled them to develop in India on the basis of their own resources and inclinations. The Turkish rulers were thus forced to develop an independent state in India, with forms and institutions suited to their own requirements and the specific conditions obtaining in the country. In consequence, gradually a new socio-cultural order evolved in North India. We shall pay attention to these aspects while tracing the broad political developments in the country.

## **QUTBUDDIN AIBAK AND ILTUTMISH**

As we have noted, Qutbuddin Aibak (1206-1210), a favourite slave of Muizzuddin, who had played an important role in the battle of Tarain and in the subsequent Turkish conquests in North India had been enthroned at Lahore in 1206 on the basis of the support of the local notables and amirs. Although prominent in India, it is doubtful whether he had ever been nominated as his wali-ahd (successor or viceroy) by Muizzuddin. Thus, he rose to the throne by personal merit. Somewhat later, he received from Sultan Mahmud who had succeeded his father, Ghiyasuddin, at Ghur, a deed of manumission (freeing him from his slave status, legally, a slave could not be a sovereign), and a *chattr*, recognizing his position as a sovereign. This finally ended the legal claim of Ghazni over the Turkish conquests in Hindustan. The early break with Ghazni and Central Asian affairs had long term consequences, as we have noted.

Aibak hardly had time to add to the Turkish conquests in India, and died in 1210, on account of a fall from his horse while playing *chaugan* (medieval polo). But his brief reign is considered significant because it marked the rise of the first independent Turkish ruler in India. Contemporaries praise him for his liberality, beneficence and gallantry. Thus, he is supposed to have given away lakhs but also slaughtered lakhs. This combination of liberality, emphasis on justice, and brutality in war were typical of many of the early Turkish rulers in India.

Shamsuddin Iltutmish (1210-36) who was a slave of Aibak, succeeded him at Delhi in 1210. He ruled till 1236, and was responsible not only for keeping the Delhi Sultanat together, but made it a well-knit and compact State. He may thus be called the real establisher of what came to be called the Delhi Sultanat.

Iltutmish had many difficulties to contend with. First, he faced the challenge of Aram Shah who had been put up by the Turkish amirs at Lahore. Aram Shah apparently was not the son of Aibak, because we are told that Aibak had no son and only three daughters, two of whom were married successively to Qubacha, and one to Iltutmish after he ascended the throne. Aram Shah marched on Delhi but was defeated easily by Iltutmish at a battle at Tarain. But Iltutmish's position was not secure even then. Some of the Turkish nobles were not prepared to accept Iltutmish's authority. They went outside Delhi and prepared for rebellion. Iltutmish marched from Delhi, defeated the rebels and executed most of the leaders. Nor was this the first opposition of Turkish nobles that Iltutmish had to face.

According to the contemporary author, Minhaj Siraj, "On several other occasions in different parts of Hindustan, hostilities arose between him and the armies and the Turks." Iltutmish triumphed over all of them—on account of "Divine help" according to Minhaj, or according to his own careful management of



affairs. Having brought under his control Delhi and its dependencies including Banaras, Awadh, Badaun and the Siwaliks, Iltutmish found himself faced with a piquant situation. The Turkish rule in Hindustan was by this time divided into four portions: Multan and Uchch and Siwistan upto the sea in Sindh which was under the control of Qubacha, Lakhnauti under the control of the Khalji maliks, Delhi under the control of Iltutmish, and Lahore which was coveted by Yalduz, Qubacha and Iltutmish and passed under the control of one or the other according to circumstances.

## **PUNJAB AND SINDH**

In his struggle for the control of the Punjab and Sindh, Iltutmish displayed great tact, patience and diplomatic skill. He did not get too closely involved in the struggle for the Punjab till circumstances favoured him. At first he befriended Yalduz at Ghazni, and accepted the letter of manumission and durbash (two-headed baton which was a symbol of royalty) sent by Yalduz, even though it implied according a superior status to Yalduz. Meanwhile, there was a complex struggle for the control of Punjab between Yalduz and Qubacha which need not concern us here. In 1215, after being ousted from Ghazni by the Khwarizm Shah, Yalduz occupied Lahore and the whole of the Punjab, expelling Qubacha. It seems that as the successor of Muizzuddin at Ghazni, Yalduz claimed not only to be the ruler of the Punjab, but also claimed a vague control over all the conquests of Muizzuddins in Hindustan. This situation was unacceptable to Iltutmish, and led to hostilities between the two in which Yalduz was defeated, imprisoned and later killed. However, the problem of the Punjab remained. At first, Iltutmish was prepared to leave Lahore to Qubacha, but there was a disagreement between the two upon its boundaries. Qubacha wanted to extend his control upto Tabarhinda and Kuhram which Iltutmish felt, would have threaten his position at Delhi. In the hostilities between the two which followed, Qubacha was defeated and Iltutmish occupied Lahore.

Before Iltutmish could consolidate his position in Punjab, Jalaluddin Mangabarani, the Khwarizm prince, being pursued by Chengiz, crossed the Indus in 1221 and, in alliance with the warlike Khokhars, conquered the Punjab upto Thanesar. He then sent a message to Iltutmish seeking an alliance against the Mongols so that he could recover his lost dominions. Iltutmish politely turned down the overture, refusing to be drawn into a fight with the Mongols. He also marched against him with a large army. Unable to withstand his forces, Jalaluddin quit Lahore, and moved towards Qubacha in Sindh. He inflicted a sharp defeat upon Qubacha and occupied Uchch. Meanwhile, the Mongols too invested Multan.

Thus, the effect of Jalaluddin's incursion into India was the weakening of Qubacha's position in Sindh. Jalaluddin quit India in 1224, but for fear of Chengiz, Iltutmish kept a low posture in the northwest. It was only in 1228, after the death of Chengiz that he decided to conquer Sindh from Qubacha, and invested Uchch. It was captured after a siege of three months. Qubacha fled to Bakkhar. Shortly afterwards when Iltutmish advanced on Bakkhar, Qubacha drowned himself in the river Indus.

Thus, by 1228, not only did Iltutmish's control extend upto the Indus, but the whole of Multan and Sindh upto the sea came under his control. This marked the first phase of Iltutmish's consolidation of the Delhi Sultanat.

## **TURKISH CONQUEST OF BIHAR AND LAKHNAUTI**

As has been mentioned earlier, during the reign of Muizzuddin, Bihar and Lakhnauti had been captured by a Khalji Malik, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji. The contemporary historian, Minhaj Siraj, praises him as a man of "impetus, enterprising, intrepid, bold, sagacious and expert in warfare." The Khaljis were a Turkish tribe from southwest Ghur. However, Bakhtiyar was ungainly in appearance, and was offered only low employment when he appeared for service before Muizzuddin at Ghazni. Rejecting this as beneath him, he repaired to India, and presented himself again at Delhi. But he was rejected once more. Thereupon, he took service under the iqtadar (governor) of Badaun who had an extensive charge in modern west U.P. Soon after, he repaired to the service of the Commander of Awadh who assigned him two villages on the boundary of Bihar. This gave him the opportunity of making plundering raids into Bihar and Maner which,



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following the downfall of the Gahadavala Empire, had become a kind of a no-man's land dominated by petty Gahadavala chiefs. Rai Lakshman Sena, the ruler of Bengal, who had been a rival of the Gahadavads, preferred to confine himself to Bengal, either because he was too old and feeble, or because he was under the illusion that the Turks would be satisfied with Bihar if he did not come into conflict with them.

Bakhtiyar Khalji's reputation as an enterprising warrior spread far and wide, and many Khaljis from different parts of Hindustan joined him. Even Muizzuddin sent him a special robe of distinction (khilat) and honoured him, though he was neither his slave nor his employee. Emboldened, Bakhtiyar Khalji now attacked a fort in Bihar with 200 horsemen which he later found was a Buddhist monastery (vihar). This apparently was the famous university of Nalanda. He then captured Vikramsila, another university town, and wrought much havoc there. He also captured the capital, Uddandapur, and built a fort there. This is placed in 1202.

After this victory, Bakhtiyar Khalji returned with great booty and presented himself before Qutbuddin Aibak and received from him great honour and distinction, including a robe of honour from his special wardrobe and many presents. Bakhtiyar Khalji distributed the presents to his people and returned to Bihar. This shows the nature of relationship between prominent chiefs and the Sultan at that time. The chiefs were expected to fend for themselves, and their victories were the victories of the Sultan. The chiefs on their part, acknowledged a Sultan if it suited them, or made a bid for independence. Thus, the structure of the Sultanat was rather brittle.

Returning to Bihar, Bakhtiyar Khalji gathered information about Lakshman Sena. He was said to be eighty years old, and had been a famous warrior. According to Minhaj Siraj, he had never committed any oppression on his people, and was very generous in giving gifts. Apprehensive that after the conquest of Bihar, the turn of Bengal would come next, and because fear of Bakhtiyar's military prowess had spread far and wide, and on the advice of Brahmans and astrologers, many Brahmans and traders had left the Sena capital for a safer place of refuge in the east. But we are told that Lakshman Sena had decided to stick on.

For Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest of Lakhnauti, we are dependent on one contemporary source, Minhaj Siraj, whose account has been followed by all later writers. Minhaj's account is well-known; that Bakhtiyar prepared a force and pressed on the Sena capital, Nadia, so rapidly that only 18 horsemen were able to keep up with him, that he proceeded in such a manner in which people of the place imagined that may be his party were merchants and had brought horses for sale, that reaching the palace Bakhtiyar suddenly attacked, and the Rai, taken unawares, fled by a posterior gate, and that Bakhtiyar captured the whole of his treasures, his wives, and other females and attendants etc., and that the main army arrived soon and took possession of the city and its round abouts.

There are several difficulties in accepting Minhaj's story as it stands. Minhaj states that Nadia was the capital of Lakshman Sena. From archaeological evidence, we know that the capital of the Senas was first Bikrampur (near modern Dacca), and then Lakshmanavati or Lakhnauti. Nadia was a very small town—perhaps a pilgrim centre or a centre of brahmanical learning. It is possible that, as in the case of Bihar where Bakhtiyar confused a university with a fort, he mistook a pilgrim centre, Nadia, for the Sena capital. This appears even more likely because there is no mention of any resistance by the Sena forces, although Lakshman Sena had been a noted warrior, and had been forewarned of the danger of Turkish attack. It is possible that Minhaj confused Nadia with Lakhnauti, the Sena capital which Bakhtiyar captured later. Again, there is no mention of a fight. May be the Senas had abandoned the city in anticipation of a Turkish attack. The Senas continued to rule south Bengal for another fifty years from their capital at Sonargaon near ancient Gaur.

We have no independent corroboration of Lakshman Sena being at Nadia at the time. May be he had gone here on pilgrimage with a small military escort. Following Nadia, Bakhtiyar captured Lakhnauti. He had the khutba read, and issued coins in the name of Muizzuddin, although he was independent in all but name.

Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest of Bihar and North Bengal stands as an example of intrepid daring. It added greatly to the reputation of Turkish arms in India. But Bakhtiyar Khalji did not live long after his success. In the following year, he prepared an army of 10,000 horses for the occupation of Tibet and Turkistan. The Turks had very vague ideas of the geography of the region. Bakhtiyar apparently believed that Tibet and Turkistan were just across the mountain, and that if he could gain direct access to Turkistan, he could get military supplies from it, and set himself up as an independent ruler. The campaign was thus, destined to fail from the beginning. It seems that Bakhtiyar never went beyond Assam. The Magh rulers allowed him to come as far as he could, crossing the river Bagmati across a stone bridge. Finding that he could go no further, Bakhtiyar retreated, to find that the bridge had been destroyed. Caught between a large opposing force and the river, Bakhtiyar made a dash for the river. But the river was too deep to be forded. Most of the soldiers drowned, Bakhtiyar himself escaping with about 100 soldiers. This was the worst disaster of Turkish arms. Bakhtiyar was deeply depressed, and took to bed where he was stabbed to death by one of his nobles, Ali Mardan Khan. This was in 1205.

## RELATIONS OF BENGAL WITH DELHI

Ali Mardan was ousted by nobles loyal to Muhammad Bakhtiyar and imprisoned. But he escaped, and after many adventures, came to the court of Qutbuddin Aibak who honoured him, and assigned him the territory of Lakhnauti. The prestige of Muizzuddin and his successors was high, and the Khalji amirs at Lakhnauti submitted to Ali Mardan who brought the whole of North Bengal under his control.

When Aibak died, and ambitious nobles such as Qubacha in Sindh, assumed airs of independence, Ali Mardan assumed the canopy of state (chatra) and read the khutbah in his name. However, he proved to be a tyrant, and was soon displaced by a Khalji amir, Iwaz, who assumed the throne under the title Sultan Ghiyasuddin. Minhaj calls Ghiyasuddin Khalji a monarch worthy, just and beneficent. The region prospered under his rule and he undertook a number of public works which benefited the people. Taking advantage of Iltutmish's preoccupation with the north-west, he extended his authority over Bihar, and exacted tribute from many of the neighbouring rulers.

It seems that there were many clashes between Iltutmish's Malik Iwaz for control over Bihar. This was a repetition of an old geostrategic struggle between the masters of Kashi and Magadh. After the situation in the north-west had settled somewhat, in 1225 Iltutmish marched against Iwaz. A kind of a treaty was patched up between the two whereby Iwaz agreed to Iltutmish's suzerainty and also paid a heavy indemnity. Iltutmish awarded Bihar to his own officers. But as soon as Iltutmish's back was turned, Iwaz repudiated his suzerainty, and ousted his officials from Bihar. Iltutmish asked his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud, then Governor of Awadh, to watch the situation. Two years later, when Iwaz was campaigning in Kamrup (Assam) and Bang (East Bihar), and Lakhnauti was undefended, Nasiruddin Mahmud made a sudden move and occupied Lakhnauti. Iwaz came back, and fought a battle but was defeated, imprisoned and executed. Nasiruddin remained in charge of Lakhnauti. But he died shortly afterwards and the Khaljis again threw off the yoke of Delhi.

It was not till 1230 when Iltutmish led a second campaign that Lakhnauti was brought under his control. But Bengal always remained a difficult charge, and threw off its allegiance to Delhi at the first sign of weakness at the centre.

## INTERNAL REBELLIONS-RANTHAMBOR, GWALIYAR, BUNDELKHAND ETC

During his long reign, Iltutmish had to face a number of internal rebellions. The ousted Gahadvaras of Kannauj had recovered Badaun and Kannauj, and there was a rebellion even at Banaras. These were dealt with, but the Rajputs of Katehar (modern Rohelkhand) continued to threaten this area. Katehar was attacked, and Iltutmish cleared the area upto the Siwaliks. There were also hostilities with local Hindu chiefs in parts of Doab and Awadh. These areas, which were then covered by heavy forests, continued to be troublesome for outsiders for several centuries.

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After settling the affairs of Bihar and Bengal, Iltutmish turned his attention towards the recapture of some of the forts, such as Bayana and Gwaligar, which had been recovered by the Rajput rajas in the confusion following the death of Aibak. First, Iltutmish invested and captured Ranthambhor from the Chauhan successors of Prithvi Raj. This was deemed a great success because Ranthambhor was considered an impregnable fortress, and had defied many earlier invaders. However, since it was too far away from Delhi for effective control, after some time it was returned to the Chauhans as feudatories. Ajmer continued under Turkish rule.

Next, Iltutmish captured Bayana and invested Gwaligar. The Paramar ruler of Gwaligar resisted for over a year, but was then compelled to evacuate the fort. Gwaligar was made the base of plundering raids into Bundelkhand and Malwa. The Turkish governor of Gwaligar attacked Chanderi and Kalinjar but escaped with great difficulty when on the way back, laden with plunder, he was attacked by the Rajputs. A little earlier, Iltutmish raided Bhilsa and Ujjain in Malwa. The famous temple of Mahakali at Ujjain was destroyed, and rich plunder obtained. But little effort was made to extend Turkish dominion over the area.

### **ESTIMATE OF ILTUTMISH AS A RULER**

Iltutmish re-established the territorial integrity of the Delhi sultanate created by Muizzuddin and which was in danger of being split up. He defeated efforts of ambitious rivals such as Yalduz and Qubacha to divide the sultanate. In the process, he displayed a great deal of tact, patience, and far-sightedness. Thus, he bided his time till he was in a position to take decisive action. This was displayed in his dealings with Qubacha as well as Jalaluddin Mangbarani. Early in his reign he had realized that his policy must be one of steady consolidation rather than rapid expansion. He proceeded against the Khalji Malik of Lakhnauti only when he had consolidated his position in the north-west.

It was under Iltutmish that the Delhi Sultanat can be called a truly independent state, not tied up to a foreign sovereign living at Ghazni or Ghur. Iltutmish's legal status as an independent sovereign was reaffirmed in the eyes of the Muslims when in 1229 an envoy of the Caliph of Baghdad reached Delhi with a formal letter of investiture for Iltutmish. Although it was a mere formality and recognition of an accomplished fact, Iltutmish made the visit a grand occasion. Iltutmish can be credited with making Delhi the political, administrative, and cultural centre of Turkish rule in India. His steady presence at Delhi was a major factor in this as also the fact that Delhi became the refuge for nobles, bureaucrats, scholars, poets and religious divines from Central Asia to escape the Mongol depredations. Iltutmish beautified Delhi by setting up new buildings. The most notable example of this was the tower or minar, later called the Qutb Minar, commenced by Qutbuddin which he completed. Soon a magnificent city arose in the environs. The Hauz Shamsi, south of the Qutb Minar, and the madrasah (College or University) around it, was built by him. Iltutmish was not only a patron of men of Islamic learning and poets; he also accorded great honour to the sufi saints of his time, such as Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki.

By his military prowess, pleasing manners and liberality, Iltutmish earned the deep respect and attachment of the people of Delhi to his family, in consequence of which the right of his children to succeed him was accepted. Thus, he set up the first hereditary sovereignty at Delhi. However, his children were not successful because Iltutmish had not been able to create a well-knit and compact state. The State was still a loose structure in which the inner jealousies and rivalries of the Turkish nobles and slave officers could be kept under control only by a strong ruler.

# UNIT-III

## STRUGGLE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRALIZED MONARCHY (1236-1290)

### RAZIA AND THE PERIOD OF INSTABILITY (1236-46)

The death of Iltutmish was followed by a decade of political instability at Delhi. During this period, four descendants of Iltutmish were put on the throne and murdered. The main cause of this was acute factionalism in the Turkish nobility. As we have seen, the Turks were divided into many tribes some of which had converted to Islam, and some had not. There was acute struggle between them, as for example, between Muizzuddin and the Ghuzz Turkish tribe of Transoxiana which was non-Muslim. Even Islamized Turkish tribal groups fought against each other all the time.

Apart from the Turks, the next important ethnic group in the nobility under Iltutmish were the Tajiks (or Taziks). The Tajiks were Iranians from the Transoxiana and Khurasan regions. The Persians had settled in, and dominated the area before the Turks entered and ousted them from the region. However, the Turks were rude warriors, and knew little about the arts of administration. It was the Tajiks, many of whom had been landlords previously, who largely provided the sinews of administration. In the process, many of them had reached high offices. Thus, Nizamul-Mulk Junaidi, the Wazir of Iltutmish, was a Tajik. The Turkish nobles, both free and slave resented the pre-eminence given to the Tajiks and looked down upon them as being pen-pushers (*nawisanda*) or bureaucrats rather than warriors. Though the tribal structure of the Turks had largely broken down once they settled down in Khurasan and the neighbouring areas (Iran, Ghur, Ghazni, etc.), old tribal associations, and personal bonds were still strong. The most important personal bond was that of slavery. As we have seen, many sultans purchased Turkish slaves for the specific purpose of raising them up as warriors and administrators. Such slaves were well treated, and often trained along with the rulers' own sons.

The slave officers of Iltutmish formed an elite corp which was very proud of itself. It did not consider even the free amirs, both Turk and Tajik, as being equal to them. The later historian, Ziauddin Barani, calls these slave officers the "Corp of Forty" (*Chihalgani*). The number forty does not matter because we can identify less than 25 such persons in the list of Iltutmish's nobles. Perhaps things could have been managed if even this "Corp of Forty" had behaved as a unified body. But as Barani says, "none of them would bow or submit to another, and in the distribution of territories (*iqtas*), forces, offices and honours they sought equality with each other."

The rise and fall of Razia (1236-40), a romantic figure in medieval history, should be seen against this background. She ascended the throne because a strong body of Turkish slave officers, who were *iqtadars* (governors) of Badaun, Multan, Hansi and Lahore had risen against Ruknuddin, the son of Iltutmish, who had succeeded to the throne after his father's death. Nizamul-Mulk Junaidi, the Wazir of Iltutmish, also joined the rebels. Ruknuddin had become unpopular because after his accession to the throne he became immersed in pleasure, and left the affairs of state to his mother, Shah Turkan, who had been a Turkish hand-maid. As head of the Sultan's harem and its administration, she sought vengeance against those who had looked down upon her earlier. While Ruknuddin had gone out of the city to fight the rebels, Razia took the opportunity to go to the Jama Masjid and appealed to the people of Delhi for their support, alleging that there was a conspiracy to kill her. She succeeded, after something like a popular revolt in her favour took place.



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Razia strengthened her claim by recalling that in his life time, Iltutmish had nominated her as his successor in preference to his sons. It was typical of the times that Iltutmish did not consult the theologians before he took this decision, but informed them about it afterwards, leaving them no option but to concur. We shall find that later on many Turkish rulers in India took decisions in the light of political circumstances, and consulted the theologians afterwards. However, the Turkish nobles, including the Wazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, did not accept Iltutmish's nomination, but at first supported his eldest son, Ruknuddin .

Although Razia succeeded to the throne it seems that she never had the solid support of any powerful group among the Turkish nobles, but depended for survival on her political skill in keeping the opposition divided. Thus, the powerful group of nobles who were governors of Multan, Lahore, Hansi and Badaun, and who had been joined by Nizamul Mulk were at first opposed to her. But she won over some of the ring leaders, and isolated Nizamul-Mulk Junaidi who had to flee.

Firmly seated on the throne, Razia set about "reorganising the administration". According to Minhaj, "the kingdom became pacified, and the power of the state widely extended. From the territory of Lakhnauti to Debal all the maliks and amirs manifested their obedience and submission." In order to have direct contact with the administration, Razia laid aside the female dress and donned the tunic and head-dress of a man. She abandoned the veil, and appeared in the darbar, and rode out on an elephant with her face uncovered. Thus, people could see her openly.

This must have led to murmurings among the orthodox sections, but there was no public opposition to it because she had the support of the people of Delhi. Soon opposition to her began in a section of the nobility at Delhi and in the provinces. This opposition began because, we are told, she had appointed a Habshi (Abyssinian), Malik Yakut, as amir-akhur or Superintendent of the Stables. This post, which implied control over the royal stables, including elephants and horses, was considered to be a strategic post, and one which implied that the holder was close to the sovereign. Hence, it was resented by the Turkish nobles who wanted to monopolize all the important offices in the state. There is no evidence that the appointment of Malik Yakut was a part of Razia's policy to build a bloc of non-Turkish nobles in order to off-set the power of the Turkish nobles. Nor is there any reason to believe that there was any personal intimacy between Razia and Malik Yakut. Even the charge that he had to lift Razia by the arm-pits to her horse is a later concoction because it is not mentioned by any contemporaries. Also, whenever Razia went out in public, she rode on an elephant, not a horse.

It was apparently Razia's firmness, and desire to exercise power directly which was the major cause of the dissatisfaction of the Turkish nobles with her. The first rebellion was at Lahore by its Governor, Kabir Khan. Razia marched to Lahore, and forced Kabir Khan to submit. She then appointed him as iqtadar of Multan in place of Lahore. She had hardly returned to Delhi when Altunia, the Governor of Tabarhinda, rebelled. Both Kabir Khan and Altunia had been favoured by Razia, and she had little reason to expect opposition from them. She marched against Altunia, but did not know that he was in touch with a powerful group of Turkish nobles at Delhi, who wanted to overthrow her in order to clear their own way to power. Hence, when Razia reached Tabarhinda, the Turkish nobles rose in revolt, killed Yakut, and put Razia in prison at Tabarhinda. The conspirators at Delhi elevated another descendant of Iltutmish to the throne.

This virtually brings Razia's reign to a close. Her subsequent marriage to Altunia, their march on Delhi and their defeat, the melting away of her rapidly recruited soldiers, is a romantic interlude which never had much chance of success. She was murdered by dacoits while in flight.

The tragic end of Razia demonstrated the growing power of the Chihalgani Turkish nobles. The contemporary historian, Minhaj Siraj, praises Razia highly. He says that Razia was endowed with all the qualities befitting a sovereign; she was "prudent, benevolent, benefactor to her kingdom, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects, and a great warrior." But he adds, "Of what advantage were all these attributes to her when she was born a woman?" It suited Minhaj to say so rather than blame the Turkish nobles who, as we have seen, were the principal cause of her downfall, as also that of her successors.

The period between the death of Razia (1240) and the rise of power of Balban as naib (vice-regent), is a period of continued struggle between the nobles and the monarchy. While the nobles were agreed that only a descendent of Iltutmish could sit on the throne at Delhi, they wanted that all power and authority should vest in their hands. As a noted modern historian, R.P. Tripathi, notes, "The chief constitutional interest in the history of the family of Iltutmish lies in the struggle between the crown and the peers for the possession of real power." At first, the nobles seemed to succeed. They appointed Bahram Shah, a son of Iltutmish, as a successor to Razia on condition that he appointed one of the Turkish nobles, Aitigin, to the post of naib or Vice-regent. For some time, a body of three nobles—the naib, the Wazir, and the mustaufi (auditor-general) constituted itself as a kind of a governing board, reducing the monarch to the position of a figure-head. But conflict of interest among the triumvirate, and the efforts of the ruler to reassert himself led to a struggle with the Wazir in which Bahram Shah lost his throne and his life. The fate of his successor, Masud, was no different. The effort of the Wazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk, to arrogate all power to himself led to his murder, and to the rise of Balban who subsequently had the monarch deposed in order to clear his own road to power.

The death of four monarchs within a brief span of six years following the death of Iltutmish denoted a serious crisis in the relationship between the monarchy and the Turkish nobles. The nobles wanted to rule while the monarch merely reigned, but they could not present a united front.

The elevation of Nasiruddin Mahmud, a grandson of Iltutmish, to the throne in 1246 was really the handiwork of Balban, though he tried for some time to take all the Turkish nobles along with him. Nasiruddin Mahmud was a suitable Instrument for the nobles because he had little interest in political and administrative affairs, the fate of his predecessors being enough of a warning. He devoted all his time to prayers and religious observances, such as making copies of the Quran, or stitching caps for the devoted. Thus, to all appearances, the nobles had won. But their victory was only of a short duration, as events showed.

## THE AGE OF BALBAN (1246-87)

Although Balban ascended the throne only in 1266, the entire period from 1246 to his death in 1287 may be called the age of Balban because he was the dominant figure at Delhi during this time.

### (a) Balban as the naib—struggle with the Chihalgani

Not much is known about the early life of Ulugh Khan, later known to history as Balban. He came from a family of Ilbari Turks who were greatly respected in Turkistan. They were ousted from the area by the heathen Turks, and Balban was sold as a slave in Baghdad, and then brought to Delhi in 1232-33 where he was purchased by Iltutmish. He was thus one of the Chihalgani Turks and gradually rose till he was appointed Mir Hajib, or the Lord Chamberlain, a post given only to important nobles. He made his mark as a brave and intrepid officer in 1246 by fighting against the Mongols who had devastated Lahore and besieged Uchch in Sindh. Following this, Balban took the initiative in carrying out a series of plundering raids against neighbouring Hindu rajas, rebellious raj's and zamindars. In consequence, within three years he rose to the position of "naib" with full power to control the army and the administration. He further strengthened his position by marrying his daughter to the young sultan.

However, the position of Balban was not secure for a considerable period. The high position of Balban, and the fact that many of his relations held important posts or powerful iqtas, led to growing opposition on the part of the Turkish and Tajik nobles. The leader of the opposition was Qutlugh Khan, governor of Bihar, who was the senior most among the Chihalgani slave officers. It was due to the efforts of the Turkish nobles that in 1253 Balban was asked to quit his post as naib, and to repair to his iqta. Many supporters and relations of Balban, including his cousin, Sher Khan, who was governor of Sindh, were also ousted. Among the new appointees was Imaduddin Raihan, who was a eunuch and a Hindustani. He was appointed Wakildqr or deputy to the king in judicial matters. The exact influence of Raihan on political affairs is not known because another Turkish noble, entitled Nizamul Mulk Junaidi was appointed Wazir. However, the contemporary writer, Minhaj Siraj, who under Raihan had lost his position of Qazi, puts all the blame

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for the developments on Raihan. From his iqta in Nagaur, Balban continued his efforts to regain his position. He gathered much booty from a successful raid on Ranthambhor, and opened negotiations with the Turkish nobles. It seems that he also established contact with the Mongols. Soon he was able to detach many of the Turkish amirs from the side of Raihan. The sultan bowed to the strength of Balban's group and dismissed Raihan and sent him to his iqta. This was early in 1255. Soon, an army was sent against Raihan and he was defeated and killed. This strengthens the belief that Raihan did not have a powerful group of his own and that he was really a convenient front for powerful Turkish nobles who did not want that any one of them should attain the position of Balban.

On return to power, Balban soon settled scores with his leading opponents. He sent an expedition against Qutlugh Khan, who had married the sultan's mother, and taken her to his iqta of Awadh, and started behaving in independent ways. Stern action was taken against many others. To signify his new position, Balban compelled the young king to hand over to him the chatr or royal canopy. We have no account of the last six years of Nasiruddin Mahmud. Probably this was a period of increased factionalism which made Balban feel insecure. Hence, it seems that he decided to poison the young king. He also did away with all the royal princes so that he could himself assume the throne.

### **(b) Balban as the Ruler (1266-87)**

The assumption of the throne by Balban at Delhi (1266) marks the beginning of an era of strong, centralized government. Balban sought to increase the prestige and power of the monarchy, and to centralise all authority in the hands of the sultan because he was convinced that this was the only way to face the internal and external dangers facing him. For the purpose, he harkened back to the Iranian theory of kingship. According to the Iranian theory, the king was divine or semi-divine in character, and answerable only to God, not to any set of intermediaries, i.e. religious figures. As such, there was a fundamental difference between the ruler and the nobles, the latter being dependent on the sultan's favour, and in no way equal to him.

These ideas, which were to some extent shared by the Hindus, had to be reconciled with the Islamic theory of sovereignty. While this was a complex matter which continued to agitate the Turks in the subsequent period as well, Balban's approach was a practical one. He underlined the theory that the sultan was the "shadow of God" (zil-i-Allah), and emphasised it by insisting that in his court anyone presented to him had to perform the sijda and pabos, or prostration before the sovereign, a practice which, according to the theologians, was reserved for God alone. Second, he maintained a splendid court in which all the nobles had to stand in serried ranks, strict order being maintained by the Mir Hajib who was always an important noble. Balban himself maintained the utmost dignity in the Court. He would neither laugh out aloud himself nor allow anyone else to do so. The Court was richly decorated, with horses and elephants having jewelled trappings, and slaves and wrestlers (who were swordsmen and executioners) standing at the sides. When the Sultan moved out, he was preceded by a large posse of Sistani warriors with drawn swords which gleamed in the sun. According to the historian, Barani, Hindus and Muslims came from a distance of 100 to 200 kos to see Balban's public processions. Even the dependent rajas and rais who visited Balban's court were deeply impressed. Barani goes on to say, "whenever the awe and splendour of the ruler do not impress the hearts of the ordinary people and the select from far and near, sovereignty and the conduct of government cannot be properly upheld." Thus, Balban's splendid court and public processions had a political purpose. For the same reason, Balban gave up drinking even in his private assemblies though as a Khan, he had been fond of drinking wine and gambling, and used to hold convivial parties at his house at least three days in a week. Balban also emphasised that it was unbecoming for a ruler to associate with low, ignoble persons, buffoons, dancing girls etc. Even his private servants had to observe the utmost decorum in dress and behaviour.

Balban was not prepared to share power with anyone, not even with the members of his family, and poisoned his cousin, Sher Khan, for opposing him. He adopted methods fair or foul to deal with those he considered to be his rivals. At the same time, he tried to stand forth as the defender of the entire Turkish no-

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bility. For the purpose he declared that he would not give any post in the government or an iqta, or a post of authority in the local administration to any person belonging to a low or ignoble family. These included posts of accountant (khwaja or musharif), correspondent at the local level, even barids or confidential spies. There was a deep seated belief in those times, shared alike by Muslims and Hindus, that only people belonging to old or noble families should be placed in authority over the ordinary people. Contemporary writers give free rein to this idea. However, this was almost an obsession with Barani. Barani emphasised this by saying that since Balban claimed to be a descendent of the Iranian hero, Afrasiyab, he felt that if he gave high government posts to the mean and ignoble, he would prove to others that he himself came from an ignoble stock. For Barani, a policy of excluding the mean and ignoble meant excluding the Hindus, and Hindu converts from the service of the state, thereby strengthening the position of the immigrants and their descendants like him. How strictly such a policy of racial exclusivism was followed by the earlier Turkish sultans in India needs a close study. According to Barani, during the reign of Iltutmish, a survey had been carried out as to how many persons drawn from low and ignoble families had been given posts of authority in the lower administration. The names of thirty-three such persons were discovered, and they were all immediately dismissed. In fact, enquiry had revealed that the Wazir, Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, who was a Tajik, came from a family whose ancestors had been weavers, and that in consequence, he lost respect.

There is no means of checking the veracity of Barani's account. That an Abyssinian like Mir Yaqut, and an Indian convert like Raihan could reach high posts, that Nizamul Mulk Junaidi was not dismissed despite his weaver ancestry, and that Indian converts who were skillful and proficient in their work continued to be recommended for government service by Turkish nobles, as Barani himself states, shows that the Turkish monopoly of power was already under stress.

Barani gives two examples of Balban's attitude towards low, ignoble persons. First, when two prominent nobles proposed the name of Kamal Maihar for the post of khwaja (accountant) for the iqta of Amroha, and it was found on enquiry that he was the son of a converted Hindu slave, Balban not only flatly turned down the proposal although Kamal Maihar was reputed to be able and experienced, but gave dire warning to his officer not to propose to him in future for appointment the name of any person who was of low or ignoble birth. Explaining Balban's attitude, Barani says that it was a mandate given to him by God not to appoint any low ignoble person, and that when he saw low, ignoble persons, his body trembled (with rage).

In another case, Balban sternly refused to give audience at court to Fakhr Bawni since he was only the chief of the merchants, (Malik-ut-Tujjar) and it would compromise the dignity of the sovereign. Balban tempered his despotism by laying great emphasis on justice. According to Barani, his justice and his consideration for the people won the favour of his subjects and made them zealous supporters of his throne. In the administration of justice, he was inflexible, showing no favour to his brethren or children, or to his associates or attendants. He appointed spies (barids) in all the cities, districts and iqtas to keep himself informed of the doings of the officials, and to ensure that no acts of oppression or high-handedness was perpetrated by them on anyone, including their slaves and domestic servants. Thus, when he learned that Malik Bakhak who was his confidant, and was governor of the iqta of Badaun, had flogged one of his servants to death in a drunken rage, and his widow appealed to the Sultan for justice, he ordered the Malik to be flogged to death, and the barid who had not reported this matter to the Sultan to be publicly hanged. Another noble, Malik Haibat who had been his superintendent of arms and governor of Awadh had, under the influence of wine, killed a person. He was ordered to be given 500 strokes of the whip in public, and then handed over to the dead man's wife for extracting revenge for blood guilt, i.e. putting him to death if she so desired. He saved himself with great difficulty by paying her 20,000 tankas, and after that never moved out of his house for shame.

These harsh measures must have had a salutary effect, and we are told that Balban's confidential spies were greatly feared by the nobles. In his attitude to the people we see a combination of harshness and benevolence. Balban was convinced that both excess of wealth or poverty would make people rebellious.



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Hence, he advised his son, Bughra Khan, to be moderate in levying land tax (kharaj) on the peasants. When Balban was a Khan in the iqta under his charge, he tried to help those cultivators who had been ruined (on account of vagaries of nature, oppression by previous iqtadars or wars). In this way, we are told that he became famous for helping the poor and the helpless, and for making his iqta prosperous. As sultan, whenever the army camped anywhere, he used to pay special attention to the poor, the helpless, women, children and the old, to ensure that none of them suffered any loss, or physical harm (from the soldiers). Whenever there was a river or a rivulet or a marsh, he helped the people to cross, providing them with boats, or even his own elephants.

But Balban was extremely harsh when he found any rebelliousness on the part of the people or disturbance of the peace. We are told that following the death of Iltutmish, the Meos around Delhi had grown in numbers and boldness. Although a number of expeditions had been launched against them, they had not been successful, largely on account of the thick forests around Delhi. At this time, the Meos had become so daring as to attack the city at night, break into peoples' houses and cause them extreme hardships. People could not sleep at night for fear of the Meos, or not dare to go out of the city for visiting the various sacred tombs. Even in daytime, water-carriers and slave girls who had gone to fill water at the Hauz Shamsi were molested. All the inns in the neighbourhood had been plundered by the Meos, thereby affecting trade. In the Doab, robbers and dacoits had closed the roads to Delhi from all sides, and it had become impossible for the caravans and the traders to come and depart.

During the first two years of his reign, Balban spent a whole year in suppressing the Meos and cutting the forests around Delhi. He slaughtered a large number of Meos, built a fort, and established many thanas (military outposts) and assigned them to Afghans. Tax-free villages were set apart for their maintenance. Thus, Delhi was freed from the fear of the Meos. Turning to the doab, iqtadars who had the requisite means were appointed to the various territories in the doab. 'Balban ordered the villages of the disobedient to be totally destroyed, the men were to be killed and their women and children seized as spoils of war. High ranking; amirs were appointed for this task. The thick forests in the area were cut down. Similar methods were applied to the areas near Awadh. Strong forts were established, and Afghans and other Muslims with tax-free lands were settled there to maintain law and order. Thus, the roads were freed for the traders and banjaras. We are told that in consequence prices of catties and domestic animals, including slaves, fell at Delhi.

Balban adopted similar measures to deal with the rebels in Katehar (modern Rohilkhand), who were plundering the villages, and harassing the people in the territories of Badaun and Amroha. These harsh methods of Balban have been called by some modern historians a policy of "blood and iron." But it would be wrong to apply this to all of Balban's policies.

A strong, centralized state needed a strong army. As it was, all medieval thinkers considered the army to be a pillar of the state. While we have no idea of the strength of the army under Balban, we are told that he tried to reorganise and expand the central army which was directly under the control of the sultan. Thus, brave and experienced maliks and sardars were appointed over the royal forces to which several thousand new sawars were added, care being taken to see that they were given adequate remuneration by assigning them fertile villages in iqta. As part of the reform process, Balban also ordered an enquiry into the position of old Turkish soldiers, many of whom had been given villages in the doab as iqta in lieu of salary. Many of the soldiers had become too old to serve, but continued to hold the villages in connivance with the diwan-i-arz (Department of the Muster-Master). Balban wanted to pension off the old soldiers, but withdrew his order at the instance of Fakhruddin, the kotwal of Delhi. But some improvement in the situation must have taken place.

To keep the army active and vigilant, Balban undertook frequent hunting expeditions in which thousands of horsemen, archers and footmen were employed. These expeditions were kept a secret, orders being passed only the previous night. Thus, officers and men were always kept in a state of alert. Barani praises Balban for his foresight in the matter, but foolishly puts the words to the effect in the mouth of the Mongol chief, Halaku, who had died before Balban's accession to the throne.

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We have no idea about the state of the army of the nobles except that Balban appointed only able and experienced officers. Apparently, the nobles were left to recruit their own soldiers. Balban attached great importance to horses and elephants, each elephant being reckoned as equal to 500 sawars. While Balban had a ready supply of elephants from Bengal and Assam, the Mongol conquest of Central Asia had made it difficult to obtain horses from those areas. Hence, Balban had to fall back on Indian horses from the Siwaliks, the Punjab etc. For the army, too, recruitment of soldiers and slaves from Turkistan, Khurasan etc. had become difficult. Afghans and Indians, including Hindus, seem to have filled the vacuum. Thus, we have seen that Afghan soldiers were settled in the Doab and in the areas around Delhi. When Balban was marching to the east in order to meet the rebellion in Bengal, while at Awadh he ordered a general mobilisation, and we are told that two lakhs of men, including sawars (horsemen), foot-men, archers, load bearers etc. were recruited. Many of these were Hindus and Hindustanis (Indian Muslims).

Despite a large and efficient army which was kept in a state of readiness by constant exercises, Balban did not try to expand the territories of the Delhi sultanate, or raid the neighbouring kings of Malwa or Gujarat because, as Balban explained to his close associates, the “wretched Mongols were always looking for an opportunity to raid the doab, ravage Delhi and its neighbourhood and inflict untold suffering on his subjects.”

## **STRUGGLE FOR THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE SULTANATE**

The Mongol threat was a major preoccupation of Balban, and the reason for not leading expeditions anywhere far away from Delhi. The Mongol threat to India during the 13th and 14th centuries shall be dealt with separately.

According to Barani, when Balban attained the throne, the dignity and authority of government was restored, and his stringent rules and resolute determination caused all men, high and low, throughout his dominions to submit to his authority. Like all generalisations, this statement also needs to be treated with caution. While the prestige and power of the Central Government increased under Balban, internal dissensions continued to raise their head. These consisted of two elements; first, the attempt of ambitious Turkish nobles and chiefs, some of them neighbours of India, to carve out an independent sphere of authority for themselves. Second was the attempt of Rajput rajas and rais, including big zamindars, to assert themselves, and if possible, to expel the Turks from their territories.

Among the Rajput rajas and rais, the most important were those from Rajasthan. In the confusion following the death of Razia, both Gwalियar and Ranthambhor had to be abandoned by the Turks, as it was not feasible to withstand the Rajput forces. Balban recovered Gwalियar, but his efforts to recapture Ranthambhor were not successful. From this time onwards, the Chauhans based on Ranthambhor rapidly rose in power. However, their expansionist efforts were directed against the existing rulers in Rajasthan, Malwa and Gujarat, not against the Turks. The Turks continued to hold Ajmer and Nagaur, but they had little influence in Rajasthan beyond or outside these cities.

South of the Jamuna, the Bundelkhand area continued to be ruled by different branches of Rajputs—the Chandelas, the Bhar and the Baghelas. Balban led an expedition against the Baghela chief of Rewa to clear the plain area south of Kara. His victory and the plunder he gained there has been mentioned with considerable exaggeration by Minhaj. However, the expedition had limited political significance.

North of the iqta of Badaun in modern West U.P., the Katehariya Rajputs, with their centre at Ahichchata, continued to harass Badaun and Sambhal. Balban's expeditions and harsh measures seemed to have removed the threat, and gradually led to the extension of Turkish influence into Katehar or modern Rohilkhand.

It will be seen that none of the Rajput efforts threatened the existence, or the essential territorial integrity of the Turkish state. However, the alleged Hindu threat was sometimes used by the rulers to counter internal dissension or differences. Balban did lead an expedition into Malwa, but it was in the nature of a

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plundering expedition. The Turkish state was evidently in no position to embark on a policy of expansion at this stage.

As compared to these strifes, the attempts of ambitious Turkish officers, from within the sultanate and outside, to carve out independent spheres of authority were far more serious. Taking advantage of the Mongols threat, the Kurlugs who had been the local rulers of Ghur and Ghazni but had been ousted by the Mongols, crossed the Indus and occupied the Cis-Indus region of Koh-i-Jud or the Salt Ranges. They also tried to expand their control over Multan and Sindh. In the complex struggle, they sometimes lost control of the Koh-i-Jud to the Mongols and sometimes recovered it. The point is that the Delhi sultanate had lost all effective control over this tract. Although Lahore remained under Delhi's nominal control, the effective frontier in the north-west was the river Beas, so that the Punjab was largely lost. In Sindh also, a number of governors raised the banner of independence, some of them even accepting a Mongol intendant (shuhna) as a part of their effort of gaining freedom from Delhi. However, Iltutmish, and later Balban were able to reassert control over Multan and Sindh.

In the east, Bengal and Bihar were largely under the control of the governors of Lakhnauti who sometimes tendered formal allegiance to the sultan at Delhi, and sometimes asserted their independence, according to circumstances. Some of them tried to extend their control over Kamrup (Assam), Jajnagar (Orissa) and southern Bengal (Radha). However, on a number of occasions they suffered serious reverses in their struggle with the local rulers since their resources were not sufficient for the purpose. A few of the governors even tried to extend their control from Bihar to Manikpur and Awadh. If they had succeeded, the Turkish sultanate at Delhi would have faced a split and many other internal problems.

As has been seen, Iltutmish had led two expeditions against the Khalji chief, Iwaz. His, and the subsequent efforts of the sultans of Delhi to separate Bihar from Lakhnauti rarely succeeded.

Thus, in the confusion following the death of Iltutmish, another Turkish chief, Tughan Khan, became master of Lakhnauti and Bihar. He invaded Radha and made a raid on Tirhut. He even made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Awadh and its neighbouring areas. However, he was clever enough not to repudiate the allegiance to Delhi, and received from Razia and her successors confirmation of his position, and honours including a chair which was considered a symbol of royalty. Matters continued in this way till in his struggle against the Ganga rulers of Orissa, Tughan was put on the defensive, and requested the help of Delhi. The Orissan armies besieged him at Lakhnauti, and retreated only when it was learnt that an army led by the governor of Awadh had come to the help of Tughan Khan. The governor of Awadh removed Tughan, and himself assumed powers at Lakhnauti, but he was soon killed.

When Balban assumed power at Delhi as naib, he sent his slave, Yuzbek, as governor of Lakhnauti. Like his predecessors, Yuzbek also soon assumed airs of independence. Although he could not prevail against Orissa, he was successful in capturing Radha (1255). This success led to a change in his policy towards Delhi. He now assumed the title of a sultan, and the royal canopy. Taking advantage of trouble in Awadh where the governor had been ousted by Balban, Yuzbek advanced and captured Awadh, and had the khubah read in his name. But Yuzbek retreated on hearing rumors of an advance of Delhi armies on Awadh. Following this misadventure, Yuzbek made an attack on Kamrup. The local ruler retreated as far as he could, then turned against Yuzbek at the commencement of the rainy season. Cut off by the rising river water, Yuzbek suffered a disastrous defeat and was captured and put to death (1257).

Thus, successive Turkish officers sent from Delhi to Lakhnauti had assumed airs of independence. The worst proved to be the case of Tughril, a slave-officer, whom Balban now appointed governor of Lakhnauti. After consolidating his position, Tughril raided the territories of the ruler of Jajnagar, and amassed a lot of wealth and elephants which he refused to share with Delhi. He assumed the title of a sultan, and had the khubah read in his name.

News of Tughril's rebellion upset Balban greatly. He lost his sleep, feeling that events in Bengal would effect his position in Delhi. In 1276, Balban ordered the governor of Awadh, Amin Khan, to march along

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with his forces, and with the contingent of Hindustan to suppress the revolt. But in the engagement with Tughril many of Amin Khan's troops deserted as Tughril was lavish with money. When Amin Khan returned to Delhi, in anger Balban gibbeted him and put his dead body on public display. Balban now appointed one of his chosen officers, Bahadur, to punish Tughril. But the result was the same. Bahadur fought bravely, but was defeated by Tughril. The Delhi army melted away, with many of the soldiers joining Tughril.

Thus, Balban was faced with an extremely serious situation. Two officers had been defeated, and Tughril was emerging as a rival to Balban. Balban, therefore, decided to personally lead a campaign against Tughril. To guard against all eventualities, he nominated his eldest son, Prince Muhammad, as his legal successor. However, the responsibility of running the affairs at Delhi was given not to any Turkish noble, but to Fakhruddin, the kotwal of Delhi, with the post of naib. Balban took a second son, Bughra Khan, with him to Lakhnauti.

The campaign against Tughril took Balban two years (1280-82) because Tughril avoided a battle with him, retreating into the remote parts of Bengal with the hope that Balban would tire of the campaign and return. Balban relentlessly pursued Tughril till an advance guard of Balban's army surprised Tughril on a tip off from some banjaras, and killed Tughril. Balban gave savage punishment to the followers of Tughril at Lakhnauti. But when he returned to Delhi, he was dissuaded from making an example of those soldiers of Delhi who had deserted to Tughril. Perhaps, Balban's desire to maintain the solidarity of the Turks proved stronger. Bughra Khan was now appointed governor of the eastern part. However, it was Bughra Khan who, after the death of Balban, set up an independent dynasty which ruled Bengal for almost forty years.

## **ASSESSMENT OF BALBAN**

The house established by Balban lasted only three years after his death. His son, Bughra Khan, preferred to rule at Lakhnauti, leaving the throne at Delhi to his son, Kaiqubad, a young man of eighteen. Kaiqubad proved to be an utter debauch, leaving all the affairs of state to Nizamuddin who tried to kill all the Turkish officers opposed to him. In the process, Nizamuddin himself was killed. The administration collapsed, and Jalaluddin Khalji who had been the warden of the marches and had distinguished himself in fighting against the Mongols, was called in to help. He soon got rid of Kaiqubad, and set up a new dynasty (1290).

Although Balban did not succeed in setting up a dynasty, by his stern enforcement of law and order within the upper doab or Indo-Gangetic plain which formed the essential part of his kingdom, sternly suppressing the lawless elements, and freeing the roads for the movement of goods and merchants, he created the necessary basis for the growth and future expansion of the sultanate. It might be noted that the Indo-Gangetic plain, extending upto Banaras and Jaunpur, was one of the most extensive and productive plain anywhere in the world, and its unification had been the essential basis of flourishing empires in the past.

Although there is no evidence that Balban made any systematic efforts to reorganise the system of administration, particularly at the local or provincial levels, his tight control over the iqtadars, with the barids informing him of all developments, imply that the revenues which were previously appropriated by the "Chihalgani" or Turkish slave-officers for their own use, now began to be made available to the central government. A part of these funds were used by Balban for setting up a highly ostentatious court, as we have noted, and the rest for strengthening the central army. Balban did not undertake any large scale building activity at Delhi or elsewhere. In fact, in the architectural field, his period of domination is almost a blank. Balban laid great emphasis on maintaining a large efficient army. He advised his son, Bughra Khan, that apart from the army half the income should be set aside as a safeguard against an emergency.

It is difficult to estimate the efficiency of Balban's army since it was not engaged in any expansionist activities due to the fear of the Mongols. Balban did manage to contain the Mongols at the Multan-Dipalpur-Sunam line along the river Beas. But he was not able to push back the Mongols from the tract beyond Lahore, although he was faced only with second rank Mongol commanders, the attention of the Mongol



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rulers being concentrated on Iran, Iraq, Syria etc. Thus, it can be argued that there was no real threat to Delhi from the Mongols. However, Balban obviously could not take any chances.

More serious was the failure of Balban to control Tughril's rebellion in Bengal for six long years. The failure of two senior Turkish officers—Amir Khan, the governor of Awadh, and Bahadur, and many of their soldiers deserting to Tughril, suggests that there was growing dissatisfaction with Balban's management of affairs and his policies. The Turkish soldiers were never satisfied with their salaries, but expected to supplement these with plunder (ghanim). Balban's policy of consolidation provided them no such opportunity. The rebellion of Turkish officers in Sindh and, even more significantly, the attempt of two of Balban's own slaves, Yuzbek and Tughril, to become independent in Lakhnauti shows that even Balban's sternness could not put down the innate Turkish tribal desire for independence. Although Balban did finally break the power of the Turkish Chihalgani, his resort to a policy of poison and secret assassination of many Turkish nobles, and his exaggerated emphasis on family and ancestry rather than efficiency and ability were counter-productive. The latter not only prevented competent Indians to be appointed or rise in the service of the state, but it seems adversely effected even Turks of humble origin.

Nevertheless, Balban's achievements were greater than his limitations. He built a polity which was capable not only of sustaining itself, but had the capacity to embark on a policy of expansion as soon as the narrow constraints he had put on it were broken, and men of proven worth and efficiency were pushed forward. This was the task which he bequeathed to his successors.

## UNIT-IV

# THE MONGOL THREAT TO INDIA DURING THE 13<sup>th</sup> AND 14<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

### THE MONGOL INCURSIONS (UPTO 1292)

Although India was defended in the North and the North-West by a range of mountains, the Himalayas and their extension, the low mountains in the North-West were pierced by passes which were the traditional points of entry into India. Of these passes, the most well-known, and the most frequently used, were the Khybar and the Bolan passes. A more natural line of defence for India than these low mountains in the north-west was provided by the Hindukush Mountains, which were a fairly effective barrier between Afghanistan and Central Asia in the north, while the Iranian desert provided an effective shield on the west. Afghanistan and its neighbouring areas were strategically important for India because they provided a staging centre for any invasion of India. Thus, as we have seen, attack on Afghanistan was the first stage in the Ghaznavid and Ghurian conquest of north India.

After the Ghurian conquest, it might have been expected that Ghur and Chazni would provide an effective shield against any future invasions of India. But the separation of India from Ghur and Ghazni, and the subsequent conquest of the area by Khwarizm Shah, followed by the Mongols, completely altered the strategic position. A viable defence line in the north-west could now be provided either by the Indus, or by the Koh-i-Jud (Salt Ranges) which was on this side of the Indus. We shall trace the stages by which the Mongols breached these lines of defence in course of time, and reached upto the river Beas, thereby posing a serious threat to the sultanate of Delhi.

We have seen how in 1221, Chingez loitered around the Indus for three months, after defeating the Khwarizmi prince, Jalaluddin Mangbarani. Crossing the Indus, the prince had formed an alliance with the Khokhars who dominated the tract upto the Salt Ranges. Before departing from the area, Chingez sent envoys to Iltutmish, the sultan at Delhi, that he (Chingez) had given up the project of sending his army to Hindustan and returning to China by way of Gilgit or Assam, since he had not received favourable omens from burning sheep-skins. It suggests that Chingez had contemplated the invasion of north India, but gave up the idea, either because of Iltutmish's refusal to help prince Jalaluddin, or because of a rebellion in Turkistan, which needed the attention of Chingez. It is easy to imagine what would have happened to the cities of north India if Chingez had decided to invade the country.

After the death of Chingez, the Mongols were for some time too busy in their internal affairs, and in completing the conquest of Khurasan and Iran, to bother about India. But in 1234, Oktai, who had succeeded Chingez Khan in Turkistan (also called Khitai), decided to invade Hind and Kashmir. Iltutmish advanced upto Bunyan in the Salt Ranges to counter this threat. On the way, Iltutmish fell ill, and returned to the capital where he died soon afterwards.

Soon after the death of Iltutmish, the former governor of Ghazni, Wafa Malik, who had been ousted by the Mongols, came to India and captured the entire tract comprising the Koh-i-Jud or the Salt Ranges. This invited Mongol attacks. The Mongols ousted Wafa Malik, and brought the entire Koh-i-Jud under their control. There was a prolonged struggle between Wafa Malik whose dynasty is called the Qarlugh dynasty, and the Mongols for the control of the Koh-i-Jud and Multan, with the sultans of Delhi intervening whenever possible. By 1246, the Qarlughs had to quit India. But by that time, the Koh-i-Jud had become a Mongol bastion, and a base for their further attacks on India.

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The seriousness of the Mongol threat had become apparent to the inhabitants of Delhi when in 1240 a Mongol force under Tair Bahadur, who was the commander of Herat, Ghazni and Afghanistan, besieged Lahore. The Turkish governor was ill-prepared to stand a siege, and was further hampered because many of the inhabitants were merchants who regularly traded in the Mongol territories, and were not prepared to aid and help the governor for fear of Mongol reprisals. Also, there was little hope of any help coming from Delhi where there was utter confusion following the death of Razia. Hence, the governor abandoned the city. After capturing the city, the Mongols encountered stiff resistance from the citizens and, we are told, 30 to 40,000 Mongols and many of their commanders, including Tair Bahadur, were killed. The Mongols wreaked savage vengeance for this. They killed or enslaved all the citizens of Lahore, and devastated the city. Then they suddenly retreated because the Mongol Qa-an, Ogtai, had died. Although Lahore was re-occupied by Delhi, for the next twenty years Lahore remained in a ruined condition, being sacked on several occasions either by the Mongols or by their Khokhar allies.

It is not necessary for us to follow in detail the recurrent Mongol invasions of the Punjab, Multan and Sindh. It is sufficient to say that the Chaghtai Mongols who controlled Afghanistan were entrenched in the Koh-i-Jud, extended their depredations upto the river Beas which then ran north of the Sutlej, joining the Chenab between Multan and Uchch. This was the situation which faced the sultans of Delhi when Nasiruddin Mahmud ascended the throne in 1246, with Balban becoming the naib soon after. Although Balban wanted to adopt a bold policy, and clear the area upto the Koh-i-Jud from the Mongols, along with the Khokhars who were siding with them, little could be done due to the factionalism in the Turkish nobility. Hence, the frontier commanders of Multan and Sindh were left largely to their own devices to cope with the Mongols. In consequence, some of them came to terms with the Mongols, even setting themselves up as independent rulers under Mongol overlordship. Thus, Sher Khan, the cousin of Balban, who had been ousted from Sindh when Balban was displaced by Raihan, repaired to the Mongol chief, Manju Qa-an, apparently to persuade him to invade India in order to restore Sher Khan to his previous position! Nor was Sher Khan the only Turkish officer to do so. But the Mongols had already decided to conquer China, and to concentrate on the conquest of Iraq, Syria and Egypt, leaving it to local commanders to plunder as much as they could in India, on the basis of their own resources. Thus, the sultans of Delhi were lucky not to face the full brunt of Mongol power.

In order to limit the Mongol depredations, Balban adopted both military and diplomatic measures. He sent an envoy to Halaku, the Mongol Il-Khan of Iran, who, apart from the Ogtai-Chaghtai branch which dominated Turkistan and Transoxiana, was the most important figure among the successors of Chingez. Halaku sent a return embassy in 1260 which was given a grand and impressive reception by Balban. Halaku is supposed to have strictly ordered his officers not to invade India, under pain of punishment. However, this assurance need not be given too much importance because Halaku's energies, then as earlier, had been devoted to the conquest of Iraq, Syria and Egypt. He had suffered a serious set-back in 1260, being defeated by an Egyptian army which had forced the Mongols to retreat from Syria also. Interestingly, at about the same time, an envoy was received from Barka Khan, the head of the Mongol Golden Horde in South Russia, which was the most powerful group among the Mongols and which had deep enmity towards Halaku. In this complex situation, Halaku simultaneously sent his intendants (shuhna) to Sindh and the Koh-i-Jud areas, thus claiming over-lordship over them.

Thus, the agreement also implied that the Sultans of Delhi would not try to disturb the Mongols in Sindh and in areas west of Lahore. By the time Balban ascended the throne in 1266, Halaku had died, thereby ending the nebulous agreement and goodwill between the Mongols and the ruler of Delhi. The situation on the ground had not, however, changed. Although Balban's cousin, Sher Khan, who was the warden of the marches, holding the iqtas of Lahore, Sunam, Dipalpur etc. acted as a shield against the Mongols, the Mongols were able frequently to cross the Beas. At the outset, Balban adopted a forward policy. After clearing the roads in the doab, he marched his army towards Koh-i-Jud. He ravaged the mountainous tract and its neighbouring areas, and captured large number of horses, leading to a sharp decline in the price of horses in Delhi. In 1270, he ordered the fort of Lahore to be rebuilt, and appointed architects to rebuild the city. However, soon afterwards, Balban had Sher Khan, whom he suspected of harbouring

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dreams of independence, to be poisoned. He then entrusted the defence of the frontier tracts to his eldest son, Prince Muhammad. Prince Muhammad was an able and energetic prince, and it appears that during the remaining years of Balban's reign, while the Mongol attacks continued, his defensive arrangements at Multan and Lahore, with the river Beas as the line of military defence, continued to hold. Barani says that the Mongols no longer dared to attack across the Beas, and that even Mongol forces of 70 to 80,000 sawars could not face the forces of Prince Muhammad from Multan, Bughra Khan from Samana, and Malik Barbak Bakatarse from Delhi. The death of Prince Muhammad outside Multan in 1285 was the outcome of a chance encounter, the prince being surprised by an advance party of the Mongols. However, rather than seeking safety in flight, he preferred to stand and die.

The death of the prince was a heavy personal blow to Balban who had designated the prince as his successor. But it did not change the ground realities as far as the Mongols were concerned.

The last Mongol attack under Balban's successors was in 1288 when Tamar Khan ravaged the country from Lahore to Multan. But the Mongols retreated as soon as they heard of the arrival of the imperial forces. Thus, upto 1290, the Mongols dominated western Punjab, the effective frontier being the river Beas. They also continually threatened Multan and Sindh. But they did not mount any serious offensive towards Delhi. This enabled the sultanate of Delhi to survive, but only at the cost of the utmost vigilance and military preparedness.

A last invasion of India by the Mongol branch settled in Iran took place in 1192 when a Mongol army of 150,000 headed by Abdullah, a grandson of Halaku, the Ilkhan of Iran, invaded India. Jalaluddin Khalji who had just succeeded to the throne had spent a considerable part of his life in fighting the Mongols. Jalaluddin Khalji advanced with a large force. After some skirmishes, the Mongols agreed to withdraw without a fight. It seems that there was some kind of an agreement between the two. Jalaluddin had a cordial meeting with Abdullah whom he called his son, and a party of the Mongols, headed by Ulaghu, another grandson of Halaku, embraced Islam, along with 4000 of his followers. They were allowed to settle down near Delhi along with their families. The Sultan married one of his daughters to Ulaghu. These and a band of 5000 Mongols who had entered India in 1279 became Muslims. They were called "Nau (Neo) Muslims." These cordial relations suggest that a tacit agreement had been reached between the two sides not to disturb the status quo, leaving the Mongols in possession of West Punjab. However, changes in Mongol domestic politics created a new situation in which the Mongols for the first time posed a serious danger to Delhi.

## **THE MONGOL THREAT TO DELHI**

The rise of the Ogtai-Chaghtai branch of the Mongols which dominated the Mongol homelands including Turkistan led to important changes in the politics of Central Asia. The Mongol chief, Dawa Khan, set out on a course of conflict with the Mongol Qa-an of Iran. Dawa Khan over-ran Afghanistan. He then extended his sway upto the river Ravi.

The first inkling of a new Mongol policy came in 1297-98 when a Mongol army of 100,000 sent by Dawa Khan crossed not only the river Beas, but the river Sutlej, and the road to Delhi seemed to lay open before them. Alauddin sent a large army under his trusted commander, Ulugh Khan, who met the Mongols near Jullundhar and completely routed them. About 20,000 Mongols were killed as they fled across the river, and many others, including officers, were captured and done to death at Delhi. This was the most convincing victory which an army of the Sultans of Delhi had gained over the Mongols in a straight fight. A similar victory was gained the following year when the Mongols captured Siwistan in lower Sindh. Zafar Khan, another favourite commander of Alauddin, proceeded against the Mongols. He won a complete victory, capturing the port city, and bringing the Mongol commander, Saldi, in chains to Delhi.



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These victories seem to have lulled Alauddin to a false sense of security as regard the Mongols. That is why he was caught unprepared when towards the end of 1299 a force of 200,000 Mongols invaded India, headed by Qutlugh Khan, the son of the Mongol ruler, Dawa Khan. The number of the Mongol soldiers may have been exaggerated and possibly included women and children who, unlike the times of Chingez, had begun to accompany the Mongol armies. Unlike the previous times, the Mongols did not ravage the countryside or the towns on the way, their objective being to conquer and rule Delhi. Hearing of their approach, Alauddin quickly gathered an army, and took a position outside Siri, the place where he had taken residence before entering Delhi, after murdering his uncle, Jalaluddin. The Mongols entrenched themselves at Killi, six miles north of Delhi. While the two armies faced each other, Alauddin sent urgent summons to the nobles of the doab to hasten to his side with their armies. Meanwhile, many people from the environs took shelter at Delhi which became extremely crowded, and provisions became dear since the caravans of food from the doab had stopped coming.

In this situation, Alaul Mulk, the kotwal of Delhi, advised Alauddin to play a waiting game, and if possible, induce the Mongols to retire peacefully since his army consisted largely of the Hindustani soldiers who had only fought Hindus, and were not used to fighting the Mongols, and were not familiar with their tactics of feigned retreat and ambush. Alauddin rejected the kotwal's advise as being unmanly, and one which would undermine his prestige as a ruler. However, he had no intention of letting everything be decided on the outcome of one battle. Considering that time was on his side, and the Mongols, far away from their homelands, might soon fall short of provisions, Alauddin issued strict instructions to his officers, on pain of death, to stand on guard, and not to go out of their lines to attack the Mongols without his orders. However, Zafar Khan, who was itching for a fight, attacked the Mongol contingent facing him. As usual, the Mongols feigned retreat, and when Zafar Khan had gone out several miles pursuing them, an ambush party of 10,000 horses cut off his retreat, and surrounded him. According to Alauddin's orders, the rest of the army did not move out to rescue Zafar Khan who, along with all of his followers, died fighting bravely.

Although the Mongols won an initial victory, the firmness of Zafar Khan seems to have made an impression. Qutlugh Khan realized that he could not break Alauddin's lines, or capture Delhi. Hence, after skirmishing for two days, he retreated from Delhi and, moving rapidly, recrossed the Indus. Alauddin did not try to pursue him.

This full-scale Mongol attack on Delhi was a severe shock not only to the citizens of Delhi, but to Alauddin. He now awoke from his sleep of neglect, and undertook far-reaching measures. A protecting wall around Delhi was built for the first time, and all the old forts on the route of the Mongols repaired. Strong military contingents were posted at Samana and Dipalpur. Simultaneously, he took steps to reorganise the internal administration, and to recruit a large army. These measures, which we shall discuss separately, enabled Alauddin to meet the Mongol challenge, even though the Mongol threat to Delhi loomed over India for several more years.

In 1303, the Mongols advanced on Delhi a second time, under the leadership of Targhi. While some commentators put the Mongol force at 12 tuman or 120,000, the figure of 30-40,000 mentioned by Barani elsewhere appears to be nearer the mark. The Mongols had marched rapidly, meeting little resistance on the way, and expected to surprise Delhi, because they had learnt that Alauddin was away from the capital, campaigning. However, Alauddin had returned from the Chittor campaign just a month earlier. His troops needed to be refurbished. The capital had been denuded because another army had been sent to Warangal via Bengal, and had come back to the doab badly battered. Moreover, the Mongols had seized all the fords across the Jamuna so that despite royal summons no troops from the doab could reach Delhi. In this situation, Alauddin came out of Siri with all his available forces, and took up a strongly defended position, resting on the river Jamuna on one side, and the old city of Delhi on the other. He further strengthened his position by digging a ditch all round, and putting on its side planks of wood so that, according to Barani, his camp looked like a fort made of wood. The Mongols did not dare to attack this strong position, but hovered around Delhi, creating a great fear among the citizens. There was an acute shortage of both fuel and corn in the city, the caravans from the doab having stopped coming. However, the Mongols were not

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the same as the earlier Mongols, and their discipline seems to have become much more lax, because they came to the tanks outside Delhi, drank wine there, and sold cheap corn to the citizens, thus relieving the acute food shortage. After two months of this futile exercise, the Mongols retreated once again, without a fight.

Despite the failure of these two attempts at the conquest of Delhi, two years later, in 1305, the Mongols made a third and final desperate attempt at the conquest of Hindustan. Crossing the Indus, a Mongol army of 30,000 to 40,000 horses marched rapidly across the Punjab “like an arrow”, and after burning the towns at the foothills of the Siwaliks, crossed into the doab, by-passing Delhi. However, Alauddin, whose army was much stronger than before, sent an army of 30,000 under a Hindu noble, Malik Nayak who, according to the poet Amir Khusrau, had been governor of Samana and Sunam earlier. A number of Muslim officers were placed under his command. This shows how far the social base of the Turkish sultanate had broadened since the days of Balban. Malik Nayak met the Mongols somewhere near Amroha (north-west part of modern UP), and inflicted a crushing defeat upon them. The leaders of the Mongol armies, Ali Beg and Tartaq, surrendered and were brought to Delhi, while about 20,000 Mongols were slaughtered.

This victory finally destroyed in India the aura of Mongol invincibility—something which the Mongols had lost earlier in West Asia after their defeat by the Egyptians in 1260, and the loss of Syria to them. After the death of Dawa Khan in 1306, the Mongols lost interest in the conquest of Delhi. They launched a series of attacks in the Katehar-Siwalik region, but they were all repulsed with great slaughter of the Mongols. According to Barani, whenever the Mongols attacked Delhi or the neighbouring regions, they were defeated. The armies of Islam had become so confident against the Mongols that a single soldier with a *du aspah* rank would bring in (as prisoners) ten Mongols with their necks tied with ropes. “A single Mussalman horseman would put to flight a hundred Mongol horsemen.” The areas devastated by the Mongols were gradually brought under the plough once again. We are told that Lahore and Dipalpur became impassable barriers for the Mongols, “like a Chinese wall.” The commander of the area, Tughlaq Shah or Ghazi Malik, launched a series of attacks on the Mongol-held areas in West Punjab upto the river Indus, and were so successful that in these areas the dread of the Mongols completely disappeared from the hearts of the people. According to Barani, the Mongols did not dare to cross the river Indus. This, we shall see, was an exaggeration.

Thus, Alauddin not only defended Delhi and the doab from the threat of the Mongols but created the conditions whereby the northwest frontier of India could be pushed back from the river Beas and Lahore to the river Indus.

These were significant achievements. However, the threat to India could not be said to have disappeared as long as the Mongols dominated Afghanistan and the neighbouring areas. Thus, after the death of Alauddin, the Mongol threat to India revived. In 1320, Dalucha Khan entered the Kashmir valley with 70,000 horses, and devastated it from end to end. All the men were killed, and the women and children sold to slave merchants from Khitai and Turkistan. All houses in the cities and villages were also burnt. Fortunately, the Mongol invaders perished in a snow blizzard while retreating from Kashmir eight months later. Shortly after Ghiyasuddin’s accession to the throne (1320), two Mongol armies reached Sunam and Samana, and marched upto Meerut. They were defeated with great slaughter. In 1326-27 the new Mongol Khan, Tarmashirin, again invaded India. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq marched against Tarmashirin, and not only pushed him back but extended his frontiers to include Peshawar and Kalanaur across the Indus so as to form a better defensive line against future Mongol invasions. However, after some time, the Indian armies retreated behind the Indus which remained the frontier with the Mongols.

The boldest effort to counter the Mongol threat to India was made by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who shortly after his accession recruited an army of 375,000 men for what was called the Khurasan expedition. While the larger motives of the Sultan are a matter of speculation, one effect of any such campaign meant the conquest of Kabul, Ghazni and the neighbouring areas—areas which we have described as staging theatres for the invasion and conquest of India. Muhammad bin Tughlaq’s enterprise failed, like many

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of his other projects, even at the planning stage. However, he was one of the few Turkish sultans of India who seems to have possessed a strategic insight regarding the north-west frontier of India. This must have been so because he was a close student of Asian affairs. It was the neglect of these factors which led to Timur's invasion of India in 1399.

Thus, the Mongol threat to India lasted for almost a hundred years, gaining in intensity till it reached a climax during the reign of Alauddin Khalji. The Mongol incursions led to the virtual loss of western Punjab beyond Lahore to the Mongol during the second half of the 13th century, thereby creating a serious threat to Delhi and the doab, as in the time of the Ghaznavids. However, unlike the Rajput rulers of the time, the sultans of Delhi organized their resources, and carried out a far-reaching restructuration of their economy to meet the Mongol threat. However, they failed in the task of building a viable line of defence based on Afghanistan in order to stem such future incursions. This task was undertaken later on by the Mughals.

# UNIT-V

## INTERNAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE DELHI SULTANATE (1290-1320)

### JALALUDDIN AND ALAUDDIN KHALJI'S APPROACHES TO THE STATE

The brief period of Khalji rule (1290-1320), saw important changes in the socio-economic and administrative structure of the Delhi sultanate. It also raised important questions regarding the nature of the state and polity in India.

The most important consequence of the rise to power of the Khaljis was the broadening of the social base of the ruling class. The early Turkish sultans who are called the Ilbaris on the basis of their tribal origin, or Mamuluks, i.e. slave-officers, had believed in the virtual monopoly of important posts in the state by high born Turks. The Tajiks who had formed an important part of the nobility under Iltutmish had been largely eliminated shortly after his death. The presence of an Abyssinian, Yaqut, or an Indian

Muslim, Raihan and of the Khaljis in important positions on the frontiers was more in the nature of exceptions which proved the rule. Barani says that with the accession of the Khaljis, the empire passed from the hands of the Turks, and that the people of the city of Delhi who had for eighty years been governed by sovereigns of Turkish extraction, "were struck by admiration and amazement at seeing the Khaljis occupying the throne of the Turks."

While the rise of Khaljis brought forward a new group of people to positions of power and authority, the founder, Jalaluddin Khalji (1290-96), did not follow a policy of narrow exclusivism. Many Turks and officers of Balban's time who visited Jalaluddin were given important posts and iqtas. Even Malik Chhajju Kishli Khan, a nephew of Balban, was appointed governor of Kara which was considered one of the most fertile and prosperous tracts. Nor were drastic punishments meted out when Malik Chhajju rebelled, marched on Delhi, and was defeated.

But even more importantly, Jalaluddin put forward by his actions the concept of a new type of a state, one which was based fundamentally on the good-will and support of the people of all communities, one which was basically beneficent and looked after the welfare of its subjects. Thus, unlike Balban, he refused to identify sovereignty with self-pride and tyranny. In the picturesque language of Barani, he believed in a policy of "not harming even an ant".

Although Jalaluddin Khalji was a pious Muslim, he considered as unrealistic a policy of forcible conversion of the Hindus or their humiliation, as demanded by some theologians. In a discussions with his close associate, Ahmad Chap, he defended the policy of allowing Hindus to worship idols, preach their beliefs, and observe practices which were the hall-mark of infidelity. Thus, they were not hindered in passing in processions outside his palace, beating drums, and to go to the Jamuna for immersing their images. Likewise, the Hindus were allowed to live a life of ease and splendour and honour even at Delhi, the centre of Islam. According to him, while by a policy of terror, fear of the government and its prestige could be established in the hearts of the people for a short time, it would mean discarding (true) Islam, or, as was said, "it would mean "discarding Islam from the hearts of the people like discarding a hair while kneading dough."

Jalaluddin Khalji's nephew and son-in-law, Alauddin Khalji, (1296-1316) who ascended the throne after treacherously murdering his uncle, did not accept the liberal, humanitarian precepts of Jalaluddin. Nevertheless, the principles enunciated by Jalaluddin had a long term relevance. In one form or another, they had to be faced by almost all his successors.



Thus, Jalaluddin's reign has a long term significance which is often ignored. Alauddin Khalji did not accept Jalaluddin's theory of benevolence and humanitarianism, considering them to be unsuitable to the times, and signifying a weak government. He adhered more to Balban's theory of fear being the basis of good government, a theory which he applied to the nobles as well as to the ordinary people. Thus, after the outbreak of a couple of rebellions early in his reign, including one by his nephew, Aqat Khan, he decided to take harsh measures to keep the nobles under control. He revived Balban's system of spies who kept him informed of all developments, even those in the privacy of the houses of the nobles. The nobles were forbidden to associate with each other, or hold convivial parties. In fact, even for forming marriage alliances they had to seek the permission of the Sultan.

Second, he hearkened back to Balban's belief—one which the historian Barani shared, that the people should not be left enough means to harbour thoughts of rebellion. As a part of this policy he ordered that all charitable lands, i.e. lands assigned in waqf or inam, should be confiscated. Almost all the nobles of Jalaluddin's time, whom Alauddin had won over to his side by the lure of gold and positions, were uprooted, and their accumulated wealth confiscated.

Wine drinking was also forbidden and severe punishments given to those who violated these orders. However, Alauddin admitted to the Chief Qazi that buying and selling of wine did not stop.

Barani would have us believe that Alauddin Khalji's agrarian reforms were also a part of this policy of reducing the people, i.e. the Hindus to a position of destitution in order to avoid rebellions. We shall discuss this separately. Alauddin did, however, institute a new reprehensible policy. When some of the Mongol soldiers who had participated in the campaign launched against Gujarat rebelled against the policy of the state claiming 4/5 of the war spoils, Alauddin imprisoned their wives and children living at

Delhi, a practice which Barani says was a novel one. Alauddin's brother, Nusrat Khan, went one step further: he gave savage punishments to the women and children of those who had rebelled against Alauddin.

However, Alauddin accepted Jalaluddin Khalji's contention that a truly Islamic state could not be set up in the specific conditions obtaining in India. In his discussions with Qazi Mughis of Delhi, as reported by Barani, he asserted that splendour and show, and award of punishments not sanctioned by shara or the Holy Law were inescapable in India. In fact, he went so far as to assert, "I do not know what is lawful or unlawful according to shara. Whatever I consider necessary for the state or for its welfare, I decree." Barani sadly concludes that Alauddin was convinced that matters concerning the state and administration were independent of the rules and orders of the sharia, and that while the former pertained to kings alone, the latter had been assigned to qazis and muftis (i.e. those concerned with justice in the courts).

During Alauddin Khalji's reign, the non-Turks were no longer kept back, and forged ahead. This was the reason why Alauddin was able to choose, and promote to the top, many non-Turks such as Zafar Khan and Nusrat Khan, and later Malik Kafur, a non-Turk slave who had been captured in Gujarat. Malik Nayak, a Hindu who had been governor of Samana and Sunam, was given command of an army with Muslims officers serving under him, which inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mongols. Large numbers of Indian Muslims also formed a part of his army.

## **AGRARIAN AND MARKET REFORMS OF ALAUDDIN**

Alauddin Khalji's agrarian and market reforms should be seen both in the context of the efforts at the internal restructuration of the sultanate, as also the need to create a large army to meet the threat of recurrent Mongol invasions.

### **Agrarian Reforms**

The essence of Alauddin Khalji's agrarian reforms was to bring the villages in closer association with the government in the area extending from Dipalpur and Lahore to Kara near modern Allahabad. In this region, the villages were to be brought under khalisa, i.e. not assigned to any of the nobles as iqta. Lands

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assigned in charitable grants were also confiscated and brought under khalisa. Further, the land revenue (kharaj) in this area was fixed at half of the produce, and assessed on the basis of measurement (pai-maish). Barani, who is our main source of information, does not tell us about the method and mode of the measurement of the fields. On the basis of the measurements of the area under cultivation, and a standard of expected production per bisiwa (1/20 of the bigha), the share of the state was determined.

Apart from this, no extra cesses were to be levied, except a grazing tax (charai) on cattle and ghari on houses. Both these taxes had been levied earlier and were traditional. The land-revenue was calculated in kind, but demanded in cash. For the purpose, the cultivators had either to sell the produce to the banjaras, or take it for sale to the local market (mandi).

We do not know to what extent Alauddin's demand of half of the produce marked a rise in the land-revenue demand since we have no information about the actual incidence of land-revenue earlier, either under the Rajput rulers or the early Turkish rulers. Although the Dharmashastras prescribed a land-revenue of one-fourth to one-sixth which could rise to half in times of emergency, there were a lot of sanctioned taxes in addition to the land-revenue whose incidence is not known. Thus, the formula used for assigning land to nobles was bhaga, bhog, kar, i.e. land-revenue, cesses and taxes. These must have continued under the early Turkish rulers. Whether Alauddin merely consolidated all these taxes into one or raised the total amount payable by the cultivator is something we do not know.

Likewise, measurement was an old system, but had apparently fallen into disuse in north India. It may have been revived in some areas by earlier rulers, such as Balban, because Barani does not refer to it as a totally unknown system. However, its systematic application over a wide area was a significant contribution of Alauddin. The bringing of doab under khalisa, and establishing direct relations with the cultivators, did not imply that all intermediaries were removed. Since long there was a hierarchy of intermediaries in the rural areas, with the Rai, Rana, Rawat standing at the top. These are called chiefs. A chief sometimes controlled a considerable tract of land which was parcelled out to his clan and other supporters for collecting land-revenue. At the village level there was the village head, called chaudhari or muqaddam. As the Turkish sultanate consolidated itself in the doab, the power and authority of the rais and ranas was eroded, and some of them were displaced. In the process, there was the rise of a new set of intermediaries who operated at the pargana or shit (district) level. These apparently, were the people whom Barani called Khuts and for whom the word zamindar is used for the first time by Khusrav. The word zamindar began to be used widely later on for all types of intermediaries. Alauddin's agrarian reforms implied putting greater pressure for the displacement of the rais or ranas. However, we know that many of the chiefs who paid a lump-sum of money to the state as land-revenue survived into the 16th and 17th centuries. In other words, the lands dominated by such chiefs were not brought under khalisa.

In the area brought under khalisa, Alauddin tried to curb the privileges of the kinds, muqaddams and chaudharis. These sections formed the rural aristocracy and, according to Barani, were rich enough to ride Arabi and Iraqi, horses, wear weapons and fine clothes, and indulge in wine drinking and holding convivial parties. Their wealth was based on their holding the best lands in the village. Also, in a system where the village was assessed as a whole (called group-assessment), they often passed on the burden of their share of the land-revenue on to the shoulders of the weak.

We do not know what exact effect Alauddin's agrarian reforms had on different sections of rural society. Alauddin not only forced the khuts, muqaddams and chaudharis to pay the grazing and house taxes like the others, and through the system of measurement ensured that they could not pass on their burden of land-revenue on to the shoulders of the others. They were also deprived of the khuti charges for collecting land-revenue. Thus, in the exaggerated language of Barani, they were reduced to the level of the bala-har, or the lowest of the low in village society, the menial! They could not afford to ride horses, wear fine clothes, or eat pan (the betel-leaf), and their women were forced to go and work in the houses of Muslims for wages. Since it was hardly possible for Alauddin to effect a redistribution of land in the villages, and these sections generally held the largest and the best lands, they must have continued to remain a privi-

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leged section in village society. However, we may accept Baran's statement that for fear of punishment, these sections became obedient, and would go to the collector's office for payment of land-revenue, even at the behest of a peon.

To what extent did the cultivators benefit by Alauddin's efforts to curb the exactions of the privileged sections in the village? It seems that the cultivators lost on the other hand what they gained from one. The market reforms of Alauddin affected them adversely for the policy was to leave the cultivator with so little as to be "barely enough for carrying on cultivation and his food requirements (literally, for milk and butter-milk)." We are told that the fear of the government was such that the cultivators would sell even their wives and cattle to pay the land-revenue!

While reforming the agrarian system, Alauddin tried to ensure the efficient and honest working of the machinery of revenue administration. This was not easy since with the extension of the *klialisa*, large numbers of accountants (*mutsarraf*), collectors (*amil*s), and agents (*gumashtas*) had to be appointed. That this was done in a comparatively short period shows how the new rulers were able to reach out even to the small towns. Alauddin desired that the accounts of all these officials should be audited strictly by the *naib wazir*, *Sharaf Qais*, and if on the basis of the account-book of the village *patwaris*—something we hear of for the first time, even a *jital* was found to be outstanding against them, they were to be severely punished, or suffer imprisonment or even worse. Alauddin was prepared to give them sufficient wages to lead a decent life, but took a serious view of their bribe taking and corruption. Those, who did so, were to be punished severely. Barani goes on to say in his characteristic way that none of the *amil*s and *mutsarraf*s could take bribes, and had been reduced to such a position by hardships, imprisonment for long periods or torture for small outstanding dues that people considered these posts to be worse than fever, and were not prepared to marry their daughters to those who held them!

Alauddin's system of measurement, of trying to limit the exactions of the local privileged sections, and of auditing the accounts of the local revenue officials with the help of the *bahis* (ledger books) of the village *patwaris* set up a standard and a direction which some of his successors, such as *Sher Shah* and *Akbar*, tried to emulate. But his effort to limit the emoluments of the privileged sections was only partially successful. These sections were too influential, and under Alauddin's successor, *Mubarak Shah*, the privileges of the *khuts* and *muqaddams* were restored, and many of Alauddin's revenue measures given up.

Perhaps, a significant and lasting effect of Alauddin's agrarian reforms was the furthering of the growth of a market economy in the villages, and bringing about a more integral relationship between the town and the country, thus furthering the process of the internal restructuring of the Sultanat.

## **Market Reforms**

Although Alauddin *Khalji*'s market reforms were oriented more towards administrative and military necessities than internal restructuring, it would be convenient to deal with them here.

Alauddin's market reforms and their effectiveness was a cause of wonder to the contemporaries. Medieval rulers were expected to ensure that necessities of life, especially food-grains, should be available to the city folk at fair or reasonable prices. This was so because the cities were the sinews of power and authority all over the Islamic world, the village-folk being considered backward and immersed in their own narrow world. However, apart from imposing periodic checks on the traders, few rulers had been able to control the prices effectively, or for any length of time. Alauddin *Khalji* was more or less the first ruler who looked at the problem of price control in a systematic manner, and was able to maintain stable prices for a considerable period.

Barani says that Alauddin *Khalji* instituted the market reforms because after the Mongol siege of Delhi, he wanted to recruit a large army, but all his treasurers would have soon been exhausted if he had to pay them their normal salaries. As a result of price control and the fall in prices, we are told that he was able to recruit a cavalry man with one horse, and pay him 238 tankas annually and 75 tankas more for one

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with two horses. Barani gives us a second reason for the market reforms. He thinks that it was a part of Alauddin's general policy to impoverish the Hindus so that they would cease to harbour thoughts of rebellion. We shall examine this while analysing his market reforms.

According to Barani, Alauddin set up three markets at Delhi, the first for food-grains, the second for cloth of all kinds, and for expensive items such as sugar, ghee, oil, dry fruits etc., and the third for horses, slaves and cattle. Detailed regulations (zawabit) were framed for the control and administration for all these markets.

For controlling the food prices, Alauddin tried to control not only the supply of food-grains from the villages, and its transportation to the city by the grain-merchants (karwanis or banjaras), but its proper distribution to the citizens. These undoubtedly were the three most important aspects in controlling food prices. Alauddin's first effort was to see that there were sufficient stocks of food-grains with the government so that the traders did not try to hike up prices by creating an artificial scarcity, or indulge in profiteering (regraiting). For the purpose, royal stores were set up at Delhi. It was ordered that in the area near Delhi, such as Jhain, half of the royal share, i.e. one-fourth of the produce was to be demanded in kind. The grains were first to be stored locally, then sent to Delhi.

The task of transporting food-grains from the countryside was generally carried out by karwaniyan or banjaras, some of whom had 10,000 or 20,000 bullocks. These banjaras were ordered to form themselves into one corporate body, giving sureties for each other. They were to settle on the banks of the Jamuna with their wives, children, goods and cattle. An official (shuhna) was appointed to oversee them. We are told that in normal times these banjaras brought so much food-grains into the city that it was not necessary to touch the royal stores.

To ensure the regular supply of food-grains to the banjaras, a number of Regulations were made. In the doab, and in an area of 100 kos around it which had been brought under khalisa, and where the land-revenue fixed at half of the produce, the local official charged with the responsibility of collecting land-revenue were asked to be so strict that the cultivators sold their food-grains for payment of land-revenue to the merchants at cheap prices without taking them to their houses, i.e. to their storage pits.

According to one regulation, 'the sultan ordered the whole of the kharaj (land revenue) of the khalisa towns in the doab to be demanded in kind and taken to royal stores at Delhi.' This contradicts the regulation cited above, and would have flooded the market in Delhi and deprived other towns in the area of the needed food-grains. In practice, kharaj seems to have been taken both in cash and kind.

If the cultivators could sell more, i.e. what was beyond their personal needs and for seed, they could do so. However, the local officials were asked to sign a bond that they would not permit anyone to regrate, or sell at a price higher than the official price. If anyone violated this order, the food-grains were confiscated, and the regrator, i.e. the cultivator or grocer, and the official concerned, severely punished. Barani tells us that the cultivators were not to keep more than 10 man of grains for themselves, but it would not have been easy to enforce such an order. All the food-grains were to be brought to the market (mandis) for food-grains set up by Alauddin, and sold only at official prices.

Alauddin took strict measures to see that the prices laid down by him were strictly observed. An officer (shehna) with an adequate force was appointed in charge of the market with strict instructions to punish anyone who violated the orders.

Barani says that in consequence the price of grains fell. Thus, wheat was sold for 7 1/2 jital per man, barley for 4 jital, superior quality rice for 5 jital, grams 5 jital etc. Calculated in terms of modern weights, these came per rupee to 88 sers of wheat, 98 sers for gram and superior quality rice. Even for contemporaries, these were very cheap prices.



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Alauddin also instituted a system of rationing during times of scarcity. Each grocer was issued an amount of grains from the government stores bearing in mind the population of the ward. No individual was allowed to buy more than half a man at one time. But this was not applied to the nobles. If they did not have villages or lands of their own, they were issued grains in accordance with the number of their dependents.

Barani says that in consequence of these measures, even during times of famine there was no shortage of food-grains at Delhi and the price of food-grains did not increase even by a dam or a dirham. This is supported by Isami, a contemporary of Barani, who says that once on account of famine, such a vast crowd of people had collected in the market for grains (mandi) that two or three of the weaker people were crushed to death. Alauddin ordered grain to be collected, and sold at prices prevailing before the famine.

The second market, the cloth-market, which also sold dry fruits, herbs, ghee, oil etc. which could be kept for a long time was called sarai-i-adl. Alauddin ordered that all cloth brought by the merchants from different parts of the country including foreign lands, was to be stored and sold only in this market at government rates. If any commodity was sold even at a jital higher than the official price, it would be confiscated and the seller punished. To ensure an adequate supply of all the commodities, all the merchants whether Hindu or Muslim, were registered and a deed taken from them that they would bring the same quantities of commodities to the sarai-adl every year, and sell them at government rates.

These steps were not new, but two steps show fresh thinking. First, the rich Multani merchants, i.e. those who brought commodities from long-distances including foreign countries, were given an advance of 20 lakh tankas from the treasury, on condition that they did not sell them to any intermediaries, but sold them at the sarai-adl at official rates. Second, the power and responsibility for obeying these orders were given to a body of merchants themselves. We are told that thanks to these rulers, so much cloth was brought to Delhi that it remained unused for years.

Finally, in order to ensure that costly cloth was not purchased by people and given to others who would take it out of Delhi, and sold in the neighbouring towns at four to five times the price, an officer was appointed to issue permits to amirs, maliks, etc for the purchase of these costly commodities in accordance with their income.

As in the case of food-grains, Barani gives us a long list of the prices of different types of cloth and other commodities. These are only indicative of the cheapness of things. Thus, for one tanka a person could buy 40 yards of coarse, or 20 yards of fine-woven cotton cloth, one ser of coarse sugar for 1 1/2 jital, 1/2 ser of ghee for 1 jital, 3 ser of til oil for 1 jital etc.<sup>1</sup>

The third market dealt with horses, cattle and slaves. The supply of horses of good quality at fair prices was important both for the military department and the soldier. The horse trade was more or less a monopolistic trade, the overland trade being monopolised by Multanis and Afghans. But they were sold in the market by middle-men or dallals. According to Barani, the rich dallals were as powerful as the officials of the market, and were shameless in their dealings, resorting to bribery and other corrupt practices. The horse-merchants were in league with the dallals to raise the price of horses.

### **Alauddin's silver tanka contained about one tola or 250 mg of silver, 48 to 50 jitals of copper made a tanka.**

Alauddin took harsh measures against such dallals. They were banished from the town, and some of them imprisoned in forts. Then, with the help of other dallals, the quality and the price of horses was fixed. Horses of first quality were priced between 100 and 120 tankas, those of the second category 80 to 90 tankas, and those of the third 65 to 70 tankas. The price of ordinary horses or tattos which were not used in the army was 10 to 25 tankas.

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Alauddin wanted that rich men and dallals should not go to the horse-market, and that the horse merchants should sell the horses directly to the military department (diwan-i-arz). But his efforts to eliminate the middle-men were not quite successful, though Barani tells us that the prices of the horses fixed by Alauddin remained stable throughout his reign.

Similarly, the price of slave boys and girls and of cattle were also fixed, although the need for doing so is not clear, for they were neither a necessity, nor needed for military purposes. Apparently, these prices were fixed to make life a little easier for the nobles, the richer sections including government servants, and the soldiers who had become accustomed to buy slaves for domestic and personal service. Likewise, the animals were needed for meat, transport, and for milk and milk products.

Barani says that the stability of prices under Alauddin, which was a cause of wonder, was due to Alauddin's strictness. The Sultan kept himself informed of the prices through a series of informers, even sending small boys to the market to see that the shopkeepers did not cheat them by under-weighing. In his characteristic way, Barani tells us that if a shop-keeper under-weighed, twice the amount of flesh would be cut off from his body! Perhaps, exemplary punishments would have been given in a few cases. But the scheme itself could have hardly functioned for a decade or more without the minimum support of the traders, and the wider community.

It is obvious from the foregoing that the measures were not designed to harm anyone community. As we have seen, the merchants whose names were entered into a register were both Hindus and Muslims. So also the Multanis and the dallals of the horse-merchants who were so tightly controlled that, we are told, they were fed up with their lives and wished for death. The cultivators most certainly would have been affected adversely by the low price of food-grains, and the high land-revenue.

We are told that after the death of Alauddin his market reforms vanished. Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah who succeeded him, not only released the large number of persons imprisoned or exiled from Delhi on account of various offences, he withdrew the laws which, we are told, denied freedom to people to eat, wear, speak or buy or sell what they wanted.

Barani states that the market reforms of Alauddin were applicable only to Delhi. If that was so, it was hardly necessary to control the supply of food-grains all over the doab. Also, soldiers and their families did not live at Delhi alone, but in various towns and townships (qasbas), from Lahore to Awadh. Barani himself suggests in a work devoted to political theory that whatever was done at the capital was generally followed in the other towns. However, we have no means of ascertaining how effective were the price controls in the towns other than Delhi.

Apparently, the regulations of Alauddin resulted in a lot of vexatious, bureaucratic controls and corruption. Perhaps Alauddin would have been more successful if he had controlled the prices of essential commodities only, or those meant for direct use by the military. But he tried to control the price of everything from "caps to socks, from combs to needles, vegetables, soups, sweet-meats to chapatis etc." Such widespread, centralised controls were bound to be violated, inviting punishments which led to resentment.

Thus, by their very nature, Alauddin Khalji's market reforms were temporary, and largely meant to tide over an emergency, or a particular situation.

## **THE TERRITORIAL EXPANSION OF THE DELHI SULTANATE (UPTO 1328)**

We have seen how during the previous 85 years since the establishment of the Delhi sultanate in 1206, successive sultans, far from undertaking any territorial expansion, were hard put to prevent the fragmentation of the sultanate itself, partly on account of the struggle for power at Delhi, partly on account of the attempts of individual Turkish amirs to carve out their own spheres of influence, the Mongol incursions, and the ceaseless efforts of dispossessed Hindu rajas to regain their territories. However, with the rise to power of the Khaljis, and greater openness on the part of the sultanate in recruiting as officials, admin-

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istrators, and soldiers, other elements in addition to Turks, i.e. Indian Muslims and Hindus, and internal restructuring of the administration, conditions were created for the rapid territorial expansion of the sultanate.

The expansion itself took place in several phases. In the first phase, the areas not far from Delhi, such as Gujarat, Rajasthan and Malwa were brought under the control of Delhi. In the second phase, the principalities in modern Maharashtra and the Deccan were raided, and compelled to accept Delhi's vassalage. No attempt, however, was made during this phase to bring them under the direct control of the Delhi sultans. The third phase, which began during the last years of Alauddin's reign, and climaxed during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's reign (1320-24), saw the extension of central control over the entire Deccan. Bengal was also brought under control once again.

Thus, in a brief period of 30 years, the territorial limits of the Delhi sultanate had expanded to cover almost entire India. We shall study this process as a continuous evolving enterprise, rather than one undertaken by individually ambitious sultans.

### **(a) Gujarat:**

Although the Turks had been trying to conquer Gujarat since the time of the Ghaznavids, their attacks had been frustrated by the Chaulaukyan rulers of Gujarat. Later, Muizzuddin M. Ghuri had launched an attack on Anhilwara, and occupied it, but could not hold it for long. However, Gujarat was far too important to be neglected by the Turks for long. Nor only was it a fertile and populous area, it was a centre for handicraft production, especially in the production of textiles. Its chief port, Khambayat (Cambay), carried on a rich trade with West Asia, as also with countries of South-East Asia and China. Apart from Jains, Hindus and Bohras, Arab merchants had been settled in Khambayat for a long time. On account of its prosperity, gold and silver had been accumulated by the rulers, and was also lodged in its rich temples. Another reason for the rulers of Delhi to covet Gujarat was that with the domination of the Mongols over Central and West Asia, and their continuous attacks on India, the supply of horses from Central Asia and Iraq had been effected. As we have seen, Balban had to content himself largely with horses of Indian breed. Control over Gujarat could ensure a regular supply of Arabi, Iraqi and Turki horses which were needed by the army, and which had been an important item of trade with Iran and Iraq etc. for a long time.

Thus, the Delhi sultans hardly needed any excuse to invade Gujarat. But such an excuse was provided when, according to tradition, the Chief Minister of the new ruler, Karan, invited Alauddin to invade Gujarat because Karan had forcefully seized his wife in his absence, and done other illegal acts. In 1299, Alauddin deputed two of his leading generals, Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, to lead an expedition against Gujarat. Ulugh Khan, who marched from Sindh, attacked and plundered Jaisalmer on the way. The joint forces then marched to Gujarat across Chittor, despite opposition from the Rana. Reaching Guhilwara, they thoroughly sacked and plundered it. Rai Karan was taken by surprise, and fled to Deogarh. All his women and treasures, including the beautiful chief queen, Kamla Devi, were captured by the Turks. She was taken to Delhi where Alauddin took her into his harem. Many of the other leading towns of Gujarat, including Surat, and many monasteries and temples including Somnath which had been rebuilt, were thoroughly plundered. At Khambayat, neither Hindus nor Muslim merchants were spared. It was here that the slave, Malik Kafur, who later played a prominent part in the Deccan campaigns, and who was called hazar-dinari, i.e. bought for 1000 gold dinars, was taken by force from a Muslim merchant.

There seems to have been no serious resistance anywhere to the Turks because Karan had just succeeded and set up a new dynasty, the last ruler having died issueless. As we have seen, Karan did not enjoy much local support due to his misdeeds. After fleeing from his capital, Karan kept control over Baglana in South Gujarat where the Turks did not disturb him for some time. The rest of Gujarat passed under Turkish control, and a Turkish governor was appointed to administer it.

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## **(b) Rajasthan**

Although Ajmer had been under the control of the Turks since the time of Muizzuddin M. Ghuri, as also Nagaur and Mador, the sultans had not been able to extend their control over Rajasthan beyond these places, efforts at bringing under their control Ranthambhor, the most powerful fort in Rajasthan, having succeeded only for a brief time. Jalaluddin Khalji had invested Ranthambhor, but had to return unsuccessful, realizing the strength of the fort and the Rana's determination to resist.

After bringing Gujarat under his rule, it was necessary for Alauddin to bring Rajasthan as also Malwa under his control in order to secure his communications with Gujarat. As it was, the ruler of Mewar had opposed the movement of Turkish armies across his dominions to Gujarat. Following his example, the ruler of Jalor had also refused entry to the Turkish army. Finally, on the way back from Gujarat, the Mongols, called neo-Muslims, had risen in rebellion over the question of distribution of spoils gained in Gujarat between them and the Sultan. Although the rebellion had been suppressed, two Mongol officers along with their followers had sought shelter at Ranthambhor. The ruler, Hammir Deva, a direct descent of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, had refused to surrender the fugitives, deeming it as a matter of honour, and proud of the strength of his fort. Hence, in 1301, Alauddin ordered Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan, the conquerors of Gujarat, to proceed against Ranthambhor. While investing the fort, Nusrat Khan went too near while directing operations, and was killed. Taking advantage of confusion in the Turkish camp, the Rana came out of the fort, defeated Ulugh Khan in battle and forced him to retreat to Jhain, which was 12 miles away and had been the Rana's capital before he took refuge at Ranthambhor.

In this situation, it became necessary for Alauddin to proceed to Ranthambhor personally. He did so after quelling a conspiracy against him. Reaching Ranthambhor, he closely invested the fort. Although the Turks were not able to scale the walls of the fort, after the siege had lasted almost for months, there was acute shortage of food and water inside the fort. Hence the Rajputs performed the fearful jauhar ceremony: all the women entered the funeral pyre, and the men came out to die fighting. In this battle, the Mongols fought and died side by side with the Rajputs. The poet, Amir Khusrau, who had accompanied Alauddin, describes the fort, and refers to jauhar in one of his well-known poetical works.

After the conquest of Ranthambhor came the turn of Chittor which was also reputed to be one of the strongest forts of Rajasthan. Although Chittor had for long been a bone of contention between its Guhil rulers and the Chalukayas of Gujarat, it was at the time under the control of the Guhil ruler, Ratan Singh, who had just succeeded his father. The poet Khusrau, who had accompanied Alauddin, describes the siege in detail, and says that after it had lasted for six months, Ratan Singh came out and surrendered. He was well treated, but 30,000 peasants who had taken refuge in the fort were slaughtered. Khusrau makes no mention of jauhar at Chittor.

Khusrau's account is supported by all the contemporaries. None of them mention the legend of Padmini which is mentioned for the first time in a literary work in the first quarter of the 15th century. It was embellished with various fanciful stories and adventures by Malik Muhammad Jaisi, a hundred years later. The story is too well-known and need not be repeated here. It has been rejected by most modern historians, including Gauri Shankar Ojha, one of the leading Rajasthan historian. The Padmini legend, therefore, need not detain us any further. It may be mentioned that after its conquest, the governorship of the fort of Chittor was given to Khizr Khan, the son of Alauddin.

After the conquest of Chittor, most of the rajas in Rajasthan, including those of Marwar and Harauti (Bundi) submitted. As it was, Mador in Marwar had been under Turkish occupation. Jaisalmer had been subdued earlier during the Gujarat campaign, as we have noted. Siwana and Jalor, adjacent to Gujarat, both of which were strongly fortified, put up stout resistance, but were occupied and plundered in 1308 and 1311.



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Thus, in a period of about 10 years, entire Rajasthan had been brought under Turkish domination. However, except keeping hold of Ajmer, and of some of the powerful forts, such as Ranthambhor and Chittor, no attempt was made by Alauddin to establish direct rule over any of the Rajput states. In fact, he apparently tried to establish cordial relations with some of the Rajput rajas. Thus, according to tradition, Maldeo, brother of the ruler of Jalor, served Alauddin loyally with a force of 5000 horses, and that around 1313, Alauddin made him governor of Chittor in place of Khizr Khan.

This policy of not interfering with local administration, and befriending the Rajput rulers was later extended by Alauddin with great advantage to Deogir and to some of the other Deccan rulers. Thus, Alauddin was the first ruler in the Delhi sultanate to put forward in a rudimentary form a Rajput policy based on recognition of mutual interests.

### **(c) Malwa**

After the conquest of Chittor, Alauddin gave his attention to Malwa which was a rich and extensive tract with many populous cities. According to Amir Khusrau, it was so extensive that even wise geographers were unable to delimit its frontiers. Although Malwa had been invaded both by Iltutmish and later by Alauddin during the rule of Jalaluddin, and great plunder had been obtained, little effort had been made to bring it under direct occupation. Its conquest by Alauddin was both to bring under control the route to Gujarat, as also to open the way to the south.

In 1305, Ainul Mulk Multani was deputed to conquer Malwa. The Rai had a force of 30-40,000 horse, but it was no match for the Turkish forces. The Rai was pursued from Ujjain to Mandu where he had taken shelter, defeated, and killed. Unlike Rajasthan, entire Malwa was annexed, and Ainul Mulk was appointed its governor.

Thus, apart from Bengal which remained independent till the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-24), entire northern India came under the control of the sultans of Delhi. Orissa was also invaded and subdued during the reign of Ghiyasuddin, but was not annexed.

### **(d) Maharashtra and South India—first phase:**

After successfully dealing with the Mongol invasions, and reorganizing his army and internal administration, Alauddin was prepared to undertake his most daring design, viz. raiding the Deccan states and making them subordinate to Delhi. Maharashtra and south India were known to be lands of treasures and gold. Their famed handicrafts and flourishing ports had resulted in an influx of gold which had been hoarded by generations of rulers. The country was dotted with rich temples many of which were also engaged in inland and overseas trade, and money-lending. Thus, it was an area where both money and glory could be gained. As it turned out, the enterprise succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams because the states in the area had been engaged in waging wars against each other in the characteristic manner, completely oblivious of developments in north India, or that the developments there could pose any danger to them.

### **Maharashtra**

Alauddin's first contact with Maharashtra had come about in 1296 when starting from Kara, and traversing the difficult country of Bundelkhand, he had suddenly appeared before Deogir, with a force of 8,000 horse, and defeated the Yadava king Ram Chandra, and then his son, Singhana. He had returned laden with wealth and a vague promise on Ram Chandra's part for the payment of an annual tribute.

After the conquest of Chittor and Malwa, Alauddin turned his attention towards Deogir once again. An excuse for invasion was found, though one was hardly needed in those times, that Ram Chandra had stopped paying the annual tribute during the last two to three years. According to some, this was due to the influence of his son, Singhana, who chafed at his father's subordination to Delhi.

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In 1308, two armies were despatched to Deogir, one to oust Karan, the former ruler of Gujarat, from Baglana in south Gujarat which he had managed to hold on to with the help of Ram Chandra. He was defeated after a stiff fight. The armies then joined Malik Kafur who had been deputed to punish Ram Chandra. The Yadava ruler offered only light resistance, and submitted to Kafur. According to Amir Khusrau, Alauddin had ordered Malik Kafur not to injure the Rai and his family in any way. Hence, Ram Chandra or Ram Deo was honourably escorted to Delhi, Deogir remaining under the charge of his son, Singhana. Alauddin showered pearls and precious stones on Ram Deo when he entered his court. He was kept at Delhi for six months, ostensibly as a guest. According to Khusrau, "everyday his status and honour increased." He was then allowed to return to Deogir with his sons and family. At the time of his departure, Ram Deo was presented one lakh of gold tankas, given the title of Rai Rayan and a golden coloured canopy (chatr) which was the sign of royalty. Nausari, a district in Gujarat, was also allotted to him as a gift. It was perhaps at this time that Ram Deo gave his daughter, Jhatyapali, in marriage to Alauddin. Earlier, Deval Devi, a daughter of Rani Kamla Devi of Gujarat who had entered Alauddin's harem and gained influence over him on account of her beauty, was captured during the campaign against her father, Karan. At Kamla Devi's instance, Deval Devi was married to Khizr Khan, son and heir-apparent of Alauddin. Though Khizr Khan had a sad end, we can see in this a gradual expansion of Alauddin's policy of building relations with Rajput rajas.

## **The Southern States**

The most important states in south India at the time were the Kakatiyas of Warangal (modern Telangana); and the Hoysalas with their capital at Dvar Samudra (modern Halebidu in Karnataka). Further to the south were the Pandyas of Mabar and Madurai (Tamilnadu). All these powers were engaged in constant wars with each other and with the Yadavas of Deogir in territorial disputes.

Having secured a base and a reliable ally at Deogir, between 1309 and 1311, Alauddin sent two expeditions under Malik Kafur to make the southern states disgorge their accumulated wealth, and compel them to accept Delhi's suzerainty and pay an annual tribute. Alauddin had no intention of annexing any of these states and bringing them under his direct administration, since he knew that the distances, and differing conditions would make such an attempt difficult and hazardous. According to Isami, who wrote at the same time as Barani, Alauddin had instructed Malik Kafur, while leading the first expedition of Warangal, that "if the rai of Telang accepted subordination (to the sultan), his kingdom should be returned to him, and honoured by being granted khilat (robes) and chatr (royal canopy)." Barani says that Alauddin's instructions were: "If the rai gives up his treasures, elephants and horses, and promises a tribute for the future, accept the arrangement." The same instructions must be assumed to have applied to the second expedition aimed at Dvar Samudra and Mabar.

The first expedition against Warangal in Telangana (1309-10) took six months. Marching through remote and little accessible routes, Kafur reached the fort of Warangal. It had an outside mud wall which was stronger than steel, and an inside fort of stone. After a close siege, when the outer fort had been captured and the fall of the inner fort seemed inevitable, the Rai supplicated for peace, which was agreed to. The treasures surrendered were carried to Delhi on the backs of a thousand camels which were paraded before Alauddin. The Rai also agreed to pay an annual tribute.

Embolded by this success, the following year, Malik Kafur was appointed with an army to invade Dvar Samudra and Mabar. Marching through remote routes as before, and with the help of guidance provided by the Maratha sardars of Ram Deo, Kafur surprised Ballal Deva, the Hoysala ruler, at Dvar Samudra. After a close siege Ballal Deva agreed to the same terms as the ruler of Warangal. He surrendered all his treasure, and agreed to pay an annual tribute. According to Isami, Ballal Deva came to Delhi to wait on Alauddin, and was given 10 lakh tankas, a khilat and a chair, and the kingdom was returned to him.

Kafur then moved against Mabar (Coromandal). But it was not possible to bring to battle the two Pandyan brothers, who were at war with each other. Kafur reached Patan (Masulipatanam) where he found a colony of Muslim merchants. The city was thoroughly ravaged, and none, including the Muslim merchants,

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were spared. Kafur devastated the temple of Chidambaram (near Madras) where he captured many elephants belonging to the Pandyan brothers. He also sacked Madurai. But he had to return without contacting the Pandyan brothers, or effecting any agreement with them. This campaign lasted a year.

These two expeditions not only brought immense wealth to Alauddin, it raised his prestige very high. Malik Kafur gained in public estimation by his skill, daring and success as a military leader. He rose even higher in the estimation of Alauddin who gave him the title of malik naib (regent or personal representative of the sovereign). But in the long run, it led to power going to Kafur's head, and the consequent growth of an anti-Kafur lobby among the nobles which led to his subsequent downfall and death.

The immediate political benefits of the Deccan campaigns were limited. While Deogir remained a firm ally as long as Ram Deo lived, the arrangements with the other south Indian states remained brittle. The payment of an annual tribute promised by them could hardly be ensured without continuous pressure, including military campaigns. Nor could the expeditions lead to greater trade till a greater degree of political stability had been attained. The expeditions, however, paved the way for the next step—annexation.

### **Maharashtra and the Southern States—Second Phase: Annexation:**

Although Alauddin had made non-annexation a deliberate policy with regard to Maharashtra and the southern states, the situation developed in such a way that he had to modify this policy in his own life time. In 1315, Ram Deo of Deogir died, and his son, Bhillama, repudiated allegiance to Alauddin. Alauddin sent Malik Kafur to punish Bhillama, with instructions to send him to Delhi, and to annex the kingdom. But Bhillama escaped. Kafur occupied the fort, and tried to govern the kingdom without displacing the old Maratha chiefs. He was successful only partially, many of the chiefs asserting their independence, while a part of the kingdom remained under the control of members of the old dynasty.

This change of policy on Alauddin's part from non-annexation to annexation needs some explanation. Bhillama's rebellion alone does not appear to be a sufficient cause. Apparently, Alauddin felt that direct Turkish control over Deogir was necessary for keeping the other southern states in line by exerting diplomatic and, if necessary, military pressure on them. Thus, it was a modification, not an abandonment of the policy of non-annexation in the south.

When Mubarak Khalji succeeded Alauddin, he marched on Deogir to bring it effectively under his control. He was able to do so without meeting much opposition. He also sent an expedition against Warangal where the Rai had not paid the annual tribute for several years. The outcome of the siege was the same as before: the Rai submitted when the outer fort had been captured. On the Sultan's side, at first a demand was made for the surrender of five districts, as well as his treasure and elephants. Finally, the Rai agreed to surrender one district, and payment of an annual tribute of 40 gold bricks. This was a partial breach of the policy of non-annexation, but not its abandonment.

The abandonment of Alauddin's policy of non-annexation in the south should really be attributed to Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, and his son and successor, Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Immediately after his accession, Ghiyasuddin ordered his son, Ulugh Khan later known as Muhammad bin Tughlaq, to invade Warangal where the ruler, taking advantage of the confused situation at Delhi, had stopped paying tribute. An army was deputed from Delhi which, after resting at Deogir, proceeded to invest Warangal. After six months siege, the fort was about to fall when rumours of the king's death at Delhi led to a confusion in Ulugh Khan's camp. Taking advantage of the flight of some of the nobles, the Rai attacked and compelled Ulugh Khan to fall back on Deogir.

After the rumours of the king's death had been successfully scotched, and with the help of a new army from Delhi, Ulugh Khan renewed the campaign against Warangal the following year. This time no quarter was given to the Rai. He was compelled to surrender, and sent to Delhi. But on the way he committed suicide. The entire Telangana was now annexed. It was divided into nine districts, and officials were appointed to govern them, and a year's land-revenue collected. The name of Warangal was changed to Sultanpur.

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The conquest of Mabbar followed the conquest of Telangana. Thus, Madurai, the capital of Mabbar, was captured in 1323. It seems that earlier, Malik Kafur had left a Muslim garrison at Madurai, the Pandyan capital, but its effectiveness is not known. The area had also been raided by Khusrau Khan, an officer of Mubarak Khalji. Thus, the Tamil area had been in a state of confusion. The expedition sent during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq reinstalled a Muslim governor at Madurai and the entire Mabbar area was brought under the control of Delhi.

Finally, in 1328, following a rebellion by Gurshasp, a cousin of Muhammad Tughlaq, who took refuge with the ruler of Kampil in south Karnataka, Muhammad bin Tughlaq sent an army, and the Karnataka was also annexed.

Thus, in a brief space of twelve years, the entire south upto the borders of Malabar had been brought under the direct administration of Delhi. Only some areas, including Dvar Samudra, remained under the control of their own rulers. Events soon proved that this was a hasty and ill-considered step. The rapid incorporation of such a vast area, so far away from Delhi and with a different administrative set up and different socio-cultural outlook and traditions, strained the resources of the sultanate to the limit, and soon a process of its disintegration began. Thus, the territorial expansion of the Delhi sultanate brought forward new opportunities, as also new challenges.



## UNIT-VI

# A CENTRALISED ALL-INDIA STATE AND DISINTEGRATION OF THE SULTANATE

### GHIYASUDDIN AND MUHAMMAD BIN TUGHLAQ (1320-1351)

The last years of Alauddin Khalji were disturbed by a painful disease, and intense struggle for power among the nobles. Malik Kafur, the malik naib or vice regent who had the complete confidence of Alauddin, gradually eliminated his opponents, and to clear his way to power had Khizr Khan, the heir apparent, imprisoned and then blinded. After Alauddin's death (1316), Kafur elevated a minor son of Alauddin to the throne, and assumed all powers. But Kafur was overthrown in a month's time, and another son of Alauddin, Mubarak Khalji, ascended the throne. In order to gain popularity, Mubarak Khalji abolished all the agrarian and market control regulations of Alauddin. However, he tried to maintain the position of Alauddin in the Deccan and Gujarat by sending expeditions there. Barani condemns Mubarak Khalji for being a homosexual and a pervert, though these "vices" were not unusual among the Turkish warrior class.

The main criticism of Barani was of the sultan giving undue favour to a group of new Muslims, the Baradus, whom he calls "igoble". The Baradus, who belonged to a warrior caste, forged ahead under their leader, Khusaru Malik, who assassinated the young Sultan, and assumed the throne himself (1320). The Khalji dynasty thus came to an end. Barani accuses the Baradus and their Hindu supporters of starting idol-worship in the palace, of insulting Islam and of strengthening the ways of infidelity day by day. Modern research does not support these charges. The Baradus did not try to monopolize power, and received the support of a sizeable section among the Alai nobility and the Muslims of Delhi. The standard of rebellion against them was raised by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq who was the warden of the marches against the Mongols, and was an experienced warrior. The Baradus could hardly stand against him in battle, and within two months, they were defeated and dispersed. The new ruler, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq was, however, destined to rule only for a short time. After setting the administration to order, and appointing his son, Ulugh Khan, to restore the Imperial position in Warangal, and sending a noble to deal with a rebellion in Gujarat, Ghiyasuddin marched on Bengal to reduce it to submission. As is well-known, on his return from the successful campaign, a pavilion erected by his son, Ulugh Khan (Muhammad Tughlaq), to welcome him, crashed and crushed him to death (1325). Modern research does not support the idea that it was due to an intrigue on the part of the prince, or was the effect of lightning. The crash of the hastily erected building may have been due to the parading of captured elephants.

### PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES

As has been pointed out in the previous Chapter, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, and his son and successor, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, rejected Alauddin's policy of non-annexation of distant states and of being content with their formal submission and sending tribute regularly. Barani tells us that both Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad bin Tughlaq were highly ambitious. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was not prepared to leave a scrap of territory in India which was not subordinate to him and under his control. Thus, during their rule, the direct control of Delhi was extended to Warangal (Telangana), Malabar (Coromandal), Madurai (Tamil Nadu), and Dvar Samudra (Karnataka) upto the southern tip of India. Whenever a territory was annexed, Muhammad Tughlaq would appoint a set of revenue officials to assess it. It was with their help that the accounts of distant provinces and tracts were audited in the office of the wazir, "in the same (detailed) manner as the villages and towns in the doab." (Barani).

Such a rapid expansion of the directly ruled territories, and such a high degree of centralisation, had their own pitfalls which Muhammad Tughlaq was to realize later.

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There are two other aspects which have a bearing on the character of the state with which Barani and other contemporary historians were concerned. The first was the question of the welfare of the people. Though Barani praises Alauddin Khalji for his control of the market and (wrongly) lauds him for crushing the Hindus, he criticizes him for his policy of “excessive bloodshed, harsh and tyrannical behaviour, and inflicting hardships on others in order to get his orders obeyed.” In contrast to this, he praises Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq for his concern for the welfare of the people and his policy of moderation so that “the country might not be ruined by the weight of taxation, and the way to improvement be barred.. The Hindus were to be taxed so that they might not be blinded by wealth, and so become discontented and rebellious, nor, on the other hand, be so reduced to poverty and destitution as to be unable to pursue their husbandry.”

Almost for the first time, we see a recognition of the importance of agriculture and handicrafts on the part of the state, and the need to continuously expand cultivation. Thus, the policy of welfare and humanitarianism put forward by Jalaluddin Khalji was reiterated and sought to be revived by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in a more positive manner. He extended this policy of mildness and generosity to the noble families of the time of Alauddin and his son, Kaiqubad. Many of these were leading lives of poverty and neglect. They were given posts and iqta. The revenue-free lands held by theologians, some of them for long periods, were examined and many of them reduced. Those who had received large sums of money as gifts from the previous regime were called to audit, and most of them forced to return the sums.

Regarding the question of the relationship between state and religion, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, though a strict Muslim in his observance of religious practices such as the regular and public prayers, fasting during the month of Ramazan etc., did not accept the narrow interpretation of the sharia regarding the humiliation and impoverishment of the Hindus advocated by some theologians. Muhammad Tughlaq also was strict in himself observing the injunctions regarding prayers, fasting etc., and was strict in seeing that others observed them also. He was a learned man, and had a deep understanding of many branches of knowledge such as philosophy, mathematics, tibb (medicines), religion etc. He was interested in Persian and Hindi poetry, and had read widely. Barani’s criticism, which we may treat as a compliment, was that he was a “rationalist”, that is, he would not accept anything except by logical proof. This meant that while he did not reject the essential articles of the Muslim faith, he was not prepared to accept many traditions and practices merely on the basis of faith. Barani accuses Muhammad bin Tughlaq of combining in his person the traditions of prophethood (nubuwwat) with sultanate, i.e. of trying to combine spiritual and political authority. This charge has no basis, except that Muhammad Tughlaq refused to accept the spiritual authority of many theologians and mystics. It might be recalled that Barani also accuses Alauddin Khalji of wanting to set up a new religion, merely because he was not prepared to blindly accept the authority of the sharia. Though not a believer in mysticism, Muhammad Tughlaq respected the Sufi saints, and was the first sultan to visit the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. He also built mausoleums over the tombs of many Sufi saints, including Nizamuddin Auliya at Delhi.

That Muhammad Tughlaq was a man of an open mind, and not a blind dogmatist is also demonstrated by his associating with jogis and Jain saints such as Raj Shekhar and Jinaprabha Suri. While in Gujarat, he visited some of the Jain temples there, and gave them grants. He is also known to have associated himself with some Hindu festivals, such as Holi.

Barani’s criticism of Muhammad Tughlaq’s faults of character cannot, however, be dismissed out of hand. He is accused of being hot and hasty in character, with an excessive reliance on his own judgement, without heeding the advice of others. Hence, many of his innovations were ill-considered, or launched without “adequate preparations”. Barani, and the Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta, also accuse Muhammad Tughlaq of giving excessive rewards and punishments, and of appointing mean, low-born people to high offices.

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## EXPERIMENTS AND REFORMS

The problems and approaches we have outlined above should be helpful in understanding the many experiments and reforms which Muhammad bin Tughlaq launched, and for which he is so well-known. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was keen to tone up the administration, and bring about uniformity in its functioning. Towards this end, according to Ibn Battutah, he issued large numbers of orders (manshurs). However, only a few of these appear to have been taken up seriously, or to have made an impact. Those have been listed by Barani, and may be divided into two: (a) administrative and political measures, and (b) economic and agrarian reforms. Of course, each influenced the other, so that no rigid demarcation can be made between them.

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL MEASURES: EXODUS TO DEOGIRI

One of the most controversial step taken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq early in his reign was his so-called transfer of capital to Deogiri which was renamed Daultabad, and the alleged orders of the sultan ordering a mass transfer of the people from Delhi to the new capital. A careful analysis of the contemporary and later sources show that Barani grossly exaggerated when he alleges that the steps led to the ruination of Delhi which, till then, had equalled the leading cities of the Islamic world, Cairo and Baghdad. Some others have alleged that the step was taken by the sultan to punish the people of Delhi who had become hostile to him. However, there is evidence that the step was not taken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in a pique, but was the result of considerable thought, and had been carefully prepared for.

The motive of the step taken by the sultan has been set out by Barani himself, viz. that it was central to all parts of the empire. As we have seen, during the reign of Ghiyasuddin and the early years of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the direct rule of Delhi had been extended to cover almost the entire south. Since the days of Alauddin, Deogiri had been the virtual base of operations in the Deccan. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had spent a number of years in the south, both as a prince and as a ruler, campaigning, and was familiar with Deogiri which had a pleasant climate, being surrounded by hills. He wanted to have a second capital in the south so that he could control it more easily. According to a 17th century author, Ferishta, some of the councillors of the sultan suggested Ujjain in Malwa which had been made his capital by Raja Vikramaditya for the same reason. But the sultan preferred Deogiri, both because he was more familiar with it, and because it was already one of the great cities of India.

The decision to make Deogiri a second capital was apparently taken in 1327 when Muhammad bin Tughlaq passed Deogiri after his journey to the Karnataka to suppress the rebellion of his cousin, Gurshasp. In preparation for the new step, he planted trees on both sides of the road and at a distance of every two miles (a karon) set up halting stations. Provision was made for food and drink being available for the travellers at the station. Land was allotted from the income of which the staff working there could draw their salaries. We are told that at each station, a sufi saint was stationed, and a khanqah (hospice for the saint) built. Soon afterwards the sultan's mother was sent to Deogiri or Daultabad. The sultan's mother was accompanied by many nobles, leading men of the city, and the entire royal house-hold including slaves, servants, and treasures. Sometime afterwards, the sultan summoned all the sufis, ulema and grandees of Delhi. This is placed in the year 1328-29.

It is clear that no mass exodus of the population at Delhi was ordered. However, it seems that a good deal of pressure was exerted upon the people to migrate, the royal orderlies even inspecting their houses for the purpose. Those travelling to Daultabad were divided into caravans for purposes of convenience. The journey was long, and undertaken during the hot months, so that many people died on the way. Full preparations had been made for welcoming those who reached Daultabad. The city had been divided into wards (mohallas), with separate quarters for troops, the nobles, the civil servants, the judges and the learned men, the merchants and artisans. Mosques, markets, public baths etc. were built in each mohalla. The Sultan purchased the houses and dwelling of those at Delhi who had migrated and wanted the government to do so. Liberal grants were made to people, both at the time of their departure at Delhi and at their arrival at Daultabad where free boarding and lodging was provided to them.

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Nevertheless, most of the migrants were not happy. They had got used to Delhi where many of them had lived for more than a hundred years, and which they regarded as their home. That many of the Turks had started looking upon India with love and affection is obvious from the writings of the poet, Amir Khusrau. For them, Daultabad was an alien land, full of infidels.

Meanwhile, Delhi was not deserted. Coins struck at Delhi, two Sanskrit inscriptions in baolis (sunken wells with steps) built by some wealthy Hindus in the environs of Delhi at this time prove it. But, we are told, many of the houses had been shut up, and the bad characters in the city started looting them. Hence, Muhammad bin Tughlaq invited sufis, learned men and others living in neighbouring cities to move to Delhi. In 1334, when Ibn Battuta visited Delhi, it was fully settled. Nor was there any question of the capital being shifted from Delhi. Rather, Daultabad became a second capital, as coins struck at Daultabad testify. However, the Sultan's ambitious project soon struck a reef. In 1334-35, there was a serious rebellion in Mabbar (modern Coromandal in Tamilnadu). The sultan marched to the south to suppress the rebellion. While he was at Bidar, there was an outbreak of bubonic plague in which many of his soldiers perished. Muhammad Tughlaq himself was taken ill, and retreated to Daultabad. Rumors spread of the sultan's death, and soon the entire south, including Mabbar, Dwar-Samudra (Karnataka), and Warangal (Telangana) were lost to the Delhi sultanate. Thus the *raison d'être* of keeping Daultabad as a second capital disappeared. It was around this time, i.e. between 1335-37, that the Sultan permitted the people at Daultabad to return to Delhi.

Thus, the exodus to Daultabad proved to be a costly failure, and brought misery to many people. However, its effects were felt largely by the upper classes, not by the people of Delhi. It is not clear why Muhammad bin Tughlaq ordered the sufis, clergymen and the learned people to migrate to Daultabad. Perhaps he felt that he or the state could not function in an atmosphere where mystics and men of Islamic learning were not present. He might also have felt that by their example, the sufis and the men of learning would spread Islam, and the hold of the sultan there become more secure. Whatever may have been his motives, one long-term effect of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's exodus to Daultabad was that many of the sufis and men of learning decided to stay back at Daultabad, so that in course of time it became a centre of Islamic learning. But the beneficiaries of this were not the sultans of Delhi, but the Bahmani rulers who established their rule in the area soon afterwards.

## THE KHURASAN AND KARACHIL EXPEDITIONS

Although the Khurasan and Karachil expeditions, and the recruitment of a large army by Muhammad bin Tughlaq, are mentioned by Barani separately, we may take them together as they were interconnected.

The Khurasan expedition was closely connected to events in Central and West Asia, and with Muhammad bin Tughlaq's desire to make Sindh and the Punjab safe at all times from the danger of recurrent Mongol invasions. After the death of Chingiz Khan, one branch of his descendants, the Chaghtai branch, had dominated Turkistan and Transoxiana, while another branch, led by Halaku, had captured Iran, Iraq etc. Ghur, Ghazni, Afghanistan etc. which provided access to India was a bone of contention between the two. However, both the branches were in decay at this time, the conditions in Transoxiana being unsettled after the death of Tarmashirin whose invasion of India in 1326-27 has been mentioned earlier. We are told that Muhammad bin Tughlaq wanted to overthrow the descendants of Chingiz. Khurasan was used vaguely to describe the area, and Barani adds Iraq and sometimes Trans-oxiana to it. To realise his objective, Muhammad bin Tughlaq invited and gave lavish grants to some of the leading men of those areas. He also raised a large army of 370,000 soldiers. They were paid by the grant of *iqtas* but, Barani says, no care was taken about enforcing the brand of the horses, or the description of the soldiers, or testing their swordsmanship. They were kept idle for a year, and then dispersed since it was not possible to pay them any longer.

The rapid raising of the army and its nature suggests that it was not meant to be a major enterprise, and perhaps only aimed at extending the sultan's control over Kabul, Ghazni, etc. Muhammad bin Tughlaq's interest in the area is shown by the fact that after the failure of Tarmashirin's invasion (1326-27), he



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frequently sent money to the government of Ghazni, and almost took the Qazi of Ghazni into his pay, a fact which Barani deplors. However, conditions were not ripe even for this limited enterprise, and hence it was abandoned.

The Qarachil expedition (1333) is placed soon after the Khurasan expedition. This expedition was apparently aimed at the Kulu-Kangra region of Himachal. However, Barani quite wrongly links it to the Khurasan expedition and says that its conquest would have enabled him to capture horses (from Turkistan), and provide an easier road to Transoxiana! Some later writers, such as Badayuni and Ferishta, call it the expedition to China and Himachal. Medieval ideas of geography were very vague, and these historians thought that Khitai or old China was just across the Himalayas. As it was, the expedition proved a failure. The commander of the Delhi armies advanced too far into the mountains so that his retreat was cut off by the defending forces, and almost the entire army of 10,000 was destroyed. However, this expedition was not a total failure because, after some time, the ruler of the area patched up a treaty with Muhammad bin Tughlaq, agreeing to pay him a certain sum of money for the use of the territory lying at the foot hills. He also accepted the sultan's overlordship.

## **ECONOMIC AND AGRARIAN REFORMS: TOKEN CURRENCY**

**Token currency:** One of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's ambition was to reform the coinage and, according to a modern historian, Dr. Ishwari Prasad, from his mints in different parts of the empire, various kinds of coins were issued which were unequalled in the artistic perfection of their design, execution and finish. An experiment which Muhammad bin Tughlaq launched after the exodus to Deogiri in 1329-30, was the token currency which has been little understood and much condemned.

He issued coins of copper and brass which were to exchange as equal with silver and gold. The idea of a token currency is known to everyone in the modern world, but it was a novelty in medieval times. However, it was not a totally new thing. Paper currency in China was known. The Mughal ruler, Kublai Khan, had introduced in the first year of his reign in 1261 a paper currency called the Chan which had lasted throughout his reign till his death in 1294. It had been accepted by everyone including foreign traders. This fact was widely known, and it is referred to by Barani to explain the background of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's action.<sup>1</sup> Later, in 1294, an Iranian king, Qai Katu, had tried to introduce the paper Chan in his country, but it had led to serious disturbances, and had to be discontinued after eight days.

There has been a great deal of controversy regarding the motives of the sultan in introducing the token currency. According to Barani, it was part of his ambition to conquer all the inhabited quarters of the world for which a huge army was needed and a large treasury to pay them. Thus, it was for the purpose of supplementing the treasury. But Barani contradicts himself when he goes on to say that the sultan's treasury had been exhausted by his reckless grant of gifts and awards. However, shortage of gold and silver could not have been a major reason for the step because, when the experiment failed, the sultan called in the token coins, and paid gold and silver in exchange for them.

The experiment failed largely because the sultan was unable to prevent forging of the new coins. Barani in his picturesque language says that the 'house of every Hindu became a mint'. Perhaps, what he implied was that the gold-smiths who were Hindus knew how to make alloys of copper and brass coins, and did so. The state suffered a big loss because the khuts and muqaddams in the rural areas paid the land-revenue in the copper and brass coins, and purchased arms and horses with the same currency. Soon, there was such an abundance of these new coins that their value depreciated rapidly and they became "as worthless as stones and potsherds". Trade and commerce began to be disrupted. Hence, in anger, Muhammad bin Tughlaq cancelled his orders, and redeemed the token coins by gold and silver coins. This could have been done only for the coins issued from the royal mints. The token coins issued by Muhammad bin Tughlaq were both in copper and brass. None of the earlier sultans had issued any coins in brass which was an alloy of copper with tin and zinc etc. According to an eminent modern historian, Professor Muhammad Habib, Muhammad bin Tughlaq had issued coins of bronze which had distinct inscriptions

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in Persian and Arabic to mark the new coins. Confusion across because ordinary people could not easily distinguish between these and the forged coins. The forged coins brought by people for redemption, but not accepted by the government; lay heaped in mounds outside the fort for a long time.

The experiment if successful, would have led to an expansion of India's trade and commerce because there was a worldwide shortage of silver at the time. This is reflected in the reduction of the silver content of the tanka by Muhammad bin Tughlaq from 178 to 140 grains early in his reign. The failure of the token currency must certainly have affected the treasury adversely. But it was not too serious a blow, or upset public life. It was given up by 1333, three years after its introduction. Thus, no issues of the token coins are available after 732 hijri or 1332-33. The token coins are not mentioned by Ibn Battutah who came to Delhi in 1334. This shows that the entire episode had been speedily forgotten.

The failure of these three experiments—the exodus to Deogiri, the failure of the Khurasan expedition, and the withdrawal of the token currency as also the disastrous result of the Karchil campaign must have affected the public reputation of the Sultan, as also his treasury. However, the resources of the empire were still vast, and the loss to the treasury must have been quickly made up. But it seems to have encouraged the practice of letting out big tracts of land on revenue-farming terms (*muqata*)—a development to which we shall revert later on.

Meanwhile, certain agrarian measures of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, epidemics, and a famine which lasted for six to seven years and affected large parts of the doab and Malwa, created serious public distress, and a widespread peasant uprising.

We are told that Ghiyasuddin had replaced Alauddin's system of measurement for the fields by sharing of the produce. This was advantageous to the peasant because it made allowance for a total or partial failure of crops. According to Barani, the Sultan's policy was that increase in the incidence of taxation was to be gradual, and such that it did not affect the prosperity of the peasantry. Instructions were issued to the officials to see that cultivation increased from year to year, and that the revenue also increased proportionately. We do not know what he actually charged from the cultivators, but there seems no reason to believe that he reduced it to one-fifth, as argued by some modern historians.

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq came to the throne, he attempted a substantial increase in the scale of the land-revenue demanded from the cultivators. Barani says that he increased it from "one to ten or one to twenty". This was only a figure of speech, and should not be taken literally to mean either increase from ten to twenty times, or one in ten or twenty, i.e. ten to five per cent. Barani elsewhere uses the words "one to hundred", or "one to thousand" to convey a sense of considerable increase. We are told that new cesses were levied, and the old cesses—grazing tax (*charai*), and house (*ghari*) tax were collected in a rigorous manner, the cattle being branded and the houses counted. Worse, when assessing the yield of a field, not the actual produce, but the standard yield was taken into account. Further, when commuting the state's share into cash, not the actual but the officially assumed prices were used.

These measures, we are told, led to the destruction of the peasantry and to an agrarian uprising which affected a large area near Delhi and the doab. Barani says that the Hindus, i.e. the peasants set fire to the grain heaps, and drove away cattle from their homes. Thus, "Whole regions were devastated. Cultivation was totally abandoned." The Sultan adopted the usual methods to suppress rebellion. Thus, *shiqdars* and *faujdars* (revenue collectors and military officials) were ordered to lay waste and plunder the country. In consequence, many of the *khuts* and *muqaddams* were killed, or took refuge in forests. The Sultan's troops surrounded the jungles and killed everyone whom they found within the jungle. Thus, the entire area from Kannauj to Dalmau was laid waste.

The range and extent of this agrarian rebellion need some explanation for we must remember that Alauddin Khalji had raised the land revenue in the doab to half, given no concessions to the *khuts* and *muqaddams*, and insisted on measurement which put the cultivators in a position of disadvantage when the rains failed, wholly or partially. Yet the *khuts* and *muqaddams*, or the peasants had not risen in rebellion. Fear

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of drastic punishment by Alauddin is no answer, for Muhammad bin Tughlaq was no less severe. Even if we imagine that Barani exaggerated, as he often does, the reality of a wide-spread peasant rebellion cannot be denied. Does it mean that Muhammad bin Tughlaq had, in effect, raised the land revenue to more than half, the share demanded by Alauddin? If that was so, Barani, who was critical of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, would have said so. A possible explanation is that unlike Alauddin, Muhammad bin Tughlaq was not able to keep a tight control over the local revenue officials. Hence, in the name of realising the standard produce on the basis of officially accepted prices, many of them must have indulged in gross oppressions. Barani says, when peasants of distant regions heard of the ruin and destruction of the peasantry, and fearful that the same orders may be applied to them, they also rose in rebellion. However, this may have been an exaggeration for we do not hear that the rebellion spread to areas outside the doab.

Barani says that the contraction of cultivation in the doab, the ruin of its peasantry, the reduction in the number of grain-carriers (banjaras), and the failure of the grains to reach Delhi led to a famine. The rains, too, failed. Hence, the prices of grains rose very high.

To cope with the famine, relief camps were opened at Delhi, food-grains arriving from Awadh where there was no famine. Muhammad Tughlaq also advanced agricultural loans (sondhar) to dig wells and to buy seed and implements. It seems that the famine began in 1334-35 and lasted for seven years. During this period, Muhammad bin Tughlaq found that the atmosphere of Delhi had become pestilential. Hence, the entire imperial camp moved to a place on the Ganges 80 kms away. This place was called Swarga-dwar ('Gateway to Heaven'), and the Sultan lived there for two years, food-grains being dispatched to him from Awadh. Many notable people from Delhi also moved to the areas where there was no famine.

After returning from Swarga-dwar, Muhammad Tughlaq conceived of a grand design to extend and improve cultivation. A Diwan called 'Diwan-i-Amir-i-Kohi' was set up to take charge of a territory 30 kroh by 30 kroh (roughly 100kms, by 100 kms). He planned to extend cultivation in the area so that "one span of land would not remain uncultivated." The intention was to bring barren (banjar) land under cultivation, not uncultivable (usar) land, as Barani asserts. Simultaneously, whatever was being cultivated would be improved.

In the words of Barani, "thus wheat would be sown instead of barley, and sugarcane instead of wheat", and "grape and date would be planted instead of sugarcane."

Thus, the scheme had two aspects; one, to extend cultivation, and second, to improve the crops. Both would have led to the realisation of higher land-revenue. To implement the scheme, 100 shiqadar were appointed. They were honoured, and given horses, and large sums of money for giving agricultural loans (sondhar). We are told that in this way, 70 lakh tankas and more were advanced by way of sondhar. Afif, who wrote in the time of Firuz Tughlaq, puts this figure still higher, at two crores. Barani says that the entire scheme failed, and during three years, not a thousandth or hundredth part of wasteland was brought under cultivation. He ascribes this to the fact that the persons chosen to implement the scheme were incompetent. He calls them "greedy, impecunious men, without hope of salvation." Apparently, they had no understanding of local conditions, and spent the money taken on loans for their own expenses and needs.

If Muhammad bin Tughlaq had come back from his Gujarat expedition after suppressing the rebellion there, these men would have had to pay a heavy price. However, Muhammad bin Tughlaq died, and his successor, Firuz Tughlaq, wrote off the loans.

Nevertheless, the scheme cannot be called a total failure. The idea of extending and improving cultivation with the help of agricultural loans became a standard practice with later sultans, and became a part of the agricultural policy of the Mughals. Thus, both Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq helped in the evolution of an agrarian policy which matured fully under the Mughals.

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## REBELLIONS AND CHANGES IN THE RULING CLASS

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In order to present the image of a ruler who was confused, went from one project to another which emptied his treasures, and the consequent discontent and outbreak of rebellions which the sultan was unable to control, Barani has lumped together all the rebellions which took place in Muhammad bin Tughlaq's vast empire during a period of 26 years. However, in order to assess the true extent of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's successes and failures, we may divide his reign into three unequal parts, the first two consisting of ten years each, and the third of the remaining five to six years of his reign.

During the first phase (1224-35), Muhammad bin Tughlaq was engaged in consolidating the vast kingdom he had inherited. The only expansion was the conquest of Kampil in south Karnataka following Muhammad bin Tughlaq's march to crush the rebellion of his cousin, Gurshasp. There were rebellions in Multan and Lakhnauti, which were crushed. There was also a rebellion in Sindh (Sehwan) which was brought under control after some time. Despite the failure of his schemes of exodus to Deogiri, Khurasan and Karchil expeditions, and the token currency experiment, the Sultan's prestige remained high, as Ibn Battutah testifies. According to him, the ruler of Delhi was one of the four most powerful rulers of the world at that time, the other three being China, Iraq and the king of Uzbeks.

The second decade (1236-45) began badly with a rebellion in Mabbar, and famine in the doab. The failure of the Mabbar campaign where epidemic played a role, led to the loss of all the other southern states. Bengal was also lost. The Sultan made little effort to recover these distant areas, either because he lacked the resources in men and money, or because he felt that the control and direct administration of these areas from Delhi was an impossible task in the given circumstances. The only area which he considered important, and to which he held on to was Daultabad.

During the period, there were a series of rebellions in north India, and also in the Daultabad region which can be linked either to the discontent of the old nobles, or grasping revenue policies. What are called the sadah nobles also became disaffected during this period. Perhaps, the most important rebellion of the old nobles was by Ainul Mulk, who had been a close friend and associate of the Sultan, and been made governor of Awadh. He had provided the sultan with provisions while at Swarga-Dwar and had suppressed a rebellion at Kara (near Allahabad). Muhammad Tughlaq became suspicious of the growing popularity of Ainul Mulk who had also given shelter to some revenue defaulters. Hence, he issued orders for his transfer to Daultabad, which was the occasion of the rebellion. Although Muhammad bin Tughlaq ultimately pardoned Ainul Mulk, the conflict showed the deep division between the Indian and foreign elements. Ainul Mulk was an Indian, and the bulk of the forces of the wazir who was an enemy of Ainul Mulk were foreigner—Persians, Turks and Khurasam's. These divisions were aggravated further because Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave great patronage to foreigners whom he called "aziz" or friend, and to whom he gave lavish gifts.

Among the foreigners to whom Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave patronage were Mongols. Many of these had come to India as soldiers or lower grade officials. The lower grade officers came to be called sadah. Sadah or hundred (centurian) was the term used in the Mongol military for one who commanded a hundred men. But in India, the word sadah began to be used as a territorial divisions, to signify a hundred villages. This, apparently, was the basis of the pargana which emerges as an administrative unit around this time. The sadah amirs were, however, not all Mongols. Afghans and others were also to be found among them.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq's approach towards the nobility was, however, not based on racial, or on narrow religions considerations. He welcomed not only those families which had been settled in India for long, and had served previous rulers but also admitted to the service persons from the artisan or other classes/castes despised by the Turks, such as gardeners, barbers, cooks, weavers, wine-distillers, musicians, etc. Some of these were converts, and some were Hindus. Thus, Barani mentions Kishan Bazran Indri who was made governor of Sehwan (Sindh). Barani says that these people were given high status, offices and territories to govern. Thus, Najba, a singer, was given charge of Badaun, then Gujarat and Multan; Aziz Khammar, a wine-distiller, was given charge of Malwa. Their elevations to high posts was deeply resented



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by the old nobles, and by the aizza. It is not that these people were incompetent, or were still carrying on their old family/caste professions. They had evidently risen on the basis of merit. But they were not soldiers. Hence, they failed whenever they had to deal with rebellions. Barani not only severely criticizes Muhammad bin Tughlaq for appointing these low, ignoble people, but pours scorn on "the clerks and grain-merchants (bania) who could not distinguish the front (reins and accoutrements) of a horse from its tail."

Thus, Muhammad bin Tughlaq's nobility was very heterogeneous in character, and could not be an instrument on which the sultan could lean in times of difficulty. Even though the low-caste appointees, and many Turkish and Hindustani nobles, remained loyal, the Mongol and Afghan sadah amirs behaved differently. Muhammad bin Tughlaq also tried to induct into the administration members of the religious classes, especially the sufis. Towards this end, he even entered into matrimonial relations with some of them. However, most of the sufis wanted to keep aloof from the state, and did not welcome this. In anger, Muhammad bin Tughlaq gave drastic punishments and executed some of them. Barani says that he put many theologians (ulema), shaikhs, saiyyads, sufis and qalandars (wandering saints) to death. In retaliation, and for his association with the yogis etc., the qazis issued a fatwa making it legal for anyone to rebel against the Sultan. In order to counter this propaganda, Muhammad bin Tughlaq decided to seek a formal rescript from the Caliph, making his rule legal in the eyes of the orthodox. He found out that a relation of the Caliph of Baghdad, who had been killed by Halaku, the Mongol chief, in 1258, was living at Cairo. Representatives of the Caliph, and a descendant of his, reached Delhi in 1339, and were given a lavish reception. Muhammad bin Tughlaq went so far as to substitute the name of the Abbasid caliph in his coins. Later, he also received a formal rescript (nianshur) from the Caliph. But all this could hardly change the attitude of the orthodox elements towards him.

Some of the rebellions which took place during this period, such as the one at Kara, and another at Bidar, was because the Sultan had given the area on contract (muqata) to some persons on the basis of their promising large sums of money which, however, they failed to collect from the peasants. In the process, they tried to squeeze the local officials or the sadah. Rebellions in Malwa and Gujarat later on were also connected to this phenomenon.

Despite the Sultan's concern with these repeated rebellions, they were contained. The Sultan remained at Delhi during this period. That his prestige remained high is shown by the embassies he received during this period from leading countries, such as China, Egypt, Khurasan, Iraq, Transoxiana, and even some African countries.

It was during the third phase (1346-51), that a series of rebellions broke out at Kulbarga and Malwa. A more serious rebellion broke out later at Gujarat, and at Bidar by Hasan Kangu. Muhammad bin Tughlaq decided to lead in person the campaign against Gujarat because of its economic and strategic importance, although the rebellion was led by low grade sadah amirs. In his absence, Daultabad was lost and the Bahmani kingdom born. Muhammad bin Tughlaq remained in Gujarat for two-and-a-half years, spending the later years campaigning in Saurashtra and then moving to Thatta (lower Sindh) in pursuit of the rebel, Taghi, a former slave of his, who had been given shelter by the Jam of Thatta. Amazingly, in this rather futile campaign, he accepted the help of 5000 Mongols sent by Altun Bahadur, the ruler of Transoxiana. Muhammad bin Tughlaq died before reaching Thatta. Meanwhile, a council of regency set up by him functioned at Delhi. There were no rebellions in the north during the Sultan's prolonged absence.

Despite his many limitations, Muhammad bin Tughlaq bequeathed a large empire with a functioning administration to his successor. While his rash and hasty temperament, his suspicious nature, and giving excessive punishments added to his difficulties, his main problems arose from an empire which had become too large, and in which he tried to impose a uniform and highly centralized system of administration. Some of his experiments and reforms also had a long term significance. His experiment with a token currency was a bold step, but one which was much beyond his time. He did, however, indicate a direction for agricultural expansion and growth. Finally, he tried to take the first faltering steps towards a compos-

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ite ruling class consisting of Hindus and Muslims. Even more importantly, he tried to rise above the narrow limitations of caste, inducting into service not only people of land-owning classes, but men belonging to low, or artisan classes.

## **FIRUZ'S CONCEPT OF BENEVOLENCE AND PEOPLE'S WELFARE**

The long reign of Firuz Tughlaq (1351-88), a cousin of Muhammad Tughlaq, who succeeded him after he left the army in a state of disarray at Thatta, is a watershed in the history of the Delhi sultanate. Firuz Tughlaq tried to revive the tradition of a state based on benevolence, and the welfare of the people which had been sought to be established by Jalaluddin Khalji, as we have noted earlier. Firuz pursued a policy of conciliation, of trying to win over the sections—nobles, administrators, soldiers, clergymen, peasants etc. which had been alienated by Muhammad bin Tughlaq for one reason or another. After a number of military expeditions, which were not significantly successful, Firuz gave up warfare, and made the state more an instrument of development and welfare. Unfortunately, during the latter part of his reign, Firuz became more and more narrow in his understanding of religion. Lacking a broad philosophical base such as Muhammad Tughlaq had, he interpreted religion in a narrow sense, and indulged in acts of bigotry and oppression, against sections of both the Hindus and the Muslims. This weakened rather than strengthened his concept of a benevolent state. Finally, Firuz undertook a series of administrative reforms which brought him popularity in the immediate context, but weakened the central government in the long run.

Firuz Tughlaq spells out his basic concept of benevolence in the *Fatuh-i-Firuz Shahi*, a book which he is supposed to have written but of which only a portion is now available. Mentioning that in the past times, much "Muslim" blood had been shed, and varieties of tortures been used which he describes, such as cutting of hands, feet, ears and noses; plucking out the eyes, breaking bones, burning and flaying people alive etc., Firuz goes on to say that he had resolved that during his reign "no Muslim blood shall be shed without just cause or excuse, that there shall be no torture, and that no human beings shall be mutilated."

Firuz's orders in the matter covered both Muslims and non-Muslims, though Firuz prefaces his orders by saying that as a good Muslim, his concern was to prohibit all practices contrary to the Muslim holy law, the shara. The shara did, of course, sanction cutting off the hands and feet of robbers, and punishment for retaliation for a crime committed against an individual. We do not know if Firuz's prohibitions extended against such punishments. Perhaps, his orders were restricted to political, and in some cases, financial offences.

Firuz says that the purpose of giving drastic punishments in previous times was "to terrorise the people so that fear of the government gripped their hearts and the tasks of government were carried out (undisturbed)." Firuz asserts that the fear and prestige of the government did not decline by abrogating drastic punishments. In other words, people were drawn to the government without fear of punishment.

The basic concept of benevolence, that the state was to be based on the willing acceptance of the people, rather than fear or threats of violence, had wider implications, especially in a society where the large majority consisted of non-Muslims.

As a part of his policy of conciliation, Firuz publicly destroyed the documents on the basis of which advance of money amounting to two crore tankas had been made to officials by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in order to expand and improve cultivation in the doab, but most of which had been misappropriated. In a somewhat childish manner, Firuz Tughlaq asked those who had been punished by Muhammad bin Tughlaq by their eyes, noses, hands and feet being cut off, to write letters of good-will which were put in a box and deposited at the head of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's tomb.

Likewise, no large scale punishments were given to those who had joined Ahmad Ayaz, the favourite of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, in putting up a rival prince on the throne at Delhi while Firuz was at Thatta. If Firuz had his way, he would have excused even Ahmad Ayaz, but his leading supporters would not permit it. However, no attempt was made to recover the jewels and gold which Ahmad Ayaz had distributed to

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gather a following—a practice which was in sharp contrast to what Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq had done at the time of his accession, adopting harsh methods to disgorge funds from those who had benefitted from the liberality of Khusrau Malik.

Another step taken by Firuz Tughlaq was to restore the rent-free lands (inam, idrar) granted to theologians, the learned and the weaker sections but which had been resumed by the previous rulers and included in the royal crown-lands (khalisa). We are told that these grants were, in fact, increased.

It was due to these mild methods that in the exaggerated language of Barani, “the administration became stable, all the tasks of government became firm, and all men, high and low, were satisfied, and the subjects, Muslims and Hindus, made content, and everyone busied himself in his own pursuits.”

All contemporary writers refer to the general prosperity in Firuz Shah’s long reign of 40 (lunar years), and the cheapness of commodities. Shams Siraj Afif, the biographer of Firuz, says that while food grains were cheap during the reign of Alauddin due to his strict regulations, there was all round cheapness in Firuz Shah’s reign without any effort on his part! This prosperity was, according to him, shared by everyone, including traders and artisans, because production and wages increased from year to year. Referring obviously to previous practices, we are told that regulations had been made that “brocades, silks and goods required for the royal establishments were to be purchased at the market price, and the money paid.” Remarking that all homes were replete with grains, property, horses and furniture, and no woman was without her ornaments, Afif goes on to say that there was such all round prosperity that even poor men could marry off their daughters at a young age! The obvious implication was that the girls were no longer needed to supplement the family income.

Regarding the peasants or the raiyat, Afif says that he was told that previously “it was the practice to leave the raiyat one cow and take the rest.” Firuz tried to rectify this situation by abolishing all taxes not sanctioned by the shara, and by preparing a new valuation (jama) which was based on produce, not measurement. We shall discuss this when we take up Firuz Shah’s administrative and agrarian reforms.

Firuz Shah’s benevolent and humanitarian efforts extended to repairing and rehabilitating the mosques and the madrasas attached to them. The grants (idrar) of the teachers were raised from 100-200 tankas to 400 or 500, or 700 or even 1000 tankas. Likewise, the students who earlier did not receive even 10 tankas as stipends, were given grants of 100 or 200 or 300 tankas.

Similarly, many Sufi khanqahs which had been repaired were rehabilitated and villages assigned for their upkeep. Grants were also made to the old men and women, widows, orphans and the physically handicapped. An attempt was made to set up a kind of an unemployment bureau for the unemployed, and to provide state help for the marriage of girls of respectable families. These measures were largely meant to benefit Muslims, especially those among them who were living at or near Delhi. A reform which was of more general benefit was Firuz Tughlaq’s setting up a hospital (dar-us-shafa) at Delhi for free treatment for all. Although Delhi had a number of hospitals from the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the extension of state patronage to hospitals must be considered a positive factor.

In the medieval context where warfare and violence were almost the norm, the emphasis on the principle of benevolence, even though with limitations, was a valuable contribution for which Firuz must be given credit.

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## MILITARY EXPEDITIONS OF FIRUZ AND THEIR IMPACT

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When Firuz Tughlaq ascended the throne at Thatta in 1351, the Sultanat was faced with a crisis. The southern states, which had been brought within the ambit of the Sultanat by Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad bin Tughlaq, had fallen away, followed by the loss of Daultabad. There were rebellions in Gujarat and Sindh. Bengal, too, had once again asserted its independence.

Neither by temperament nor by training was Firuz Tughlaq cut out to be a great warrior or military leader. He did, however, lead two campaigns to Bengal, raided Orissa and Nagarkot, and led a campaign into lower Sindh. None of them added to the territories of the Delhi sultanate. At the same time, nor did the territories of the Delhi sultanate diminish further.

### **Bengal Campaigns**

The two Bengal campaigns of 1353-54 and 1359-60 were aimed at recovering Bengal which had declared independence of Delhi. On both occasions, Firuz led a large army which was joined by local mis, such as the powerful rais of Gorakhpur and Champaran.

On account of their support, the armies of Delhi swelled to 90,000 horses. On both occasions, the Bengal sovereigns, Haji Ilyas during the first expedition, and his son, Sikandar, during the second, retreated, taking shelter at Ikhdala which was a strong fort surrounded by a broad moat linked by a canal to a river nearby. On both occasions, Firuz was unable to storm the fort. Considering the fort to be impregnable, and unwilling to wait outside it any longer in view of the approaching monsoon which would have made all roads impassable and the climate, unhealthy Firuz opened negotiations for peace. After exchange of costly presents, status quo and a policy of mutual peace was agreed upon. Afif's story that Firuz refused to attack the fort because it would lead to further bloodshed, and the dishonouring of Muslim women was, perhaps, the official explanation put out.

### **Jajnagar (Orissa) and Nagarkot Campaigns:**

On his way back from Bengal during the second expedition, Firuz halted at Jaunpur, and from there marched on Orissa. The purpose of the expedition was to reassert Delhi's overlordship over the region which had been subjugated following the expedition of Prince Muhammad bin Tughlaq, during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. The ruler had also withheld tribute when Bengal asserted its independence from Delhi. Worse, he had sided with the ruler of Bengal in his conflict with Delhi. Firuz's march became almost a pleasure hunt because the Orissa ruler avoided conflict. Ultimately, a truce was patched up, with the Orissa ruler agreeing to pay regular tribute including a certain number of elephants which were highly valued by Firuz. The return journey was uneventful, except that Afif tells us that Firuz wandered about, lost in the jungles for six months before returning.

After a stay of four years at Delhi, Firuz decided to undertake a campaign against Nagarkot in Kangra which was reputed to be one of the strongest forts in the country. Perhaps, it was also considered to be an occasion to compensate for the hardly successful campaigns in Bengal. At first, Firuz had decided to move against Daultabad, and moved upto Bayana for the purpose. But wiser counsel had prevailed. The Rai of Nagarkot retreated, and shut himself in the fort which was besieged by the invading forces. The countryside was, as usual, put up to plunder. After six months of siege, the two sides entered into negotiations. The Rai made a personal submission, and Firuz placed his hand on the shoulder of the Rai, bestowed on him robes of honour and a chatr, and sent him back, laden with presents. In return, the Rai accepted the Sultan's overlordship as before, and sent many offerings and horses of priceless worth.

There is no reference to the destruction of any temples during this expedition. In fact, Afif mentions that Firuz visited the Jwalamukhi temple which was on the way to Nagarkot, but he indignantly refutes the rumour "put out by some Hindus that during the visit he (Firuz) held a golden umbrella over the idol (in fact, the flame)." No attempt, however, was made to desecrate it.



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## The Thatta Campaign (1365-67)

The last campaign in which Firuz spent two-and-a-half years was a campaign against Thatta in lower Sindh to punish its local rulers, called Jam and Bahbina. The precise purpose of the campaign is not clear. We are told that the governor of Multan had many complaints against them—hardly sufficient for Firuz himself undertaking to punish them. Perhaps, the campaign was concerned with the recurrence of Mongol activities. The previous year, a Mongol army had reached upto Dipalpur, but retreated on the arrival of armies from Delhi. Jam and Bahbina were suspected to be in close touch with the Mongols. Firuz must apparently have feared that Mongol control over lower Sindh would endanger Punjab, and also disrupt the trade down the river Indus.

Some modern historians have dubbed the Thatta campaign as the most mismanaged campaign. Firuz Shah marched with an army which was supported by a flotilla of 5000 boats, itself an index of the amount of river trade along the Indus. Arrived at Thatta, Firuz encountered stiff resistance which he had not expected. Meanwhile, three-fourths of the horses died due to an epidemic, and there was acute shortage of food in his camp. With defeat staring him in the face, Firuz retreated to Gujarat, but lost his way in the Rann of Kutch due to the treachery of his guides. After great sufferings, the army reached Ahmedabad. Two crores were taken out of the treasury to re-equip the army, but many soldiers took advantage of the situation to return to Delhi. Firuz considered it counter-productive to try to stop them. But when he returned to Thatta with his reduced forces, he was unable to capture the two parts of the city which were situated on opposite sides of a broad river. Hence, he asked the wazir, Khan-i-Jahan, to send reinforcements. It was only after their arrival that Jam and Bahbina entered into negotiations and submitted. They were treated with honour, and taken with Firuz to Delhi. In their place, lower Sindh was assigned to a son of the Jam, and to Tamachi, the brother of Bahbina.

After his return from Thatta, Firuz decided not to lead any further campaigns, but to devote himself to peace. A last effort was made when Firuz announced his decision to invade Daultabad, but he allowed Khan-i-Jahan to “dissuade” him from an enterprise which would lead to shedding of further Muslim blood!

Firuz’s love of peace and his reluctance to shed Muslim blood have little to do with the limited success of his various military expeditions, and show his incompetence as a leader. However, these failures themselves became a blessing in disguise. Deterred from undertaking any more military adventures, he now presided over a state which was territorially more cohesive and manageable. Even in its reduced size, it was by no means small, consisting more or less of the territories bequeathed by Alauddin Khalji at the time of his death (but excluding Daultabad annexed during the last few years of his reign). Firuz was lucky that unlike the previous rulers, he did not have to face recurrent Mongol attacks on his territories.

Thus, Firuz was able to concentrate on the tasks of consolidation and development which brought an unprecedented level of prosperity, at least to the central areas of his empire.

## REORGANISATION OF THE NOBILITY AND THE ADMINISTRATION

As we have noted, Firuz was keen to conciliate all sections, including the nobility. He wanted a nobility which was stable and cohesive. There had been a lot of instability in the nobility since the death of Iltutmish, successive rulers trying to constitute a new nobility loyal to them. The efforts of Jalaluddin Khalji and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq to take a kinder attitude towards the earlier nobility had been frustrated. Firuz Tughlaq tried to cherish the nobility which had remained loyal to Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Thus, he appointed Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul who had been trained by Muhammad bin Tughlaq as the wazir, and left much of the work of the administration to him. Other senior nobles, such as Tatar Khan, were also honoured.

Unlike Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Firuz had no special fondness for foreigners. He made this clear at the outset when many foreigners from Herat, Sistan, Aden, Egypt etc. had been camping at Thatta, waiting to

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hear from Muhammad bin Tughlaq offering them employment, or asking them to meet him. They were given travelling money by Firuz, and asked to go back. At the same time, Firuz did not try to induct into the nobility men from the lower classes, either Muslims and Hindus, whom Barani had denounced as "mean and ignoble."

Firuz awarded extremely high salaries to the nobles. He gave to his Khans and Maliks for their personal income, salaries of 4, 00,000 tankas; 6, 00,000 tankas, and 8,00,000 tankas. His wazir, Khan-i-Jahan, received a salary of 13, 00,000 tankas, and additional grants were given for each son or daughter born to him. These salaries were given in terms of grants of iqtas. Right at the beginning of his reign, Firuz had a new valuation (jama) of the income from the lands made. This jama was not revised during the rest of his reign. The nobles, therefore, were the beneficiaries of any extension and improvement of cultivation which took place in their holdings during the period.

Finally, Firuz tried to give to his nobility a hereditary character. In his *Fatuhāt*, Firuz says, "When a person holding an office died, I transferred his office and his dignities to his son, and the status, perquisites and dignities of the office were not reduced in any way." We have some examples of the application of this law of heredity, the most notable example being that of Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul whose son, Jauna Khan, succeeded him in his office as wazir after his death in 1368-69. However, this was done when Jauna Khan asserted that Firuz had given a written undertaking, apparently at the time of Khan-i-Jahan's accession that the post of wizarat would remain in his family as long as he reigned. Another such case was that of Zafar Khan, governor of Gujarat, who died in 1370-71 and was succeeded in his post and title by his son, Darya Khan. But Darya Khan was ousted from the post soon after. The rule of heredity was not applied by Firuz to any of the other senior posts. Perhaps, what Firuz implied was that the iqta of any incumbent would not be transferred, but granted to his sons after his death. Such an attempt had recurred whenever there was any weakness in the central government, for it strengthened the position of the nobles vis-a-vis the Sultan.

Next to the nobility, the army was the next most important element in the administration. Like the nobility, Firuz wanted to have an army which was drawn from elements which had a tradition of soldiering, and which had a long term stake in the stability of the state. Hence, he ordered that the soldiers of the central army should be paid not in cash, but by grants of villages (*wajh*) in the neighbourhood of Delhi and the doab. He thus conceded the demand put forward by the Turkish soldiers and partly conceded by Balban, but sternly rejected by Alauddin Khalji. We are told that eighty per cent of the central army were paid by means of grants of villages (*wajh*). The rest which included irregular (*ghair-wajahi*) soldiers were to be paid in cash from the treasury or by assignments on the iqtas held by the nobles. However, the soldiers could obtain only a part of the grants from the iqtas held by the nobles.

In order to emphasize the hereditary and family character of soldiering, Firuz ordered that if an army man died, his village would go permanently to his son; if he had no son to his son-in-law; if he had no son-in-law, to his slave, and if he had no slave, then permanently to his women. Later, Firuz issued an order that if a soldier became old, he could be deputed by his son, if he had no son by his son-in-law. "The veteran may thus remain at home at ease, and the young ride forth in their strength."

It is hardly possible to defend these measures. Even then, an attempt to create a corps of families whose profession would be soldiering might have succeeded if Firuz had not undermined the system of *dagh* or branding of horses to ensure that sub-standard horses were not produced for service. Normally, horses had to be produced for branding within a year. But many soldiers were not able to do so and, at the instance of the deputy muster-master, Firuz granted them an extension of 51 days, and then, another two months. Even this was waived on the ground that the soldier had to go to the village at the instance of the officers to collect their salaries. Adopting a wholly wrong view of generosity, Firuz once even gave a golden tanka to a distraught soldier so that he could bribe the clerk to pass his sub-standard mount before the year ended!

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In the later part of his reign, Firuz seems to have realised that by his mistaken view of generosity, he had undermined the efficiency of the central army. Hence, he ordered the great iqtadars and officers to capture slaves whenever they were at war, and to pick out and send the best of them for the service of the court. This was extended to chiefs who, according to practice, sent annual presents to the ruler. In this way, 180,000 slaves were collected. While some of them spent their time in reading and in religious studies, and 12,000 of them became artisans of various types and were dispersed into many parganas, a large central corp of slaves was brought together as an armed guard. This was in addition to the central army of 80,000 horses. A separate muster-master, a separate treasury and a separate diwan was set up for this corp of slaves who consisted mostly of converted Hindus.

The efficiency of the corp of slaves was not tested in battle by Firuz, but to the extent that it was a counter to the power of the nobility and the standing army, it created a duality in the administration, and went counter to Firuz's attempt to provide stability by depending upon a cohesive nobility and an army drawn from a band of military-minded families. It was, therefore, no surprise that conflict between the two erupted even before Firuz closed his eyes.

In the field of general administration, Firuz was fortunate in having an able and energetic officer in the person of Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul whom the Sultan used to call 'brother', and to whom the Sultan extended full support. He went so far to say that he (Khan-i-Jahan) was the real sultan. On his part, Khan-i-Jahan never exceeded his powers, and kept the sultan fully informed. He was also scrupulously honest. Although he did take presents from the governors of provinces, he entered them in the royal treasury. He was also strict in collecting government dues. His powers, however, were restricted by the Auditor (mustaufi) and by the Accountant-General (mushrif) both of whom had direct access to the Sultan. Sometimes, it led to bitter disputes in which the sultan mediated.

Another powerful noble at Firuz's court was Bashir Sultani, the Ariz-i-Malik (Muster-Master). He had been a slave of Firuz and accumulated a lot of money by dishonest means. Khan-i-Jahan shielded him for his corrupt practices. When Bashir died, he left 13 crores. Firuz confiscated nine crores on the ground that Bashir had been his slave, and distributed the rest among his sons.

The tasks of administration were continued with reasonable efficiency after the death of Khan-i-Jahan by his son, Jauna Shah, or Khan-i-Jahan II. But Khan-i-Jahan II was ambitious, and tried to build a party of his own supporters while the powers of Firuz gradually declined with advancing age. This was another cause of conflict after the death of Firuz.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES-AGRARIAN AND URBAN**

Firuz Tughlaq carried forward the traditions of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the field of agricultural development. At the outset of his reign, he appointed Khwaja Hisamuddin Junaid to settle the revenues afresh. The Khwaja toured the country for six years with a team of officials, and made a new valuation (jama). The amount, six crores and seventy-five lakhs tankas, was fixed on the basis of "inspection", i.e., rough estimation, and was not altered during the rest of Firuz Tughlaq's reign. Although the standard share to be paid by the cultivator is nowhere stated, the basis of assessment was not measurement but sharing. This meant that the benefit of any growth (or decline) would be shared by the peasant and the State. Since the bulk of the land-revenue had been granted to the nobles as iqta, they were likely to be the principal beneficiaries of any development. As we shall see, this is exactly what happened.

In between his Bengal campaigns, Firuz founded the city of Hissar-Firuz (modern Hissar), and decided to dig two canals to bring water to the city from the Sutlaj and the Jamuna. These canals which were about 100 miles long joined together near Karnal and provided plenty of water to the city of Hissar. We are told that previously the area was so arid that merchants coming from Iraq and Khurasan had to pay four jitals for a pitcher of water. But now the peasants could cultivate two crops, the spring (kharif) and winter (rabi). This canal which had become choked up was repaired by Akbar. Later, in the time of Shah Jahan, it was extended upto Delhi. In the 19th century, the British repaired and extended it, and it became the basis

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of the Western Jamuna Canal. In Firuz's time, the entire tract of land along the canal was irrigated, and led to the expansion of cultivation in the old villages, and new villages came up. Other canals were also dug by Firuz. Contemporary writers give details of six of them. Most of these canals were in the present Haryana area. One canal also carried water to the city of Ferozpur— south of Delhi founded by Firuz. Afif says that the entire areas from the river Sutlej to Koil (modern Aligarh) became fully cultivated. In the words of Afif, "there were four villages to every kos (two miles) in the area, as in the shiq of Samana." An effort was also made to improve the cropping pattern in the area so that wheat and sugar-cane began to be cultivated in place of inferior crops.

It was perhaps the prosperity of this area, and the resulting affluence of the nobility, which is reflected in the writings of Barani and Afif. Of course, other sections, such as the peasants, the artisans, and traders of the area also benefited. But in places distant from Delhi, such as Sindh, according to a contemporary, grain-prices were unstable and wages of the artisans extremely high. We have no information of the situation prevailing in other areas.

Firuz also benefited from the agrarian prosperity of this region. He brought together a set of learned men and mullahs who decreed that for his pains of digging the canals and bringing water, the sultan was entitled to an extra charge of 10 per cent or haqq-i-sharb. This was levied from the old villages where cultivation had grown, and was a part of the personal income (khalisa) of the sultan. The normal land-revenue of the new villages was also part of the sultan's personal income which amounted to two lakh tankas. This was distributed by the sultan in charity to the religious divines and learned people.

Besides canals, Firuz also built many dams (bunds) for purposes of irrigation. He was also very fond of planting orchards, and is supposed to have planted 1200 gardens around Delhi, after paying the price to those in whose property or tax-free (inam) lands they lay. The gardens included 30 which had been commenced by Alauddin. We are told that most of the orchards grew black and white grapes and also dry fruits, and that the sultan's income from these was 180,000 tankas.

In the latter years of his reign, Firuz tried to bring the agricultural taxation system in line with the shara. Thus, he abolished all the taxes not sanctioned by the shara. Twenty-one such taxes which were abolished have been listed by contemporaries. These included the ghari (house tax) of which we hear during the time of Alauddin. Many others were cesses on produce payable at the market. It is difficult to say how far the abolition of these taxes benefited the peasants, or how effective the abolition was, because many of them had to be abolished by Akbar, and again by Aurangzeb!

As part of his policy of levying only taxes sanctioned by shara, Firuz insisted upon payment of jizyah by the non-Muslims. Although jizyah was levied by the earlier rulers, it was treated as a part of the land-tax (kharaj), and was indistinguishable from it. Firuz was the first ruler who collected jizyah as a separate tax apart from land-revenue. To some extent, it replaced ghari or house tax which was also a tax on individuals.

Firuz built a number of towns around Delhi, two of them, Hissar-Feroza and Ferozpur having been mentioned earlier. He also built or renovated Jaunpur in East UP, and built a new capital, Ferozabad, along the Jamuna. Only the fort, now called Kotla Feroz Shah, has survived from this town. The eastern part of this town extended up to the Ridge, the town itself being five kos or ten miles, including some parts of what later became Shahjahanabad, or the present Old Delhi. The many towns which Firuz built reflected a felt need. They reflected the agricultural development of the area which needed new towns (qasbas) as their grain-markets. The new towns also became centres of trade and handicrafts, some of the 12,000 slaves trained as artisans being posted in these towns.

Thus, Firuz's concept of development, both agricultural and urban, was strikingly modern.

Firuz was also a great builder. He set up a public works department which repaired many old buildings and mausoleums. Thus, he repaired the Qutb Minar a storey of which had been destroyed by lightning,



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and restored the Mosque and the tombs of Iltutmish and Alauddin near it. He also repaired the Shamsi Tank (south of Qutb Minar), and the Hauz-i-Alai (present Hauz Khas), the water-channel to which had been choked.

Firuz Tughlaq also had two Ashokan pillars transported from Meerut and its neighbourhood, installing one of them at the Kotla at Firozabad, and another at a hunting lodge on the Ridge. He also built many inns for the use of the travellers.

Firuz mentions his orthodox measures in the *Fatuhāt*, but does not mention having forbidden wine bibbling. Interestingly, Afif lists the wine department as one of the departments (*karkhanas*) of the state. Firuz was also fond of music and songs to which he listened during the festivals of the two Ids and after the Friday prayers—a practice which he continued till the end of his reign. He also celebrated *Shab Barat* with great pomp. These were practices which were banned as being anti-Islamic by Aurangzeb later on.

However, as Firuz grew older, he became narrower, even bigoted in his religious approach. Although he was reputed to be a disciple of the liberal sufi saint, Fariduddin Ganj Shakar of Ajodhan, the warrior saint Salar Masud Ghazi appeared to him in a dream when the Sultan visited his tomb at Bahraich in 1374-75. Much moved, the Sultan had his head shaved as a mark of submission to him. Many nobles followed suit. Thereafter, the Sultan decided to forbid all practices which were against the *shara*, banned all taxes not sanctioned by *sham*, and warned the revenue officials not to realise any such taxes. He also ordered all paintings with human figures erased from his palace, and forbade the use of gold and silver vessels for dinner. He also banned clothes of pure silk or pure brocade, or where human figures had been painted.

One of the worst instances of bigotry on the part of Firuz at this time was that he publicly burnt a Brahman on the charge that he openly conducted idol-worship at his house in which both Hindus and Muslims participated, and that he had converted a Muslim woman. He also insisted on collecting *jizyah* from the Brahmans who had been exempted from this tax till then. He refused to relent even though the Brahmans from the four cities of Delhi went on hunger strike. Finally, the Hindus of the city agreed to pay themselves the Brahmans' share of the *jizyah*. We do not know whether this arrangement was extended to other towns.

In the *Fatuhāt*, Firuz says that while the Hindus who paid *jizyah* were protected people, and their property was safeguarded as also freedom of worship, they had started to build new temples which was against the *shara*. He had such temples razed. He includes in this a temple in village Malwa near Delhi on the ground that the Hindus had built a *hauz* (tank) where a festival was held to which Hindu men and women and even Muslims used to go. Similarly, he destroyed new temples built in the villages of Salehpur and *qasba* Gohana. In his eagerness to serve the *shara*, Firuz inflicted death penalty on the leaders of the Ismaili group of Shias. He also inflicted a similar punishment on a number of Muslims who in a sufistic manner, had gone against the orthodox beliefs. In his orthodoxy, he even banned Muslim women going to the tomb of saints outside Delhi, as it would expose them to licentious people.

There is, however, no evidence to show that despite individual acts of intolerance, Firuz went against the concept of broad religious freedom granted to the *dhimmis* or Hindu subjects. Nor can the age of Firuz be considered one of growing intolerance. In fact, this was the age when the largest number of Sanskrit works on music, medicine etc. were translated into Persian. Hindu chiefs were treated with respect by Firuz, and three of them were even allowed to sit on the floor in his Court, which was considered a rare honour.

Nevertheless, Firuz's occasional acts of intolerance, and the importance given by him to theologians and men of religion, to the exclusion of others, tended to strengthen the position of the orthodox ulemas, and to that extent, weaken the concept of a benevolent policy based on peoples' welfare and broad religious freedom. Firuz also reversed the trend towards a composite ruling class, consisting of Muslims and Hindus, a trend which had been started by Muhammad bin Tughlaq. This was resumed in a cautious manner by the Lodis, but was resumed in a real sense only with the coming of Akbar.

## DISINTEGRATION OF DELHI SULTANATE AND ITS CAUSES

Even before Firuz Tughlaq closed his eyes, the Sultanat of Delhi began to disintegrate. First there was a struggle for power between Prince Muhammad, the eldest surviving son of Firuz, and the wazir Khan-i-Jahan II. Prince Muhammad managed to win over Firuz to his side, and ousted Khan-i-Jahan. He was given all the paraphernalia of royalty by Firuz, and made joint-sovereign. However, this was not to the liking of the slaves of Firuz, who numbered almost 100,000. In the struggle that followed, Firuz foolishly sided with the slaves, and Prince Muhammad was ousted. Soon, Firuz died (1388), and a struggle for the Crown began between his sons and grand-sons. The corp of slaves tried to play the king-maker but failed, and were defeated and dispersed. A number of princes sat on the throne for a brief time till Nasiruddin Mahmud succeeded in 1394. He managed to remain on the throne till the Tughlaq dynasty was displaced in 1412. Meanwhile, provincial governors had begun to assert their independence, the first to do so being the governor of Gujarat. The Khokhars of the Punjab followed suit, followed by Malwa and Khandesh. Soon after, Khwaja-i-Jahan, the wazir of Nasiruddin Mahmud, got the privilege of governing all districts from Kannauj to Bihar. Thus was the kingdom of Jaunpur born. During this time, various Hindu chiefs had started withholding land-revenue, so that a wit observed "The orders of the king of the world (title of the Sultan of Delhi) extend from Delhi to Palam."

The disintegration of the Delhi sultanate was completed by Timur who sacked Delhi and the neighbouring areas in 1398-99. Although Timur's son had conquered Uchch and Dipalpur in 1396-97, and besieged Multan, no effort had been made by the rulers of Delhi to meet this threat, or resist the invasion of Timur. As is well known, Timur not only spread death and destruction at Delhi and its neighbourhood, but, according to his usual practice, carried away a large number of slaves including Indian stone-cutters and masons etc, to beautify his buildings at Samarqand. He also annexed the districts of Lahore, Dipalpur, and Multan to his kingdom. This provided a basis for Babar's claim later on. Apart from this, Timur's invasion had little political consequences.

No individual sultan can be held responsible for the downfall of the Delhi sultanate. As we have seen, regional factors of disintegration were strong in medieval India. There were also numerous powerful chiefs who either had a clan-following of their own, or had strong links with particular areas. They were always ready to rebel when they found any weakness in the Central government.

The Turkish sultans tried to counter these elements of disintegration first by collecting a corp of slaves, and creating a nobility completely dependent on the sultan. The main instrument of this devise was the iqta system. However, the sultans found it difficult to control the powerful and ambitious nobles even among this limited group, many of whom wanted to carve out their own independent spheres of authority. Thus, it was always difficult to control governors of distant places such as Bengal, Sindh, Gujarat, Daultabad etc. Attempts of successive sultans to have a nobility based on racial antecedents (Balban), or personal loyalty checked by spies (Alauddin Khalji) or a dispersed nobility (Mahmud bin Tughlaq) failed. Hence, it is no surprise that Firuz's attempt to build a small nobility based to a large extent on the principle of heredity also failed.

In this situation, religion was hardly of help because the main conflict, once the Sultanat had been established, was not between Hindus and Muslims, but between Muslims and Muslims. The slogan of religion was, however, used to justify the plunder of the Hindu rajas, and of the peasantry as a whole.

The recruitment of the army also created a problem. Once the sultans of Delhi had been cut off from West and Central Asia, they could no longer hope to recruit Turkish and other soldiers from that area. They had, therefore, to fall upon (a) Afghans many of whom had settled in India; (b) descendents of Turkish soldiers who had come to India, mainly at the time of occupation; (c) Mongols and Muslims converts; and (d) Hindus belonging to what might be called the martial communities (Rajputs, Jats etc.). Each of these sections had their own problems. Firuz tried to give preference to the descendents of Turks and Mongols by giving them a hereditary character. He also recruited converted Muslims in his corp of slaves.

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Neither proved a success. The hereditary soldiers proved inefficient, and the corp of slaves selfish and disloyal. Each of these groups were also antagonistic to each other.

Another problem facing the sultans was that of succession. Even when the nobles were willing to accept that the successor to a successful ruler should be drawn from his progeny, there was no rule whereby the eldest son could succeed. This led to struggles for succession in which ambitious nobles found an opportunity to further their own interests.

# UNIT-VII

## GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

### THE SULTAN

The machinery of administration as it evolved under the Delhi sultanate was derived from the Abbasid and following it, the Ghaznavid and the Seljukid systems of administration. It was also influenced by the Iranian system of administration, and the situation in India and Indian traditions. Both West Asia, including Iran, and India had a long tradition of rule by a monarch assisted by a council of ministers. Hence, we find that some of the departments of government, or even officers, were old institutions under a new name. However, the Turks were also able to evolve a number of new institutions and concepts which provided a basis for centralization of power and authority of a type which had not existed in India earlier.

According to a number of thinkers, the institution of monarchy was not an Islamic institution, but one which emerged gradually due to circumstances. The original Islamic concept of government in Islam was that of the Imam who was chosen by the faithful, lived a life of simplicity, and combined in his person both political and spiritual authority. The collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate led to the rise of sultans who were only secular leaders. In course of time, the post of the sultan began to be elevated. He was not only the pivot of administration, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and the ultimate court of appeal in all judicial cases. He was the centre of society and politics, and held a magnificent court.

He had great prestige and was the source of honour and patronage so that a large number of persons, including scholars, musicians, poets, religious divines etc. flocked to his court. This aura of power and prestige made many thinkers to ascribe divine attributes to the king. According to Hindu ideas, the ruler was 'a God in human shape.' Iranian ideas, which deeply influenced Islamic thinking on the subject, also made the office of the king divine. According to Barani, the heart of a monarch was a mirror of God, that is, it reflected the wishes of God so that the actions of a king could not be questioned. It was in order to emphasize these aspects that Balban assumed the title of Zill-Allah (shadow of God), and introduced the ceremonies of sijda and pabos (prostration on the ground, bending down to touch one's feet), ceremonies which, according to the shara, were meant only for Allah.

Two questions arise: was the medieval sultan an autocrat without any limitations on his powers; second, what was the institutional basis of the centralization achieved by the Turkish rulers in India? It has been rightly pointed out that unrestricted individual despotism is a myth in the sense that in a civil society every individual, however powerful, had to take into account the opinions, aspirations and ambitions of the group around him without whose support he could not function. He had also to ensure at least the passive support of the population. But the point at issue is whether there were any institutional limitations on an individual ruler. According to both Hindu and Muslim thinking, religion was the major institutional check on misuse of power by a monarch. The ruler was required to subserve the broad purposes prescribed by religion, and to function within the ethical and moral norms prescribed by it. According to some thinkers, a ruler who violated these norms could be removed from power by the people, supported and backed by the religious leaders. But there was no complete agreement in the matter, some thinkers leaving the matter in the hands of God. In practice, while the ruler paid obeisance to the Dharamashastras, or shara in the case of a Muslim ruler, he was given a wide latitude with regard to his political functions. On balance, while a number of unrestrained tyrants did arise from time to time, the moral influence exercised by religion on political authority should not be underestimated.

In the western world, apart from the Church, the major institutional check on royal absolutism was a hereditary nobility. Such a hereditary nobility did not exist in the case of the Turks. The ruler was free



to appoint anyone as an amir, and vest him with vast military and administrative powers. The basis of this was the iqtadari system. This system which can be traced back to the Seljukids, seems to have subsequently become universal in all the Islamic states which arose. As we have seen, this gave the grantee considerable administrative and military power, but he did not acquire any hereditary rights in land, and could be transferred by the sultan almost at will. A change of dynasties always meant a large scale removal of the former iqtadars. Thus, when Jalaluddin Khalji, after his accession to the throne, enquired about the old nobles, it was found that many prominent nobles of Balban's time were living in poverty and want, following their removal from offices and the loss of their iqtas.

Another institution which, for some time, augmented the power and authority of the sultans was the institution of slavery. This gave even greater opportunity to the sultans to advance those individuals whom they liked and who were completely dependent on them. But the conflict between the Chahalgani Turkish slave-officers and the others after the death of Iltutmish eroded it as a political system, and it gradually fell into disuse. It was revived by Firuz Tughlaq, but on balance, its role was more negative than positive. Personal slavery continued, but it had little political role. Hence, the political importance of slavery during the Delhi sultanate should not be over emphasized, except in the early phase.

The unprecedented personal power which many sultans, such as Balban and Alauddin Khalji were able to gain, was limited by two factors. There was no universally accepted basis of succession among rulers in Islam. The principle of election had been whittled down to justify nomination by a successful ruler. However, this depended upon the nobility, and the military capacity of the person nominated. Since there was no established system of primogeniture (the eldest son succeeding), even nomination left the field open for rival claimants. In a number of cases, all such claimants were brushed aside, and one of the nobles, seen to be energetic and efficient, elevated himself to the throne, and was accepted by the other nobles. This system did, to some extent, weaken the prestige and authority of monarchy since any competent military officer could hope to acquire it in favourable circumstances. But, on balance, the problem of succession did not weaken the Turkish system of government, except for short periods, since a weak successor was always replaced by an efficient and energetic one.

Struggle for power with the nobility was a second limiting factor. But this issue had been largely resolved by the time Balban rose to supreme power. The rebellions of the nobles under Muhammad bin Tughlaq were due to specific factors which have already been discussed. Thus, despite all its problems, the monarchy remained the pivot of power and governance during the sultanate period.

## THE MINISTERS

In his task of governance, the sultan was assisted by a number of ministers. The number of such ministers or the departments of government they headed was not fixed. In a passage, Barani, speaking in the name of Balban's son, Bughra Khan, advises his own son who was ruling at Delhi not to depend on any one advisor, though the wazir was principal among them. He speaks of four prominent advisors, mentioning four departments. However, the number four was only indicative. The number of departments could and did vary, and in practice the monarch could seek advice from anyone in whom he had confidence. Thus, Fakhruddin who was merely the kotwal of Delhi, had the confidence of Balban and then of Alauddin Khalji. The ministers did not form a council, there being no concept of joint responsibility. Each minister was chosen by the ruler, and held office during his pleasure. While the wazir was considered the principal advisor of the ruler and he did often exercise a broad supervision over the entire machinery of government, he was specially charged with the management of finances.

## THE WAZIR

Much has been written about the role, powers and qualifications of the wazir. According to Nizamul Mulk Tusi, who was wazir under the Seljukids, and whose book, *Siyasat Nama*, exercised enormous influence on Muslim political thinking, the wazir had to be an *ahl-i-qalam*. i.e. a man of learning rather than a warrior. He had also to be a man of wide experience, wisdom and sagacity because his views could be sought

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by the ruler on any subject. Also, he had to be a man of tact because he had to control the nobility without alienating it.

Powerful wazirs not only supervised the entire administration, but also led military campaigns. This was inevitable as long as the military character of the state was emphasized. But 'under a powerful ruler, the wazir exercised such power as the ruler allowed'. Muslim political thinkers tried to generalize this situation by saying that there were two types of wazirs, the wazir-i-tafviz who had unlimited powers except to appoint his successor, and the wazir-i-tanfiz who merely carried out the wishes of the ruler. But this did not solve the problem at issue. The ruler wanted a wazir who was influential enough to relieve him from the day to day burdens of government, but not powerful enough to eclipse or displace him. To resolve this problem, a number of experiments were made. Sometimes no wazir was appointed, or his duties were bifurcated, or offices were created to rival him, or even to put him into shade. Broadly speaking, these experiments covered the thirteenth and the first quarter of the 14th century, the wazirs emerging to power and influence with the rise of the Tughlaqs.

Iltutmish's wazir was Fakhruddin Isami, an old man who had served in high offices at Baghdad for thirty years. He was soon succeeded by Muhammad Junaidi, who had the title of Nizamul Mulk. Muhammad Junaidi was a powerful person. However, his opposition to Razia cost him his office and his life. After the death of Razia, Muhazzab Ghanavi emerged for some time as a king maker. But he suffered an eclipse with the rise of Balban to power. As the most powerful noble, Balban claimed, and was granted the post of naib-us-Sultanat, or deputy to the sultan. As such, Balban exercised all the power, the wazir remaining under his shadow. When Balban became the ruler after displacing Nasiruddin Mahmud, he abolished the post of naib-us-Sultanat. Balban was too dominating a person to allow any powerful wazir to emerge. Though Balban did appoint a wazir, Khawaja Hasan, he seems to have remained a titular wazir since he had little idea of revenue affairs. The power of the wazir were further cut down by Balban appointing Ahmad Ayaz, his favourite, as the Muster-Master (Ariz-i-Mamalik) who was responsible for the payment, and maintenance of the efficiency of the army. Balban also appointed a deputy wazir.

The office of the wazir remained under eclipse till the end of Alauddin Khalji's reign. Khwaja Khatir, who had been a deputy wazir during the reign of Balban and was a revenue expert, was re-inducted as wazir by Jalaluddin Khalji, and continued for some time under Alauddin Khalji. But he was soon replaced by Nusrat Khan, the sultan's brother, who was a noted warrior of his age. When Nusrat Khan died, the post of wazir was given to Malik Kafur, a favourite of the king and a leading general. He combined the post of wazir with the post of naib-us-Sultanat. After the death of Alauddin, as naib Malik Kafur tried to act as king maker, but was replaced by Khusrau Malik who also took the post of naib, and then ascended the throne.

Thus, the post of naib had come into bad odour and the Tughlaqs discontinued it on coming to power. Later, it was revived in the 15th century by the Saiyid rulers under the title Wakil-us-Sultanat— a post which continued with some ups and downs till the time of the Mughals.

Tughlaq rule is the period of the high water mark of the institution of wizarat in India. After some experimentation by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, Muhammad bin Tughlaq appointed Ahmed Ayaz with the title of Khan-i-Jahan as wazir. Khan-i-Jahan was an elderly person, and had worked as deputy in the department of public works during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. He was considered to be a rigid but competent officer. The Sultan had so much confidence in him that he was left in charge of the administration at Delhi when the sultan was out campaigning, or pursuing rebels. He remained wazir throughout the long reign of twenty-eight years of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, though we do not know his actual influence on Muhammad bin Tughlaq and his policies. He did not try to, or was not allowed to build a group of his supporters so that he failed miserably when, on Muhammad bin Tughlaq's death; he tried to prop up his own nominee on the throne at Delhi.

Firuz Tughlaq appointed as wazir Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul, a converted Tailang brahman who had been deputy to the previous wazir. That an orthodox ruler like Firuz could appoint a converted Hindu to such a high post shows how far the Delhi Sultanat had travelled from the time of Balban. The wazir was compe-

tent, and Firuz could depend on him to deal with all the affairs of state when he was out campaigning, as for example in Bengal, or Orissa. But it would be wrong to think that Firuz himself took no interest in administration, and that Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul was all in all. Thus, when there was a sharp conflict between the wazir and his auditor-general, Ain-i-Mahru, and the wazir tried to transfer the auditor-general, Firuz intervened, and an amicable arrangement was arrived at. It has been rightly argued that Khan-i-Jahan's success lay in managing Firuz rather than act as a rival centre of power.

When Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul died in 1368-69 after serving as wazir for eighteen years, he was, according to agreement, succeeded by his son, Jauna Khan, who was also given the title of Khan-i-Jahan. Khan-i-Jahan II was equally, if not more competent than his father. But he was no military leader, and failed in the conflict for succession which began even during the life time of Firuz. He was captured, and executed. However, the charge that he wanted to set up his own nominee on the throne is not accepted by many modern historians, such as R.P. Tripathi.

Under the Tughlaqs, the wazirs not only had great prestige, they received very high salaries. In the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, while the highest grandee, a Khan, received many lakhs of tankas annually as pay, Khan-i-Jahan received a salary, which was equal to the income of Iraq. Under Firuz, Khani-Jahan Maqbul received 13 lakhs tankas as pay over the above the expenses of his army and servants. In addition, each of his sons received a wajah (salary) of 11,000 tankas, and his sons-in-law even higher, 15,000 tankas each. That was how Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul could present 4 lakh tankas every year to the Sultan.

The diwan-i-wizarat or the internal structure of the wazir's department gradually developed. Even during Abbasid times, there used to be a mushrif who supervised expenditure, and a mustaufi who was perhaps in-charge of income. There also used to be a treasurer. These posts were continued in India under Iltutmish who also appointed a deputy (naib) to the wazir to provide relief to him in his heavy duties. With the appointment of an Ariz-i-Mamalik under Balban for looking after the army, the civilian character of the wazir's department was further emphasised. However, the wazir did not emerge as the head of civil administration till the rise of the Tughlaqs. Even then, in a military age, any noble, including the wazir was expected to be able to lead a military campaign if asked to do so. Thus, there was no clear distinction between civil and military duties, except in the case of religious and judicial officers.

With the bringing of the doab under direct administration (khalisa) by Alauddin Khalji, the revenue department expanded rapidly, and hundreds of collectors (amils, mutsarrif etc.) were appointed. To control them, a new department, diwan-i-mustakharaj, was created. This department fell into bad odour because of the harshness it often exercised in taking accounts, and collecting 'arrear' from the collectors. It seems to have been abolished after Alauddin's death. But the collectors remained, and in Muhammad bin Tughlaq's time, an attempt was made to give them a new shape. They were now to be more or equally concerned with agrarian development. Hence a new department, diwan-i-kohi, under a separate amir was set up. As we have seen, this also ended in failure.

The structure of the revenue department developed fully under Firuz. The duties of the mushrif and the mustaufi were clearly defined, the former being primarily incharge of income, the latter of expenditure. The chief mushrif and the chief mustaufi were high officials directly appointed by the sultan, though they were subordinate to the wazir. This system of checks and balance was not to the liking of the wazir, and the Sultan had sometimes to intervene and mediate. Firuz also set up a department of slaves under a separate officer, and a separate department of imlak for the direct income of the sultan.

## DIWAN-i-ARZ

The special responsibility of the Ariz-i-Mamalik was to recruit, equip and pay the army. The Ariz was not the commander-in-chief of the army, the sultan himself being the commander-in-chief. But the Ariz was invariably a leading noble, and a warrior in his own right. The Ariz is asked to be the friend and well-wisher of the soldier, and to look after him like his own son. The office of the Ariz existed under the Abbasids, and is mentioned in the Siyasat Nama. It probably existed under Iltutmish because we are told

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by Barani that Ahmad Ayaz Rawat-i-Arz who was appointed Ariz-i-Mamalik by Balban, had held this post for thirty years under the Shamsi rulers. Balban gave more importance to this post than that of the wazir. So much so that Ahmad Ayaz declared. "Let all those assembled hear: the (chief) defender and assistant of the system of government and administration is "I"."

However, it was under Alauddin Khalji that the functioning of this office was properly organized, with the introduction of the branding system (dagh) for horses so that horses of inferior quality were not presented, an efficient cavalry force being the main element on which the Turkish rulers depended. We have also seen how Alauddin used the control of the market to ensure that good quality mounts were made available to the state at fixed and reasonable prices. He also introduced the system of descriptive roll (chehra) of the soldiers so that servants and other untrained and unreliable persons were not put up in the muster to draw fictitious salaries. This system continued till the time of Firuz, though it could not be a guarantee against all fraud. This was recognised by Firuz when he gave a gold coin to a soldier so that he could bribe a clerk to pass his inferior quality mount.

The Mir-Hajib or superintendent of the royal stables, a post held by Malik Yaqut during the reign of Razia, and the Darogha-i-Pil or Keeper of the royal elephant stables, were considered important officers till the office of the Ariz had been organized. We hardly hear of the nobles who held these posts thereafter.

We do not know how precisely the army was recruited, and the type of training provided to soldiers. According to Ibn Battutah, who came to India during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, when anyone wanted to be enrolled in the army of the governor of Multan as an archer, his strength was tested by giving him bows of different stiffness. If he wanted to be enrolled as a trooper, a target was set up which he had to hit with his lance, and to lift a ring from the ground with his lance while the horse was on the gallop. A mounted archer had to hit a ball on the ground while galloping his horse. This must have been part of a general system. The training mentioned above must have continued after recruitment.

It seems that there was a central force of which the royal bodyguard was a part. We do not have any precise idea of the strength of this force. We are told that Alauddin Khalji's army consisted of 300,000. Muhammad bin Tughlaq's army was larger. Not all this force could have been stationed at Delhi. The bigger iqtadars who administered large areas apparently recruited their own forces. The chiefs had their own forces. Both of these could be brought under the royal standards in case of need. Thus, when Balban led the campaign to Bengal, the Hindu chiefs of the eastern parts were asked to join with their forces, while Balban recruited an additional force of 200,000 men from the region. Being largely cut off from West Asia after the rise of the Mongols, the Turkish rulers had to rely increasingly on Indian Muslims and Afghans for their armies. Thus, the army of the Turkish rulers was a mixed up, consisting of descendants of the original Turkish soldiers, Afghans and Hindustanis (Indian Muslims), supplemented by Hindu contingents of the chiefs.

It was an onerous burden to pay such a large army. Apart from extraction of land-revenue from the cultivators, plundering the neighbouring countries was a time-tested system which the Turks also followed, but giving it the title of "jihad", or holy war. From the time of Alauddin Khalji, the soldiers were paid in cash. The salary of 238 tankas for a soldier with one horse fixed by Alauddin was a low one. What it was later on we do not know. Obviously, the strength, efficiency and loyalty of this central force played a major role in the stability of the Delhi Sultanat.

The Ariz was thus a very important officer who put limits on the powers of the wazir. In consequence, none of the succeeding wazirs could become powerful military leaders who could put their own nominee on the throne, or succeed the ruler on the throne. This situation arose only when the system of administration broke down due to internecine warfare, as after the death of Firuz, and the invasion of Timur.



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## DIWAN-i-INSHA

The Diwan-i-Insha was not the foreign office. In those days, relations between states were not so continuous as to need a separate office, or minister of foreign affairs. The wazir was expected, however, to keep track of developments in neighbouring countries, and to keep the ruler informed. Formal epistles or letters were sometimes despatched to neighbouring rulers and towns to register a new succession to the throne or announce a major event, such as a victory. These letters which were sometimes written in a grand manner with a great literary flourish, were drafted, copied and despatched by the Diwan-i-Insha which was headed by a dabir, or dabir-i-khas. The Dabir was also responsible for drafting orders and communications to the important iqtadars, and neighbouring rajas. The post was an important and responsible one, ensuring close proximity to the ruler. As one who enjoyed the sultan's confidence, the dabir could be a rival or a check to the wazir. The post of dabir-i-khas was sometimes a stepping stone to the post of wazir.

## DIWAN-i-RISALAT

The Diwan-i-Risalat is one of the four major ministries mentioned by Barani. But the functions of this office were not mentioned by him, and there has been a sharp division of opinion among modern historians about its duties. Some call it a ministry of foreign affairs, others as a department for control of prices and public morals, and still others a department of hearing public grievances. From its title—the word risalat being derived from rasul or a prophet, it apparently had a holy character. One of the functions of medieval states was to grant stipends of rent-free lands (inilak) to Muslim scholars and divines, the learned, and the recluse etc. The chief person in charge of this ecclesiastical department was either the Sadr-i-Jahan, or the Wakil-i-Dar who was also called Rasul-i-Dar.

Apart from the post of Sadr-i-Jahan, another important post was that of the Chief Qazi or Qazi-ul-Qazzat who was the head of the judicial department. Sometimes, the posts of Sadr-i-Jahan and Chief Qazi were combined.

Apart from granting stipends and revenue-free lands, the Sadr's department was also responsible for the appointment of muhtasibs, or censor of public morals. These officials were meant to check gambling, prostitution and other vices, as also to ensure that Muslims did not publicly violate what was prohibited in the shari'ah, such as wine-drinking, or not observing what were considered obligatory duties, such as namaz (public prayers), roza (fasting during the month of Ramzan). They were also to check weights and measures, and to keep a broad check on prices. All this fell within the ambit of the diwan-i-risalat.

The duties of the diwan-i-risalat could be added to or separate offices created. When Alauddin was concerned with the control of the market, he appointed shuhnas to control the different markets, and a prominent noble was deputed to supervise their work. This was called the diwan-i-risalat. After the death of Alauddin, and the disappearance of the market controls, we do not hear of this department.

Firuz Tughlaq, who augmented the stipend and imlak (revenue free lands) of the scholars, theologians and the students, was also concerned with abolishing the injunctions prescribed by shari'ah for disfiguring people by cutting off hands, ears, nose etc. in punishment. He also wanted to have the reputation of being a humane ruler. He separated the office of sadr and chief qazi. He also set up a separate department of public grievances, which he called diwan-i-risalat. This was headed by a prominent noble, apparently the wakil-i-dar. Even the wazir and princes could apply to this department for redressal of grievances.

Thus, the diwan-i-risalat had different forms under different rulers, but its basic function of giving stipends and revenue-free lands to the deserving and the needy seems to have continued all the time.

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## COURT AND THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD

In a situation where the sultan was the centre of power, the organisation of the court and of the royal household became matters of prime importance. However, unlike the Mughals, there was no single officer in charge of the court and the royal household during the Sultanat.

The most important officer concerned with the royal household was the wakil-i-dar. He controlled the entire royal household and supervised the payment of allowances and salaries to the sovereign's personal staff which included the royal kitchen, the wine department and the royal stables. He was even responsible for the education of the princes. The courtiers, the princes, the sultan's private servants, even the queens had to approach him for various favours. As such, the post was of great importance and sensitivity, and was bestowed only to a noble of high rank and prestige.

Another officer of high importance connected with the court and the royal household was the Amir Hajib. He was also called barbek. He was master of ceremonies at the court. He marshalled the nobles in accordance with their ranks and precedence. All petitions to the Sultan were presented through him, or his subordinates, called hajibs. The post was so sensitive that sometimes princes of blood were appointed to it.

Another important officer connected with the royal household was the barid-i-khas, or the head of the intelligence department. Spies or barids were appointed to different parts of the empire. It was their business to keep the sultan informed of all the developments. This was the main weapon used by Balban and Alauddin Khalji to control and demoralise the nobles.

There were many minor officials such as the head of the hunt, the officer in charge of royal parties (majlis) etc. whom we may pass over. Two departments which, however, may be noted is the Karkhana or royal stores and the Public Works department. The Karkhanas were responsible for the storing and manufacture of all the articles required by the Sultan and the royal household. This included food and fodder, lamps and oil, clothes, furniture, tents etc. Firuz Tughlaq gave great importance to the karkhanas, and many slaves were trained to become good artisans in these departments. Robes of silk and wool which were distributed to the nobles twice a year by Muhammad bin Tughlaq were manufactured in the royal karkhanas. Each karkhana was supervised by a noble of rank, and was assisted by a large staff of accountants and supervisors.

From the time of Alauddin Khalji, great importance was given to the department of public works or diwan-i-amirat. But the prince of builders was Firuz Tughlaq who not only repaired many old buildings, including sarais, mausoleums etc. but dug canals, and built many new towns. A separate department, therefore, was set up under Malik Ghazi who was called Mir-i-Imarat.

## PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Our knowledge of the structure and working of the provincial and local government under the Sultanat is rather limited. To begin with the Sultanat was a loose structure made up of military commands. There was hardly any single direction, and the commanders were busy subduing the various Hindu chiefs, and extracting money from them for supporting the army. In such a situation, the question of a uniform civil administration over all parts of the dominion hardly arose. But this gradually changed, the Khalji rule forming the phase of transition.

During the Khalji period, we hear of walls or muqtis who were commanders of military and administrative tracts called iqtas or wilayat. The nearest term that can be used for these units is province, and their heads as governors. The exact powers of governor or muqti varied according to circumstances. The governor of Lakhnauti was almost independent, and declared himself a sultan more than once, and military campaigns had to be launched to subdue him. However, it does not appear useful in the context of India to divide them into governors of unlimited or limited powers, as some jurists have done. As the process

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of centralization of power proceeded in India, provincial governors had to submit to increasing central control unless they were prepared to be treated as rebels. To begin with, the muqti had complete charge of the administration of the iqta including the task of maintaining an army with which he could be asked to join the sultan in case of need. He was expected to defray the cost of the army, meet his own expenses and to make financial contributions to the sultan. But the basis of this was not clear. Later, from the time of Balban, the muqti was expected to send the balance (fawazil) of the income after meeting his and the army's expenses. This means that the central revenue department had made an assessment of the expected income of the iqta, and the cost of the maintenance of the army and the muqti's own expenses. This process became even stricter in the time of Alauddin Khalji. Even more, the muqtis were now expected to follow the system of revenue assessment Alauddin had instituted in the doab in the areas called khalisa, income from which went straight to the royal treasury, and was used for paying cash salaries to the soldiers.

As the central control grew, the control over the muqti's administration also increased. The naib diwan (also called khwaja) in charge of revenue administration began to be appointed from the centre. A barid or intelligence officer was also posted to keep the sultan informed. But it seems that the muqti appointed his own troops, keeping a naib Ariz at the centre to represent him. It is not clear who appointed the qazis. Appeals from the qazis and against the conduct of the governors could be made to the sultan. The governor could, however, give revenue-free lands to scholars out of his iqta.

Under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, we hear of a number of persons who were appointed governors on revenue-farming terms. This attempt to maximise the income was a step back for it implied elimination of central control over revenue affairs. But it seems that such persons were not required to maintain troops for the service of the centre, these being placed under a separate officer. This duality of functions did not work and was apparently given up by Firuz.

According to Barani, there were 20 provinces in the Sultanat when it did not include the south. As compared to the provinces (subahs) of Akbar's time, these were smaller. Thus, out of the modern U.P., the middle doab was divided between Meerut, Baran (now Bulandshahr) and Koil (now Aligarh), and another three were in the north-west. Provinces in the Mughal sense really began under Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Under him, the number of provinces covering the entire country upto Malabar according to an Arab writer, Shihabuddin al Umar, was twenty-four.

We do not know whether there were any units equivalent to the modern district or division below the provinces. We hear of shiqs and sarkars in the Afghan histories dealing with the Lodis and the Surs. But these accounts were written during Akbar's time, and we are not certain that these were not, in fact, administrative units of a later time. We do, however, hear of parganas, sadis (unit of 100), and chaurasis (unit of 84). The sadis and chaurasis were collections of villages. The number of villages could vary. Perhaps, a chaudhari who was a hereditary land-holder and an amil or revenue collector were posted there, especially if the area was under khalisa. We hear of khuts and muqaddams. The former was the zamindar of one or more villages, while the latter was the village headman. The patwari was also a village official because we are told that Alauddin Khalji had the account books of the patwaris examined in order to detect frauds by the amils and mutsariffs who were dealt with very harshly.

Thus, a rudimentary system of government, some of it inherited from the earlier Hindu rulers, continued down to the village level.

In this way, gradually a new centralised form of government emerged. The first step was the consolidation of the central government. As the central government became stronger and more confident, it tried to extend its direct control over the regions and the countryside, which, in turn, implied reducing the powers and privileges of the chiefs who dominated the countryside. This led to a prolonged struggle, and no clear forms had emerged by the time the Delhi Sultanat disintegrated. This was a task which was taken up by the Mughals later on.

## UNIT-VIII

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE IN NORTH INDIA UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

There has been a considerable difference of opinion among scholars regarding the impact of Turkish rule on the economic and social life of North India beginning with the 13th century. One view was that the Turks wrought such damage to the economic life and the social and cultural fabric that it could only be repaired after a long time and, to some extent, only under the Mughals. In other words, the entire period of Sultanat rule was painted in dark colours, so much so that it was argued that there was a decline of population in northern India during the period! A second opinion was that since Indian society had hardly changed over the millennia, the negative aspects of Turkish rule were soon overcome, and that after some time the Turkish rulers emphasised justice and protection of the people rather than conquest. Hence, the even tenor of life was continued as far as the mass of the people were concerned, the effect of Turkish rule being felt mainly by the former ruling section—the Rajputs, and their close associates and beneficiaries, the Brahmans. It was argued that in this way, there was change only at the surface.

In recent times, a new view of Indian history has emerged which emphasises change rather than continuity. Thus, it traces the various phases of social development from the time of the Vedic Age. It is argued that along with periods of growth, decline and stagnation, there have been important structural changes in Indian society during its long history. We need not discuss here the early period of Indian history. The period following the decline of the Gupta empire in north India is seen as one during which towns and long distance trade declined, gold coins virtually disappeared and even the silver currency was debased. At the local level, the power of the landed elites increased not only on the economic and social life, but over the administrative processes of the state. The word “feudal” has been used for this system, even though some of the characteristic features of European feudalism, the manor system and vassalage, were absent.

The establishment of Turkish rule in north India led, according to an eminent modern historian, Muhammad Habib, to far-reaching changes in society and economic life. According to him, the new Turkish regime released social forces which created an economic organisation considerably superior to the one that had existed before, that it led to the expansion of towns, and to important alterations in agrarian relationships.

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

There were hardly any elements of change in the rural economy during the Sultanat period. Ibn Battutah, who travelled all over India, has left us a detailed account of the food-grains and various other crops, fruits and flowers produced in the country. Most of them are familiar to us, with rice and sugar-cane being produced in the east and south, and wheat, oil-seeds etc, in the north. Cotton was grown widely, as also barley, sesame and other inferior crops. Ibn Battutah says that the soil was so fertile that it produced two crops a year—the familiar Rabi (winter) and kharif (monsoon) crops. Rice was sown three times a year. Some of the crops were the basis of village industries, such as oil-processing, making jaggery, indigo, spinning and weaving etc. Potato, maize, red chillies and tobacco which were introduced during the 16th century are, of course, missing.

During the 14th century, under Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firuz Tughlaq, there was a marked development of gardens. Firuz Tughlaq is said to have built 1200 gardens in the neighbourhood and suburbs of Delhi, 80 on the Salora embankment, and 44 in Chittor. These gardens led to the improvement of fruits, especially grapes. Thus, we are told that wine, apparently grape-wine, used to come to Delhi from Meerut and Aligarh. Dholpur, Gwalior and Jodhpur were the other places where improved methods of fruit cultivation and gardening were adopted. Special attention was paid to the improvement of pomegranates at Jodhpur. Sikandar Lodi declared that Persia could not produce pomegranates which were better than the Jodhpur variety in flavour.



However, the fruits produced in these orchards were meant mainly for the towns, and for the tables of the wealthy. They may, however, have produced some employment, and added to the avenues of trade.

Regarding implements, although they are hardly mentioned, we may assume that there was no change in them till the 19th century. We have no idea of the productivity of the soil. It may have been higher because of more extensive manuring by cattle which were plentiful, as testified to by the fact that charai based on the number of animals was an important agricultural tax. Also, banjaras had thousands of oxen for their journeys. The peasants had more land per head because of a much smaller population. Forests were also much more extensive. However, on account of social constraints, we hear of landless labourers and menials in the villages. Most of the land was rain fed, though digging of wells and making of bunds (embankments) for storing water for irrigation were considered holy acts, and the state took an active part in building and preserving them.

An extensive system of canals was set up for the first time by Firuz during the second half of the 14th century. As we have mentioned earlier, he cut two canals from the Jamuna, and one each from the Sutlej and the Ghaggar. But these mainly benefited the areas around Hissar in modern Haryana. Other smaller canals in Sindh and the Punjab are also mentioned.

## RURAL SOCIETY

The contemporary sources are almost silent on the subject of rural society. This deficiency can be made up, to some extent, by taking recourse to information available in Sanskrit, Apabhramsh and some of the south Indian languages. Although the information on village life available in these sources deal with the period from the 9th—10th centuries onwards, they provide us a background, and enable us to understand better the changes and continuities in village life under the Delhi Sultanat.

From the writings of the 12th century Jain writer, Hemachandra, we can divide the village folk into four categories, i.e. (i) the produce-sharing peasants or share-croppers for whom the words *karshak* or *ardhikas* (receivers of a half share) are used; (ii) plough-shares and field labourers for whom various words such as *halavakaka*, *kinasa* and even *karshak* are used. These two sections constituted the lowest, most dependent peasantry. It seems that the word *karshak*, literally meaning the tiller of the soil, was a generic word for the lower peasantry which formed the largest group in the villages. Following them came the sections (iii) whom some modern writers have called free peasants, but for whom the word owner-proprietor may be more appropriate. In later times, they were called *malik-i-zamin* (owners of the land) or *khud-kasht* (owner cultivators). They were entitled to inherit the land they claimed by descent. They also owned their huts or houses, and had the use of the village commons. They were often organised on a caste basis. Lastly (iv) there were the villages artisans: the cobbler, the rope-maker, the watchman, etc. Some of the village artisans, such as the cobbler and field-labourers belonged to the *svapach* (untouchable) category. The word *low* or *adhama* is generally applied to them.

The commentators on Dharma Shastras, and other writers are agreed about the harrowing poverty and wretched life of the mass of the toiling peasantry. The Padma Purana describes the miserable life of the *karshaks* and that they were so much oppressed by the rulers of the time as to be unable to even support their families. The poverty of the peasants and field-labourers is contrasted with the luxurious life of the landed aristocracy, the *samantas*.

It will thus be seen that village society was highly unequal. The growth of a cash nexus which became more rapid under the Sultanat increased the disparities further. While the agrarian policies of the Sultans were meant to ensure a steady income for the ruler and the officials who administered the state, their policies also had an impact on the rural society and economy. This is an aspect which we have to infer because the medieval chroniclers were hardly concerned about it.

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## THE REVENUE SYSTEM

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We have little idea about the agrarian policies and practices before the arrival of the Turks in north India. The cultivators were required to pay a large number of cesses which were subsumed under the broad categories of bhaga (land revenue), bhog (cesses), and kar (extra cesses). However, it is difficult to calculate the share of the produce they comprised, individually or collectively, nor how much of it went to the ruler, and how much to his subordinates or to the local landed elites. The traditional share of the produce payable by the peasants, according to the Dharamashastras, was one-sixth, but we hear of kings in south India demanding one-third, or two-thirds of the produce. We also hear of a Chola king who had authorised his feudatories to collect half of the produce. In actual practice, the land revenue demand must have depended upon what the peasants could be made to pay.

There was hardly any change in the structure of rural society during the 13th century. The early Turkish rulers depended on the Hindu chiefs to pay the land-revenue, leaving it to them to collect it from the peasants according to the existing practices. This, again, gives us no idea of the actual land-revenue that was demanded from the cultivators. The general approach of the Turkish ruling class is indicated by Barani who wrote almost a hundred years later. According to him, Balban advised his son, Bughra Khan, not to charge so much land-revenue (kharaj) as to reduce the peasant to a state of poverty, nor so little that they become rebellious on account of excess of wealth. We have no idea how this was implemented in practice. In general, it was designed not to interfere with the existing village set up.

The 14th century saw a number of new developments, as we have noted in the earlier chapters. Alauddin Khalji raised the land-revenue demand to half in the upper Doab region upto Aligarh, and in some areas of Rajasthan and Malwa. This area was made khalisa, i.e. the land-revenue collected there went directly to the Imperial treasury. The land-revenue demand was based on the measurement of the area cultivated by each cultivator. Further, except in the area around Delhi, the cultivators were encouraged to pay land-revenue in cash. Alauddin tried to ensure that the cultivators sold their grains to the banjaras while the crops were still standing in the field, i.e. without transporting them to their own stores so as to be sold later when more favourable prices might prevail. However, this had to be modified in practice because we are told that many of the cultivators themselves brought their grains for sale in the local mandi. These could only have been the rich cultivators.

Alauddin's agrarian measures amounted to a massive intervention in village affairs. Thus, he tried to operate against the privileged sections in the villages—the khuts, muqaddams, and chaudhuris and, to some extent, the rich peasants who had surplus food-grains to sell. The khuts and muqaddams were suspected of passing their burden on to the weaker sections, and not paying the ghari and charai taxes. In Barani's picturesque language, the khuts, and muqaddams became so poor that they could not wear costly clothes and ride on Arabi and Iraqi horses, and their women were obliged to work in the houses of Muslims. Barani, no doubt, exaggerates. But the attempt to take away all the inherited privileges of the khuts and muqaddams, or of the upper sections of the landed nobility and to appoint an army of amils, most of whom proved to be corrupt, to supervise revenue collection was not liable to succeed.

We are told that Alauddin's revenue measures collapsed with his death. But we do not know whether it implied that the system of measurement was abolished, as also the demand for half of the produce in the khalisa areas of the doab. The restoration of the privileges of the khuts and muqaddams implies that the state no longer tried to assess the land-revenue on the basis of the holdings, i.e. area cultivated by each individual, but assessed it as a lump sum, leaving the assessment of individuals to the khuts and muqaddams. This was also a recognition of the economic and social power wielded by the khuts and muqaddams in the country-side.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq took the definite step of replacing the system of measurement by sharing in the khalisa areas. This was considered a step towards providing relief to the cultivators because while under measurement the risk of cultivation of crops had to be largely borne by the cultivator, under sharing both the profit or loss were shared by the cultivator and the state. Ghiyasuddin took another important step.

In the territories held by the holders of iqtas, i.e. outside the khalisa areas, he ordered that the revenue demand should not be raised on the basis of guess or computation, but “by degrees and gradually because the weight of sudden enhancement would ruin the country and bar the way to prosperity.” Barani explains this policy of moderate increases by saying that the revenue demand in the areas of the iqtas should not be increased by “one in ten or eleven”. This phrase does not mean that the increase may be one-tenth or one-eleventh. Nor does it mean that the land revenue should be one-tenth, or the theoretical minimum of one-fifth, as some modern historians have assumed. Barani nowhere mentions the scale of the revenue demand, either in the khalisa areas of the doab, or in the iqtas. Perhaps, the traditional demand in the area outside the khalisa areas remained one-third as before.

Muhammad Tughlaq tried to revive Alauddin’s system and to extend it all over the empire. His measures led to a serious peasant uprising in the doab. The reason for this, it seems, was that in assessing the land-revenue on individuals, not the actual yield but the artificially fixed standard yield was applied to the area under measurement. Further, when converting the produce into cash, not the actual prices but official standard prices were applied. There was also harshness in levying the tax on cattle and houses. Thus, the actual incidence of land-revenue demand rose considerably, to half or even more.

Like Alauddin Khalji’s agrarian reforms, Muhammad Tughlaq’s measures were also designed to curtail the privileges of the more affluent sections in village society, especially the khuts and muqaddams. But his measures also hurt the average cultivator. This may explain why there was a serious uprising against his measures in the doab.

Muhammad Tughlaq then tried to reverse direction. In the doab which was the directly administered area (khalisa), he tried to improve cultivation by changing the cropping pattern, replacing inferior crops by superior crops. The main inducement for this was granting loans (sondhar) for digging wells, etc. This policy could only have succeeded with the co-operation of the richer cultivators, and the khuts and muqaddams who had the largest land-holdings, as well as the means. However, it failed because the officials appointed for the purpose had no knowledge of local conditions, and were only interested in enriching themselves. Firuz met with greater success by providing water to the peasants of Haryana by his canal system, levying an extra charge of 10 per cent, and leaving it to the peasants to cultivate what they wanted.

All in all, it would appear that the land-revenue under the Sultans, especially during the 14th century, remained heavy, hovering in the neighbourhood of half, and that there was a definite effort to reduce the power and privileges of the old intermediaries, the Rais, Rawats etc., with the khuts and muqaddams forging ahead. This was the first time that such a high magnitude of land-revenue was assessed and collected from a large and highly fertile area for several decades. Both the administrative methods adopted, and the centralisation of such large, liquid resources in the hands of the ruling class had important consequences, both for rural life and for the urban manufacturers, trade and commerce.

Firuz Tughlaq’s rule is generally considered a period of rural prosperity. Barani and Afif tells that as result of the Sultan’s orders, the provinces became cultivated, and tillage extended widely so that not a single village in the doab remained uncultivated. The canal system extended tillage in Haryana. According to Afif, “In the houses of the raiyat (peasantry) so much grain, wealth, horses and goods accumulated that one cannot speak of them.” He goes on to say how none of the women folk of the peasantry remained without ornaments and that “in every peasant’s house there were clean bed-sheets, excellent bed-cots, many articles and much wealth.”

Obviously these remarks applied largely to the richer sections among the peasants and the rural, privileged sections—the khuts, muqaddams etc. Thus, rural society continued to be unequal, with imperial policies siphoning off a large share of the rural surplus. However, there was some limited success to the efforts to improve the rural economy even though the benefit of these was reaped largely by the privileged sections in rural society.

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## NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

We do not have any detailed account of the economic resources of the country during the Sultanat period, and it has to be supplemented by the account provided by Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, written towards the end of the 16th century. Briefly, the most important manufactures pertained to textiles, metallurgy, building activities, mining and other ancillary activities, such as leather-work, paper-making, toy-making, etc.

### TEXTILES

Textile production was the biggest industry of India and goes back to ancient times. It included the manufacture of cotton cloth, woollen cloth and silk. Cotton cloth itself could be divided into two categories—the coarse (*kamin*) and the fine (*mahin*). The coarse cloth, which was also called *pat*, was worn by the poor and the *faqirs*. It was often manufactured in households in the villages, but was also produced in some regions, such as Awadh, from which it was imported into Delhi. Cotton cloth of a little superior quality was called *calico* (*kirpas*), and was widely used. Cloth of fine variety included *muslin* which was produced at Sylhet and Dacca in Bengal, and Deogir in the Deccan. This was so fine and expensive as to be used only by the nobles and the very rich. Gujarat also produced many variety of fine cotton-stuff. Barbosa tells us that Cambay (*Khambayat*) was the centre for the manufacture of all kinds of finer and coarse cotton cloth, besides other cheap varieties of velvets, satins, *tafettas* or thick carpets.

Various varieties of cloth was both painted, and printed by using blocks of wood. Thus, the 14th century Sufi Hindi poet, Mulla Daud, talks of printed (*khand chaap*) cloth. Apart from the manufacture of cloth, other miscellaneous goods such as carpets, prayer carpets, coverlets, bedding, bed-strings, etc. were also manufactured in other parts of Gujarat.

The production of cloth improved during the period because of the introduction of the spinning-wheel (*charkha*). According to a modern historian, Irfan Habib, the spinning wheel is attested to in Iran in the 12th century by some well-known poets. Its earliest reference in India is in the middle of the 14th century. Thus, it apparently came to India with the Turks, and came into general use by the middle of the 14th century. We are told that the spinning-wheel in its simplest form increased the spinner's efficiency some six-fold, in comparison with a spinner working with a hand spindle.

Another device introduced during the period was the bow of the cotton-carder (*naddaf*, *dhunia*) which speeded up the process of separating cotton from seeds. Silk was imported from Bengal where silk worms were reared. However, a greater supply of silk yarn, including raw silk, was imported from Iran and Afghanistan. There was much use of silk cloth, and of cotton and silk mixed at Delhi and its neighbourhood. The silk of Cambay (*Khambayat*) was among the costly items of cloth controlled by Alauddin Khalji. The *patolas* of Gujarat with many fancy designs were highly valued. Gujarat was also famous for its gold and silver embroidery, generally on silk cloth.

Wool was procured from the mountainous tracts, though sheep were also reared in the plains. The finer qualities of woollen cloth and furs were largely imported from outside, and were almost exclusively worn by the nobles. However, the shawl industry of Kashmir was well established. Muhammad Tughlaq sent Kashmir shawls as a present to the Chinese emperor. Carpet weaving also developed under the patronage of the Sultans, with many Iranian and Central Asian designs being incorporated.

Mention may be also made of the dyeing industry. Indigo and other vegetable dyes were responsible for the bright colours of which both men and women were fond. The dyeing industry went hand in hand with calico-painting. The tie and dye method was of old standing in Rajasthan, though we do not know when hand-printing using wooden blocks was introduced.

We do not know much about the organisation of the textile industry which gave employment to a large number of people. Then as later, spinning was considered to be women's work, and was carried out in the



homes. Even slave-girls were used for this purpose. Weaving was also a house-hold industry, carried out in towns or in some of the villages. The weaving material was purchased by the weavers themselves, or supplied to them by merchants. The luxury items were, however, generally produced in the royal workshops or karkhanas. Thus, we are told that in Muhammad Tughlaq's karkhanas, there were 4000 silk workers who wove and embroidered different types of robes and garments. Firuz Tughlaq had recruited and trained a large number of slaves to work in his karkhanas, and in the parganas.

## **METALLURGY**

India had an old tradition of metal-work as testified to by the iron-pillar of Mehrauli (Delhi), which has stood the ravages of time and weather over centuries. Many idols of copper or mixed-metals also testified to the skill of the Indian metal-workers. Indian damascened swords and daggers were also famous all over the world. Vessels of bronze and copper, including inlay work, produced in the Deccan had a steady demand in West Asia. The high quality of the Sultanat coinage is also an evidence of the skill of the Indian metal workers. The gold and silver-smiths of India were known for the fine pieces of jewellery produced by them for which there was an insatiable demand from both women and men.

## **BUILDING INDUSTRY**

The building industry was a major means of employment. There had been a spurt of temple building activity in north India from the 10th century, as witnessed by the temples at Khajuraho in Bundelkhand, at Dilwara in Rajasthan and other places in Orissa and Gujarat. The Turkish sultans, too, were great builders. They introduced a new style of arch, the dome and the vault, and a new mortar, the lime mortar for cementing. They built cities, forts and palaces, the remains of many of which are still visible. It seems that there was a great spurt in brick making, and more and more people began to live in brick and stone houses, though the poor continued to live in mud houses, with thatched roofs. As stone cutters, the Indian craftsmen were unrivalled. Amir Khusrau proclaimed that the mason and stone-cutters of Delhi were superior to their fellow craftsmen in the whole Muslim world. As is well known, Timur had taken masons and stone-cutters of Delhi to build his capital, Samarqand. We have no idea of the number of people engaged in building industries. Barani tells us that Alauddin Khalji employed 70,000 craftsmen for the construction of his buildings. Both Muhammad Tughlaq and Firuz were great builders. Firuz not only established a number of new towns, but had many old buildings, including mausoleums repaired. Enamelled tiles were introduced in India during the period. Hindu Rajas and chiefs also patronised building-artisans, and a number of new towns, such as Jodhpur in Rajasthan, were built during the period. Wood work of excellent quality was carried out throughout the country, with doors, seats, bed-stands for domestic use being made.

## **OTHER CRAFTS INCLUDING PAPER-MAKING**

Another crafts which was widespread in India was leather-working, based on the large cattle wealth in the country. This was largely organised on a caste basis. Superior quality saddles were produced for a large number of horses in the stables, or gifted to nobles. Gujarat produced exquisite mats of red and blue leather, decorated with birds and beasts, or inlaid work.

A new industry which arose during the period was paper-making. Although known to China in 100 A.D., knowledge about paper technology reached Samarqand and Baghdad only in the 8th century. The Arabs introduced a new technology, using rags and ropes instead of the mulberry trees and the bark of trees.

There is no evidence of its use in India before the 13th century, and the earliest paper manuscript in India available to us is from Gujarat dated 1223-24. Paper making undoubtedly meant a great increase in the availability of books.

Other crafts included salt-making, quarrying for stone and marbles, and extraction of iron and copper ore. There was also diamond mining in Panna and in south India, as also diving for pearls from the sea. Ivory working was another important craft.

### **(a) Domestic Trade**

During the Sultanat period, as during the earlier period, India remained the manufacturing workshop for the Asian world and adjacent areas of East Africa, with brisk and well-established domestic trade. India's position was based on highly productive agriculture, skilled craftsmen, strong manufacturing traditions, and a highly specialised and experienced class of traders and financiers. We have noted the growth of towns and a money nexus in north India following the Turkish centralisation which led to improved communications, a sound currency system based on the silver tanka and the copper dirham, and the re-activation of Indian trade, especially over-land trade with Central and West Asia.

Domestic trade may be divided into local trade between the villages, and with the mandis and district towns; and long distance trade between metropolitan towns and regions. Trade between district and metropolitan towns fell between the two. Local trade involved the sale of crops for the payment of land-revenue and to feed the towns which were growing in size and number. The sale of crops was primarily the responsibility of the village bania who also provided the peasants with such necessities as salt and spices, and raw iron for use by the village blacksmith. Sometimes, the rich cultivators themselves took their surplus produce to the local mandis—a practice which Alauddin Khalji tried to encourage to prevent hoarding at the village level. The mandis were supplemented by local fairs where animals were also sold, animals being a necessity for field operations, local transport, milk etc. We have no means of assessing the volume of this local trade. It undoubtedly played a vital role in the economic life of the country. However, local trade did not generate enough wealth to make the traders engaged in it wealthy enough to lead a life of ease and plenty. Thus, the much reviled village bania probably did not have a standard of living higher than that of a rich peasant.

At the other end of the spectrum were the rich traders and financiers, the sahs, modis and sarrafs. Their trading activities were geared both to the movement of bulk commodities within the country, as well as to cater to the demand for luxury goods required by the nobility living in the big cities. The bulk commodities included food-grains, oil, ghee, pulses, etc. with some regions having a surplus and some others a deficit. Thus, rice and sugar which were surplus in Bengal and Bihar were carried by ships to Malabar and Gujarat. Wheat which was surplus in modern east U.P. (Awadh, Kara/Allahabad) was transported to the Delhi region. But transport of bulk commodities overland was expensive, and was carried on mainly by the banjaras, who moved with their families along with thousands of bullocks. Perhaps, the operations of the banjaras were financed by the rich merchants, the sahs and the modis, though we do not have enough information on the subject. Expensive but bulky commodities, like fine quality textiles, were carried on the backs of horses or in bullock carts. The movement of these goods was in caravans or tandas, protected by hired soldiers because roads were unsafe on account of both wild animals and dacoits.

The building of the road from Delhi to Deogir by Muhammad bin Tughlaq illustrates the manner in which road communication was sought to be improved. Thus, trees were planted on both sides of the road, and a halting station (sarai) was built every two miles (karoh) where food and drink was available. In Bengal, an embankment was made so that a part of the road to Lakhnauti which had remained under water during rains could become passable.

Regarding the commodities transported in long distance trade, apart from the bulk commodities, textiles were the main item. We have already referred to muslin from Bengal and Deogir, and fine textiles from Gujarat. Horses, both foreign and domestic, were also an important item of import. Indigo, spices, unguents, drugs, leather-goods were other important items. Shawls and carpets from Kashmir were in demand at Delhi. So were dry fruits. Wine was imported from abroad, and also produced at Meerut and Aligarh in the Gangetic doab.

Regarding the financing of long distance trade, the hundi system must have continued. The modis and sarrafs were the main means of operating and financing the hundi system. Although there was no system

of banking as such, the village bania at the village level, and the modis and sarrafs at the national level were the main means of providing finance for agricultural operations and trade. According to an eminent modern historian, K.M. Ashraf, the interest charged on loans was 10 per cent per annum for big loans, and 20 per cent on small or petty sums.

## **(b) Foreign Trade**

India had an old tradition of trade with West Asia and extending through it to the Mediterranean world, as also to Central Asia, South-East Asia and China both by over-seas and over-land routes. The overland routes lay through the Bolan Pass to Herat and through the Khyber Pass to Bokhara and Samarqand, and also by the Kashmir routes to Yarkand and Khotan for onward transmission to China. These trade routes were sometimes disrupted due to the outpouring of nomadic hordes from Central Asia, such as the Hun eruption during the 6th-7th centuries, and the Mongol onslaught during the 13th century. The rise and fall of empires also effected the safety of these trade routes. However, the traders proved to be extremely hardy and skillful in overcoming these obstacles. Also, the nomads quickly realised the value of permitting trade to flow, and tax it to their benefit. Thus, the Mongols not only permitted trade but, when not at war, themselves traded in camels and horses, arms, falcons, furs and musk. Although Balban had difficulties in getting horses from Central Asia on account of the Mongols, this must have been temporary because Alauddin Khalji had no such difficulty. With the establishment of the Mongol empires, and the security of roads, trade with China and West Asia became easier than ever before. The effect of the destruction of flourishing cities such as Samarqand and Bokhara by the Mongols should not, therefore, be overestimated. With the gradual assimilation of the Mongols to Islam, conditions for trade improved further during the 14th century. However, overland trade concentrated on commodities which were light in weight but high in value because of the high cost of transportation. Horses were the most important commodity imported overland into India. There was a steady demand for Arabi, Iraqi and Central Asian horses in India for the needs of the army, the cavalry being the principal instrument of warfare. They were also valued for purposes of show and status. Hence, the careful regulation of sale and purchase of horses was a priority for the state. The other commodities imported into India included camels, furs, white slaves, velvet, dry fruits and wines. Tea and silk were imported from China, though silk was also imported from Persia, the mulberry tree and silk cocoons having been introduced there during the 13th and 14th century by the Mongols. The exports from India included cotton textiles, food stuffs such as rice, sugar and spices. There was a continuous export of slaves from India for whom the demand in the Islamic world was quite considerable.

The principal centre for overland trade from India was Multan. Lahore had been ruined by the Mongols in 1241, and was not able to regain itself till the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq. Multan was also the entry point of all foreigners, including traders who were all called Khurasanis. It is difficult to estimate their number, but in wealth they appear to be inferior to the Multanis. However, the foreign merchants, especially the Arabs, were more active in Gujarat and Malabar in overseas trades. Indians, both Hindus (Agrawal and Maheshwari) and Jains and Bohras were also active in this trade, with colonies of Indian traders living in West and South-East Asia. Bengal also carried on trade with China and countries of South-East Asia, exporting textiles, and importing silks, spices etc. Ma Huan, who came to Bengal in the early part of the fifteenth century, mentions that "wealthy individuals who built ships and go to foreign countries to trade are quite numerous."

## **THE RULING CLASSES**

The most important class which emerged in northern India during the 13th century was the ruling class consisting of the nobles. Generally, the nobles have been divided into three categories, the Khans being the highest category, followed by Maliks and Amirs. However, this categorisation was never very clear. To begin with, people holding junior posts in and around the court, such as sarjandar (commander of the king's personal forces), saqi-i-khas (in-charge of water and other drinks etc.), as also those holding the posts of sipahsalar, sar-i-khail (junior commanders of military forces) were called amirs. Later, the word

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amir began to be used in a loose sense to signify a person of wealth and influence in the government. The most important categories remained the Maliks, and the Khans. All the top posts in the government were held by persons belonging to these categories. In the lists of nobles given by Minhaj Siraj and Barani, only Maliks are mentioned. The category of Khan was the result of Mongol influence among whom the Qa-an (Khan) was the commander of 10,000 troops. In the Delhi Sultanat, the word 'Khan' was only used to give a special status. Thus, Balban was given the title of Ulugh Khan. The nobles were also dignified by being given other titles, such as Khwaja Jahan, Imad-ul-Mulk, Nizam-ul-Mulk, etc. They were also awarded various privileges (maratib), such as robes of different kinds, sword and dagger, flags, drums, etc. These were greatly valued because they often signified status, and closeness to the Sultan. Horses and elephants with costly trappings were also awarded to them on special occasions.

We do not have any precise idea of the number of nobles in office at any one time. Minhaj Siraj gives a list of 32 Maliks under Iltutmish which included 8 princes who were displaced Central Asian rulers. Perhaps, the term Turkan-i-Chahalgani, or the corps of forty Turks used by Barani is a reflection of the number of top nobles. For Balban's reign, Barani gives a list of 36 Maliks excluding qazis. The number of top nobles rose to 48 under Alauddin Khalji, out of which 7 were relations, including sons. From this, we may conclude that till the Sultanat suddenly expanded after the death of Alauddin Khalji, the number of top nobles or Maliks in the country was quite small. As we have seen, even among this small group of nobles, there was bitter factional fighting. In this struggle, mutual relationships, ethnicity etc. played a role. The Turks considered themselves superior to all others such as Tajiks, Khaljis, Afghans, Hindustanis etc. The Turks ousted the Tajiks after the death of Iltutmish, and established a virtual Turkish monopoly over high offices. This was broken with the rise of the Khaljis. Under the Khaljis and the Tughlaqs, Indian Muslims forged ahead, largely on the basis of personal efficiency. However, foreign blood, or descent from a well-known foreign family continued to have considerable social value and esteem, as the Moorish traveller, Ibn Battutah, testifies.

We do not have much knowledge about the social origin of the high grandees. During the early phase, there was considerable social mobility among the nobles, and people from a wide social background, who had the capacity to attract and maintain a military following (jamiat) or who caught the eye of the Sultan, could, with luck, rise to the position of a Malik. Many of the nobles had, in fact, started their career as slaves, and slowly climbed the social ladder. This open character of the nobility continued to a large extent during the 13th century on account of the rapid rise and fall of dynasties, resulting in large scale displacement of nobles belonging to the previous regimes. Thus, in the 13th century we hardly hear of families whose members continued to hold the position of high grandees for more than one generation.

During the 14th century, with the rise of the Khaljis, and then of the Tughlaqs who ruled for almost a hundred years, the social character of the nobility broadened, and it became more stabilized. With the breaking of the Turkish monopoly of high offices, the zone of recruitment to the nobility broadened. Many Khaljis, Afghans and Hindustanis were admitted to the nobility. No attempt was made to exclude the Turks. However, according to popular perception, even when a noble lost his power and position, the tradition of former dignity and social honour were handed over to his descendants who believed that their restoration to former power was only a question of time and opportunity.

Along with the clergy, these sections constituted what were called ashraf (pl. of sharif) or the respected sections. According to contemporary thinking, the state had a special responsibility towards these sections, not only in matters of employment, but for giving pensions to the widows, even providing funds for the marriage of their unmarried daughters. Generally speaking, there was a broad division among the ahl-i-saif or men of the sword, and the ahl-i-qalam or the literati. The latter were chosen for judicial and clerical posts. The ulema also fell in this category. As long as administration was tantamount to a military exercise for realising land-revenue from recalcitrant chiefs, muqaddams and peasants, the literati had to be kept away from administration, although it was urged that the wazir should come from the class of the literati. In general, the nobles looked down on the literati, and considered them unfit for administrative or political matters. Thus, Alauddin Khalji not only rejected the advice of Qazi Mughis to try and arrange



a compromise with the Mongols, but ridiculed him for offering advice on military and political matters although he was a nawisanda (clerk), and the son of a nawisanda!

The emergence of a class of ashraf from whom the nobility was expected to be recruited gave it a measure of social stability, but also heightened stratification in Muslim society. The counterpart of the ashraf were the ajlaf or kam-asl, i.e. the lower, inferior classes consisting of citizens, and professionals such as weavers, peasants, and labourers. Not only marriage between the two sections, the ashraf and the ajlaf, was unthinkable, even social intercourses between the two was at a discount. While such social gradations had existed among the Muslims in West and Central Asia, they became even more rigid and pronounced after their coming to India which had a tradition of stratification on the basis of heredity, i.e. caste.

Arising from this deep social division was the belief that only persons belonging to the 'respectable' classes had the right to occupy high offices in the state. Hence, there was widespread resentment among the upper classes when Muhammad Tughlaq appointed to high offices, apparently on the basis of their efficiency, Hindus and Muslims belonging to the 'inferior' classes or castes, such as wine-distillers, barbers, cooks, gardeners, shop keepers (bazaris) etc. The experiment failed for a variety of reasons. Firuz Tughlaq earned high praise and approval when he chose as nobles only those whose ancestors had been in the service of the king or belonged to the 'respected' classes. That the prejudice was not against 'Hindustanis' as such but against the so-called inferior classes, whether Hindustani Muslim, is borne out by the fact that Firuz's wazir, Khan-i-Jahan, who was a converted brahman, was acceptable to all sections of the Muslims. This was in stark contrast to the Baraduis or Parwaris, wrongly considered to be low-caste converts, who had come to the top for a brief time after the death of Alauddin Khalji, and have been sharply denounced by Barani.

We are told by Barani that during the time of Balban when, apparently, the nobles did not have much ready cash in their hands, whenever they wanted to hold a majlis or a convivial party, their agents would rush to the houses of the Sahs and Multanis to borrow money, so that all the money from their iqta went to them as repayment, and gold and silver was to be found in the houses of the merchants alone. This situation seems to have changed with the coming of Alauddin Khalji and the growth of a new centralised system of land revenue administration which began with him, and continued under the Tughlaqs. In the new system of revenue administration, there was an emphasis on payment of land-revenue in cash. This applied not only to khalisa territories, i.e. reserved territories income from which went to the central treasury, but even in areas assigned as iqta. Thus, when Ibn Battutah was appointed a judge and given a salary of 5,000 dinars, it was paid for by assigning him 21/2 villages, the annual income of which came to that sum. We now also hear of nobles being assigned large salaries. Thus, a Malik was paid between 50,000 to 60,000 tankas; an amir 30,000 to 40,000 tankas, a sipahsalar got 20,000 tankas. These salaries were even higher under Firuz Tughlaq. Thus, Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul got 13 lakh tankas over and above the expenses of his army and servants, and separate allowances for his sons and sons-in-law. Other nobles got salaries ranging from four to eight lakh tankas per year.

This implied unprecedented centralization of the rural surplus in the hands of the central elite. The high emoluments not only implied great affluence for the nobles, but possibility of hoarding of wealth. When Malik Shahin, who was naib amir-i-majlis of Sultan Firuz, died, he left behind 50 lakh tankas besides jewels, ornaments and costly robes. Imad-ul-Mulk Bashir-i-Sultani, who had been the Sultan's slave, left behind 13 crores tankas of which the Sultan confiscated 9 crores. However, these appear to be exceptions rather than the rule. Apart from being an insurance against uncertainty, the growth of such hoards was also an index of a slow growth of a money economy in the country. However, the growth of a money economy seems to have led to a change in the attitude towards trade and traders. Ibn Battutah alludes to the ships owned by the sultan of Delhi. On one occasion, the sultan, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, placed three ships at the disposal of Shihabuddin Kazruni, a friend and associate, who had a flourishing overseas trade, and was called a "king of merchants." Almost for the first time, traders began to be involved in the tasks of administration. This, Muhammad Tughlaq gave Shihabuddin the city of Khambayat in charge. If Battutah is to be believed, the Sultan had even promised him the post of the Wazir, but he was murdered at the instance of the Wazir, Khan-i-Jahan, while on his way to Delhi.

We are also told that Abul Hasan Ibadi of Iraq, who lived in Delhi, used to trade with the money of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and to buy weapons and goods for him in Iraq and Khurasan. Other nobles may have followed the Sultan's example, though we have no evidence of it. On balance, it appears that the major investments of the nobles were not in trade but in orchards, the numbers of which grew sharply under Firuz with the growing prosperity of the nobles. However, further development in the direction of productive investments by the nobles had to await the re-centralization of the empire under Akbar.

We have little information about the education and cultural outlook and values of the Turkish nobles. Apparently, they were not illiterate: even slaves purchased by merchants in the slave market of Samarkand and Bokhara were educated before being resold. Although many of the slaves were newly converted, they had imbibed the Islamic religious and cultural norms prevalent in Central Asia, Khurasan etc. Nonetheless, they could hardly have imbibed the cultural graces of an old and well-established nobility. Nor could they be expected to be knowledgeable patrons of culture, though it was considered a mark of prestige to patronize poets and writers, sometimes even to give them extravagant rewards. This began to change with the rise of Amir Khusrau and his companion, Amir Hasan Sijzi, towards the end of the 13th century. Gradually, a new Indo-Muslim culture developed, and many nobles and sufis actively contributed to it. Thus, Zia Nakhshabi (d. 1350) wrote on many subjects including poetry, and had a number of Sanskrit works translated into Persian. Thus, from being merely rude warriors, the nobles began slowly to emerge as patrons of culture as well.

### THE CHIEFS-EMERGENCE OF 'ZAMINDARS'

Although the Rajputs had lost state power almost all over north India, with the exception of Rajasthan and adjacent areas, and in the remoter hill regions of the Himalayas, Bundelkhand, etc., Rajput rajas continued to dominate large tracts of the countryside even in the centrally administered areas of Punjab, the doab, Bihar Gujarat, etc. They were called rai, rana, rawat, etc. However, the term 'chief' has been applied to them. They had their own armed forces, and generally lived in the countryside in their fortresses. We have little idea of their numbers or the strength of their forces, but they were important in the political, social and economic life of the countryside.

Although the contemporary sources invariably portray them as enemies against whom constant jihad was not only legitimate but necessary, a relationship of permanent hostility was not feasible for the Turkish rulers, or for them. For the Turkish rulers, it was convenient to allow them to rule the areas under their control as long as they paid a stipulated sum of money regularly as tribute, and generally behaved in a loyal manner.

We have evidence of a growing political relationship between the Turkish rulers and the Hindu chiefs. Thus, we are told that Hindu rais from a hundred kos used to come and witness the splendour of Balban's court. After Balban's victory over Tughril in Bengal, he was welcomed in Awadh by many, including the rais of the area. Later, when Firuz Tughlaq invaded Bengal, he was joined by the rais of eastern U.P., the most important of them being Udai Singh, the Rai of Gorakhpur and Champaran, who paid 20 lakhs of tribute that was due from him.

In another instance, when Malik Chhajju, a nephew of Balban and governor of Kara rebelled against Jalaluddin Khalji, he was joined by the local rais, and rawats and payaks of the area who "swarmed around with their forces like ants and locusts." They stood by his side in his contest with Jalaluddin Khalji. Malik Chhajju was defeated, but from this time onwards, Hindu chiefs seem to have been in attendance of the Sultan at his court. Thus, we hear that under Firuz Tughlaq, Anirathu who was "lord of two royal canopies (chatra)," Rai Madar (or Ballar) Deva, Rai Sumer, Rawat Adhiram, etc. were not only allowed to attend, but were allowed to sit down in the court.

Despite these growing political linkages during the Sultanat rule, the position of the chiefs was one of considerable uncertainty. It was a part of the policy of the sultans of Delhi to overthrow the Hindu chiefs whenever they could, or at any rate, to try and reduce their powers and privileges by extending the impe-

rial system of revenue administration to the territories dominated by the chiefs. While such a process did not, in all probability, reduce the actual burden on the cultivators, it meant a reduction of the perquisites of the chiefs, and possibly other intermediaries.

By the beginning of the 14th century, we find increasing references to the zamindars. This term, which does not exist outside India, was used increasingly to designate the hereditary intermediaries. Amir Khusrau was amongst the first to use it. In course of time, the term began to be applied to the khuts and muqaddams and chaudhris, and even to those former chiefs who had been forced or pressurized to pay not a fixed lump sum, but a sum fixed on the basis of land-revenue assessment. Under the Mughals, and word “zamindar” began to be used for all hereditary owners of land or those who had a hereditary share in the land revenue. Even chiefs were included in this category. We have little idea of the life style of the privileged rural sections, but generally their affluence is contrasted to the poverty of the rest.

## JUDICIAL AND JUNIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS AND THE ULEMA

The ruling classes, especially the nobility, could hardly have functioned without the help of a group of lower functionaries, in addition to the large number of servants, slaves and other retainers they employed. These functionaries can be broadly divided into two: judicial and religious functionaries, on the one hand, and revenue and administrative functionaries on the other. The former consisted of qazis and muftis who were appointed in every city where there was a sizable population of Muslims. They dispensed civil justice where Muslims were concerned, leaving the Hindus to deal their own cases on the basis of customary law, and the Dharmashastras. They also dealt with criminal justice. At their head was the Chief Qazi. In the capital and perhaps in other cities there was a Dad-Bak who was responsible for checking arbitrary exaction of taxes, and supervising and controlling the amirs who were responsible for surveying and keeping a record of properties of Muslims for purposes of taxation. There was also the muhtasib who worked under the kotwal and was responsible for seeing that the Muslims did not openly violated the sharia, or disregard compulsory obligations such as observation of roza, namaz etc. He was also responsible for checking weights and measures.

All these posts were paid, and their numbers grew as the size of the Muslim population in the country increased. There were also Imams, muazzins etc. who were appointed in various mosques, and reciters of the Holy Quran who were appointed to mausoleums, or were called to various religious functions. In addition, there were religious divines who were appointed as teachers in various schools (maqtab), colleges (madrasa), etc. All these sections broadly constituted the theological class or ulema. The ulema were highly respected. As a general rule, they had undergone a course of training in Muslim Law, logic and theology, including some knowledge of Arabic. In addition to these official classes, there was a large group of Muslim scholars, pious men etc. who received support from the state through stipends, grant of revenue-free lands etc.

We have little idea of the social base of this large and amorphous group of people. In general, they formed what in modern times would be called the lower middle and middle classes, though some of the ulema rose to the position of chief qazis etc., and became more a part of the ruling class. Very often, poets, scholars, historians, doctors and lower functionaries in the government—the amils (revenue collectors), muharrirs (accountants) etc. came from the same social class. We can also call this class the literati, or the educated, literate class. As we know, in a country which was predominantly illiterate, people who were educated and could also speak in the name of religion had enormous prestige. Nevertheless, the ulema, as a class, did not enjoy a high reputation among the discerning sections. Bughra Khan, the son of Balban, warned his son, Kaiqubad, against the latter day theologians whom he described as “greedy rogues whose highest duty was this world and not the next.” Amir Khusrau considered the qazis who accepted judicial offices to be corrupt and ignorant, and unfit to occupy any responsible positions in the kingdom. They were arrogant and vain, and were generally considered time-servers who were prepared to sacrifice their principles and beliefs to please those in powers. In general, the Sultans did not allow them to have any say in political affairs, confining them to deciding judicial cases, religious matters and education. Nonethe-

less, the ulema did play a positive role in acting as a bridge between the ruling classes and the ordinary Muslims, and imbuing the Muslims with a sense of unity. Simultaneously, it must be noted that many of the ulemas were foreigners who had taken refuge in India on account of the Mongols, or were attracted to India by its prosperity. They had little understanding of India, and they and a section of theologians in India accentuated social tensions and bitterness between the ordinary Hindus and Muslims by constantly harping on elements of religious conflict, ignoring the sense of social amity that generally prevailed among the people.

A large number of clerks and officials were needed to man the growing machinery of administration at the centre, and in the various provincial and district towns following the new system of revenue administration introduced by Alauddin Khalji. The power of these officials, possibilities of corruption and oppression on their part, and the harsh corrective steps taken by Alauddin against them have been described graphically by Barani. We do not know the social background of these new recruits to government service. A large number of them may have been converted into Indian Muslims, or members of the ulema class. If we exclude the muqaddams and the patwaris who were Hindus, and who lived in the villages, most of these lower officials must have been Muslims. However, Hindus seem to have entered into this class under Muhammad bin Tughlaq. This would explain the selection by him of a small number among them to high positions. Thus, we have the emergence of a class of Persian knowing Hindus by this time.

## THE TRADING & FINANCIAL CLASSES

India had an old tradition of trade and a well developed class of traders and financiers since ancient times. Thus, laws relating to contract, loans, sale and purchase are set out by the Dharmashastras. The emergence of the Vaishyas as a separate trading community, and their being included in the category of the dvija (lit. twice born or the privileged sections) is an index of their position in the social and economic life of the country. It is, however, necessary to make a distinction between the leading merchants or nagar streshtins from the ordinary shop-keepers (banik), and transporters (banjaras). The former, according to the Panchatantra, a 5th century fable, were considered socially close to the ruler, and mingled freely with his family members. The leading merchants not only dealt with wholesale and long distance trade, which included foreign trade, but also dealt with finance and money-changing. Long distance trade was financed, insured against risk, and money transported from place to place through the system of hundis.

The establishment of a strong centralized empire in north India; the establishment of a sound currency system, mainly based on the silver tanka; the growing security of roads; growth of towns, and opening up of India to the Islamic world were important factors which led to the growth and expansion of India's overland trade to West and Central Asia, as well as overseas trade, mainly from Gujarat. This is testified to by the frequent reference to the Multanis as traders and financiers. As is well known, throughout the medieval times, Multan was a very important trading centre, being linked directly across the Bolan Pass to Qandhar, Herat and Bokhara which was the junction of the "silk road", extending eastward across Central Asia to China, and westward across Iran to Constantinople and Lebanon. Multan was also linked via the river Indus to the western sea ports. It would appear that the bulk of the Multanis "were Hindus.

We have already referred to Barani's accounts how the Multanis and the Sahs of Delhi had become so rich by lending money to the nobles that gold and silver was to be found in their houses alone. Barani testifies to the wealth and prosperity of the Multanis and the Sahs in other ways also. He says that Jalauddin Khalji bluntly refused to take stern action against the Hindus who even at the capital, Delhi, had full religious freedom, and the wealthy ones among them, obviously the Multani traders and merchants, were leading a life of ease and pleasure, with no fear about the safety of their life and property.

Another section of traders to whom Barani refers to are the dallals or brokers. The brokers were commission agents who charged a fee for bringing buyers and sellers together. Their emergence is an index of the growth of trade at Delhi. We are told that buyers of different commodities, especially textiles, used to throng to Delhi following the control of the market by Alauddin. Barani refers to brokers especially in the



context of Alauddin's effort to control the sale of horses. He uses strong words about these dallals many of whom, specially the horse traders, were Muslims. They formed a rich and powerful group which, on occasions, could even defy the Sultan, and disregard his orders.

The Muslim traders at Delhi were generally foreigners—Iraqis, Iranians, Khurasanis, etc. although we hear of a few Muslim Multanis. Thus, the father and grand-father of Hisamuddin, whom Alauddin had appointed a qazi, had been leading merchants of Multan. According to Ibn Battutah, in India all the foreign traders were called Khurasanis. The Afghans were another group of Muslim trader. They specialized in caravan trade, and trade in horses.

We have little idea about the trading communities in different parts of India. Gujarat had a well established tradition of trade, and of trading communities, both India and foreign. We have already referred to an Egyptian, Shihabuddin Kazruni, who owned many ships, and lived at Khambayat. The Jains, the Marwaris, the Gujarati banias and the Bohras were also active, according to traditional accounts. It was from one of these traders that Malik Kafur was procured for Alauddin.

## STANDARD OF LIVING

Contemporary chroniclers give a lot of space in describing the extravagant life style of the Sultans—their palaces, their furnishings, the lavish expense on the upkeep of the large number of women and relatives in their harems, their costly cloths and jewellery, expenses on the royal stables, and their extravagant gifts to nobles, poets, the learned and the saintly etc. Such a life style had become customary, and was also supposed to impress the subjects and the courtiers.

We need not concern ourselves unduly with the life style of individual sultans, any more than we need bother about the life styles of the modern day play-boys, except that the Sultans, being centres of patronage and accepted as leaders of society, exercised a tremendous influence on the life-style and behaviour pattern of the elites.

We have already noticed the growing affluence of the nobles from the time of the rise of the Tughlaqs. However, even during the reign of Balban, we are told that his cousin, Malik Kishli Khan, on one occasion gave in gift all his horses and 10,000 tankas to poets and minstrels. Fakhruddin, the kotwal of Delhi under Balban, used to give financial grants to 12,000 readers of Quran, and give dowries to 1000 poor girls each year. He never wore the same dress twice, or slept in the same bed twice. Balban's diwan-i-arz, Imad-ul-Mulk, was famous for the lavish repast, consisting of fifty to sixty trays of food which were served to his officials and clerks every day. Mir Maqbul, a noble of Muhammad Tughlaq, used to spend three and a half lakh tankas on his personal expenses. Khan-i-Jahan, the wazir of Firuz, had 20,000 women in his harem. Such examples of extravagance on the part of the nobles can be multiplied.

The life style of nobles did lead to the setting up of specialized industries in different parts of the country, catering to the demand created by them. It is difficult to estimate the number of people employed in such industries, or those who provided them services. But their numbers must have been considerable, since most of the nobles did not hoard their riches. Nor did the nobles invest their wealth in productive enterprises, except in gardens during the reign of Muhammad Tughlaq, more specially under Firuz.

We have little idea of the standard of living of the junior bureaucrats, members of the judiciary and the ecclesiastical classes and professionals, such as hakims, poets, musicians, etc. Some of the famous hakims seem to have been financially well off. The position of the poets etc. depended upon the nature of the patronage they received. Thus, the father of Amir Khusrau had a stipend of 1200 tankas a year from Balban when he was a noble. Ahmad Chap, Balban's Ariz, once gave 10,000 tankas, 100 horses and 320 dresses for the royal musicians to sing at his house. In general, these sections led a life of comfort, but not affluence.

As far as the general population in the towns is concerned, their standard of living was largely determined by prices and wages. We have little idea of prices before Alauddin Khalji. By his market control measures, Alauddin ensured the supply of cheap food stuffs. Thus, Barani tells us that wheat was sold at 7 1/2 jital per man, barley at 4 jitals, and good quality rice at 5 jitals. However, while the cost of subsistence was low, wages were also low. Thus, we are told that in Alauddin's reign, the wages of an artisan amounted to 2 or 3 jitals per day or about 1 1/2 to 2 tankas a month. Barani tells us that six jitals worth of bread and meat-stew, i.e. a bare subsistence would suffice for seven or eight persons. The salaries of servants, we are told, were 10 to 12 tankas, probably a year. The salary fixed for the cavalymen by Alauddin, 234 tankas a year, or about 20 tankas a month for the soldier and his mount was thus one which allowed the trooper to live in some style. We are told that after the death of Alauddin, the price control system collapsed, and prices rose rapidly, with wages rising four times. These figures cannot be calculated exactly. By analyzing the prices mentioned by Ibn Battutah, it seems that prices rose a little over one-and-a-half times. Wages may have risen in the same proportion. Prices and wages were higher still during the early years of Firuz's reign. During his reign, according to Afif, without any effort on the Sultan's part, the prices declined almost to the level of Alauddin's reign. However, wages still remained high. The causes of the fluctuation of the prices of food grains—whether they were linked to good harvest and expansion of cultivation, or was part of a world-wide shortage of silver is still a matter of debate among historians.

## **TOWNS AND TOWN LIFE: ARTISANS AND SLAVES**

We have already seen that there was a revival of towns in north India from the 10th century. This process was considerably accelerated from the 13th century as a result of Turkish centralization, and the growth of a new city-based ruling class with a high standard of living. Apart from Delhi, which Ibn Battutah calls the largest city in the eastern part of the Islamic world, we are told that Daultabad

(Deogiri) equalled Delhi in size. Other cities which rose to prominence in north India during the period were Multan, Lahore, Kara (near modern Allahabad), Lakhnauti and Khambayat.

The economic life of the town was dominated by the nobles and their retainues, traders and shop-keepers, as we have noted. The largest section in the cities consisted of the servants and slaves, artisans, soldiers, and a miscellaneous group consisting of peddlers, musicians, performers (nat), self-employed people and beggars. We hardly have a profile of these miscellaneous sections, i.e. their lifestyles, social background etc. It seems that the cities performed the function of a large social churner whereby people of diverse backgrounds and ethnic origins, slaves, artisans, and others came to live together. The entry to the city was carefully regulated by the kotwal, who was not only responsible for the maintenance of law and order, but regulated the markets, and houses of ill-fame (gambling, prostitution, etc.) According to tradition, people following a particular profession lived in a particular area (mohalla) which was locked at night for the sake of safety. There was a definite pattern in the lay-out of the towns: there was a separate quarter for the king and the nobles, while scavengers, leather-workers, beggars etc. were allotted quarters at the outskirts of the towns, but within the town-wall. Delhi had a large mass of beggars who thronged the houses of the nobles for charity, or resorted to mausoleums, shrines of Sufi saints etc. Like the ordinary population, they carried arms, and could sometimes create problems of law and order.

The city was a centre of many crafts; weaving, painting on cloth, embroidery, etc. The royal karkhanas employed many artisans in preparing costly items, such as cloth embroidered with gold and silver thread, silk etc. But most of the artisans worked at home, and were organised in guilds along caste lines. However, not all the specialized crafts, such as weaving, were located in the towns. In south India and Gujarat, there were many villages and small towns which specialized in particular types of textile production. Thus, unlike medieval Europe, we should not divide crafts in India into water-tight compartments between towns and the countryside. The craft link between the towns and the countryside was also a factor which facilitated the movement of artisans from the countryside to the towns.

## SLAVES

Another large section in the town consisted of slaves and domestic servants. Slavery had existed in India as well as in West Asia and Europe for a long time. The position of different types of slaves—one born in the household, one purchased, one acquired and one inherited is discussed in the Hindu Shastras. Slavery had been adopted by the Arabs and later, by the Turks also. The most usual method of acquiring a slave was capture in war. Even the Mahabharata considered it normal to enslave a prisoner of war. The Turks practiced this on a large scale in their wars, in and outside India. Slave markets for men and women existed in West Asia as well as in India. The Turkish, Caucasian, Greek and Indian slaves were valued and were sought after. A small number of slaves were also imported from Africa, mainly Abyssinian. Slaves were generally bought for domestic service, for company, or for their special skills. Skilled slaves or comely boys, and handsome girls sometimes fetched a high price. Skilled slaves were valued and some of them rose to high offices as in the case of the slaves of Qutbuddin Aibak.

Slave raiding was widely practised in West and Central Asia, the ghazis being specially used to capture and then convert slaves from Central Asia. The early Turkish rulers, such as Qutbuddin Aibak, continued this practice in India. Thus, when he invaded Gujarat in 1195, he captured and enslaved 20,000 persons and another 50,000 during his raid of Kalinjar. However, we do not hear of any such large scale enslavement during the campaigns of Balban and Alauddin Khalji, although slaves were still considered a part of the booty. More often captured prisoners of war were slaughtered, only a few chosen ones being brought back as slaves. But during campaigns of “pacification” in the country-side, large number of men, women and children were enslaved, and sold in the slave market at Delhi. The sale and purchase of slaves was such a routine matter that Barani mentions the price of slave-girls and handsome boys along with cattle! However, unlike Central Asia where captured Turkish slaves were used for military purposes, the slaves sold in the market in Delhi were used mainly for domestic service. This was so common that even clerks did not think it amiss to employ slaves. Generally, slaves were not used or trained for being craftsmen, though maid-servants were often used for spinning, and we hear of even Sufi saints living on the earnings of their slaves.

A departure from this practice was made by Firuz Tughlaq. He instructed the bigger nobles to capture slaves whenever they were at war, and to pick out and send the best among them for the service of the Sultan. Even the various subordinate chiefs were asked to follow this practice. In this way, 180,000 slaves were collected. While some of them were trained for religious studies, 12,000 among them were trained as artisans, and dispersed into various paragans.

This suggests an acute shortage of trained artisans in the towns. The slaves also formed a corp of armed guards. However, the effort to create a corp of Janissaris on the Turkish model failed. The corp of slaves tried to act as king maker at the death of Firuz and was defeated and dispersed.

Although domestic slavery continued under the Mughals, the slaves did not play any important role in manufacturing, or in the military. However, there is little doubt that the practice of slavery was not only inhuman, it lowered the status of free labour, and depressed wages.

## WOMEN, CASTE, SOCIAL MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

There were hardly any changes in the structure of the Hindu society during the period. The Smriti writers of the time continued to assign a high place to the brahmanas, while strongly denouncing the unworthy members of the order. According to one school of thinking, the brahmanas were permitted to engage in agriculture not only in times of distress, but also in normal times since officiating at sacrifices, etc. did not furnish means of subsistence in the Kali Age.

The Smriti texts continue to emphasize that punishing the wicked and cherishing the good was the duty of the kshatriyas, and that the right to wield weapons for the purpose of protecting the people likewise belonged to them alone. The duties and occupations of shudras and their disabilities were more or less

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repeated. While the highest duty of the shudra was the service of the other castes, he was allowed to engage in all occupation, except to deal in liquor and meat. The ban on the study and recitation of the Vedas by shudras was repeated, but not on hearing the recitation of the Puranas. Some writers go as far as to say that not only eating a shudra's food but also living in the same house with him, sitting in the same cot and receiving religious instructions from a learned shudra were to be avoided. This may be regarded as an extreme view. However, the severest restrictions were placed on mingling with the chandalas and other 'outcastes'.

There was little change in the position of women in the Hindu society. The old rules enjoining early marriage for girls, and the wife's obligation of service and devotion to the husband, continued. Annulment of the marriage was allowed in special circumstances, such as desertion, loathsome disease, etc. But not all writers agree with this. Widow remarriage is included among the practices prohibited in the Kali Age. But this apparently applied to the three upper castes only. Regarding the practice of sati, some writers approve it emphatically, while others allow it with some conditions. A number of travellers mention its prevalence in different regions of the country. Ibn Battutah mentions with horror the scene of a woman burning herself in the funeral pyre of her husband with great beating of drums. According to him, permission from the Sultan had to be taken for the performance of sati.

Regarding property, the commentators uphold the widow's right to the property of a sonless husband, provided the property was not joint, i.e. had been divided. The widow was not merely the guardian of this property, but had the full right to dispose of it. Thus, it would appear that the property rights of women improved in the Hindu law.

During this period, the practice of keeping women in seclusion and asking them to veil their faces in the presence of outsiders, that is, the practice of purdah became widespread among the upper class women. The practice of secluding women from the vulgar gaze was practised among the upper class Hindus, and was also in vogue in ancient Iran, Greece, etc. The Arabs and the Turks adopted this custom and brought it to India with them. Due to their example, it became widespread in India, particularly in north India. The growth of purdah has been attributed to the fear of the Hindu women being captured by the invaders. In an age of violence, women were liable to be treated as prizes of war. Perhaps, the most important factor for the growth of purdah was social—it became a symbol of the higher classes in society, and all those who wanted to be considered respectable tried to copy it. Also, religious justification was found for it. Whatever the reason, it affected women adversely, and made them even more dependent on men.

During the Sultanat period, the Muslim society remained divided into ethnic and racial groups. We have already noticed the deep economic disparities within it. The Turks, Iranians, Afghans and Indian Muslims rarely married with each other. In fact, these sections developed some of the caste exclusiveness of the Hindus. Converts from lower sections of the Hindus were also discriminated against.

The Hindu and Muslim upper classes did not have much social intercourse between them during this period, partly due to the superiority complexes of the latter and partly due to the religious restrictions of inter-marriage and inter-dining between them. The Hindu upper castes applied to the Muslims the restrictions they applied to the shudras. But it should be borne in mind that caste restrictions did not close social intercourse between the Muslims and the upper caste Hindus and the shudras. At various times, Hindu soldiers were enrolled in Muslim armies. Most of the nobles had Hindus as their personal managers. The local machinery of administration remained almost entirely in the hand of the Hindus. Thus, occasions for mutual intercourse were manifold. The picture of the two communities being confined within themselves and having little to do with each other is, thus, neither real nor one which could be practised. Nor is it borne out by the evidence available to us. Conflict of interests as well as differences in social and cultural ideas, practices and beliefs did, however, create tensions, and slowed down the processes of mutual understanding and cultural assimilation.



# UNIT-IX

## THE AGE OF VIJAYANAGAR AND BAHMANIDS

### THE VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE & ITS CONFLICT WITH BAHMANI KINGDOM

The decline of the Delhi Sultanat was accompanied by the rise of Vijayanagar and Bahmanid kingdoms which dominated India south of Vindhya for more than 200 years. Although these kingdoms constantly fought with each other, they maintained law and order within their territories, and on the whole provided stable governments which enabled the growth of trade and commerce. Many of the rulers devoted themselves to the growth of agriculture, and built cities and capitals with magnificent buildings. Many of them were also patrons of art and culture.

Thus, in contrast to north India, two large territorial states emerged and functioned in south India from the middle of the 14th century onwards. A new situation arose with the break up of the Bahmanid kingdom towards the end of the 15th century, and the disintegration of the Vijayanagar empire later, following its defeat at the battle of Talikota in 1565. This was also the period when a European power, the Portuguese, entered the Asian scene, and tried on the basis of its naval strength to establish its domination over the seas and its bordering areas and to capture the overseas trade.

There is no agreement among scholars regarding the early origins of the Vijayanagar kingdom. While the role of Harihar and his brother, Bukka, in the foundation of the kingdom are generally accepted, the early origins of the family are far from clear. According to tradition, they belonged to a family of five brothers, and had been feudatories of the Kaktyias of Warangal, and later joined the service of the ruler of Kampili in modern Karnataka, gradually rising to the position of ministers. When Kampili was overrun and conquered by Muhammad bin Tughlaq for giving refuge to a Muslim rebel, the two brothers, it is said, were captured, and sent to Delhi as prisoners, and converted to Islam. Soon a rebellion broke out at Kampili against Turkish rule, and the brothers were sent to suppress the rebellion, but they forsook their new faith and joined the rebellion. A number of modern scholars reject this traditional account. According to them, there is little evidence of the brothers serving at Warangal, nor of their subsequent capture and conversion. According to them, Harihar and Bukka belonged to the group of 75 nayaks of Karnataka who had rebelled against Turkish rule, and that they belonged to a strong Shaivite family. They deny that the family had any earlier links with Andhra. Whatever the controversy, the point for us to note is that in building their system of administration, the Vijayanagar rulers not only used the Tamil traditions of Chola rule, but also Telugu and Kannada traditions of the Kakatiyas and the Hoysalas. Thus, they were not mere provincial leaders, but represented the entire south.

There was a complicated situation in south India following the collapse of Tughlaq rule. Some of the old surviving kingdoms, such as the Hoysalas of Mysore, lingered on and a number of new principalities arose. Of these the most important were the Sultans of Madurai, the Vema rulers of Warangal, and the Reddis of Telangana. Later, the Bahmani kingdom rose to the north of the Vijayanagar kingdom. These principalities constantly fought against each other, or allied themselves according to need. Thus, in the struggle against the Sultan of Madurai, the Hoysala ruler, Ballal III, was defeated and executed in 1342. Taking advantage of this situation, Harihar and his brothers launched upon a campaign of expansion, and soon the whole of the Hoysala kingdom passed into their hands. This was followed by a protracted struggle against the Sultanat of Madurai. The Madurai Sultanat was wiped out by 1377. Vijayanagar rule now extended in the south upto Rameshwaram, and included parts of Kerala which had been parts of the Madurai Sultanat. Earlier, Harihar had established a new capital, Vijayanagar, on the river Tungabhadra. According to tradition, he did so on the advice of the sage, Vidyaranya. However, according to another tradition, the city was built by Bukka who succeeded his brother in around 1356, and ruled till 1377.

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Vijayanagar had to meet the rising power of the Bahmani Sultans in the north who, from time to time, received the support of the Valema rulers of Warangal and the Raya of Telangana who were afraid of the rising power of Vijayanagar, and looked upon the Bahmani ruler as a kind of a balancing factor.

The Bahmani kingdom was founded in 1347 by an Afghan noble, Alauddin Hasan, whose family had risen in the services of Alauddin Khalji. According to a popular legend, mentioned by Ferishta who wrote in the 17th century, Hasan has risen in the service of a brahman, Gangu, and was, therefore, known as Hasan Gangu. We do not know how far this legend is correct. After his elevation to the throne, Alauddin Hasan, in order to raise the status of his family, tried to trace his descent from the Iranian heroes, Isfandar and Bahman, and added the words "Bahman Shah" to his name. It was from this title that the kingdom was called the Bahmani kingdom.

The interests of the Vijayanagar rulers and the Bahmani sultans clashed in three separate and distinct areas; in the Tungabhadra doab, in the Krishna-Godavari delta, and in the Marathwada country. The Tungabhadra doab was the region between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra. On account of its wealth and economic resources, it had been the bone of contention between the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas in the earlier period and between the Yadavas and the Hoysalas later on. The struggle for the mastery of the Krishna-Godavari basin which was very fertile and which, on account of its numerous ports, controlled the foreign trade of the region was often linked with the struggle for the Tungabhadra doab. Thus, the rulers of the area allied themselves sometimes to the Bahmani kingdom, or sometimes sided with Vijayanagar to save themselves. In the Maratha country, the main contention was for the control of the Konkan and the area which gave access to it. The Konkan was a narrow strip of land between the Western Ghats and the sea. Its principal port Goa was, thus, of great importance to the southern states.

Military conflict between the Vijayanagar and the Bahmani kingdoms was a constant feature almost throughout the existence of these two kingdoms. This had several effects; it emphasised the military aspect of both the kingdoms; also, the conflict between the two was often portrayed in religious terms. However, the various kingdoms and states allied themselves more on secular than religious considerations. Although claiming to be defender of Hindu interests, Vijayanagar rulers did not hesitate from employing a contingent of Muslims horsemen, armed with bows. As we have seen, their early struggle was against the Hoysala rulers who were Hindus. Later, the Gajpati rulers of Orissa invaded and occupied parts of the Vijayanagar kingdom, leading to a Vijayanagar-Bahmani alliance against them. The rulers of Warangal also allied themselves for a long time with the Bahmani rulers against Vijayanagar.

The religious dimension cannot, however, be ignored altogether. It made the conflict between Vijayanagar and the Bahmani sultans more bitter, leading to widespread devastation in the contested areas and the neighbouring territories, with considerable loss of life and property. Both sides sacked and burnt towns and villages, imprisoned and sold into slavery men, women and children, and committed other barbarities, often in the name of religion.

The battle for the Tungabhadra doab had commenced as early as 1336 when the Bahmani forces had attacked and captured Raichur, but which was recovered by Harihar the following year. Warfare between the two sides continued in recurrent cycles. Thus, in 1367, Bukka embarked upon a war in association with the ruler of Warangal to recover the areas lost to the Bahmani ruler earlier. We are told that when Bukka I assaulted the fortress of Mudkal in the disputed Tungabhadra doab; he slaughtered the entire garrison, except one man. When this news reached the Bahmani sultan, he was enraged and, on the march, vowed that he would not sheath his sword till he had slaughtered one hundred thousand Hindus in revenge. In spite of the rainy season and the opposition of the Vijayanagar forces, he crossed the Tungabhadra, the first time a Bahmani sultan had in person entered the Vijayanagar territory. There are different versions about the outcome of the battle. According to Persian sources, the Vijayanagar ruler was defeated, and had to retire into the jungles. We hear for the first time of the use of artillery by both the sides in the battle. However, the Bahmani sultan could not gain a decisive victory, and the war dragged on for several months, during which a wholesale slaughter of men, women and children went on. Finally, a kind

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of a treaty was patched up which restored the old position whereby the doab was shared by the two sides. A vague promise was also made that in future wars the two sides would not slaughter helpless, unarmed inhabitants. However, this hardly had an effect on future warfare.

The elimination of the Sultan of Madurai in the south enabled Vijayanagar under Harihar II (1377-1404) to successfully embark upon a forward policy in the north-east and west. As we have noted, there were a series of Hindu principalities in the north-east region. The rulers of Orissa to its north, as well as the Bahmani sultans were also interested in this area. Although the ruler of Warangal had helped Hasan Gangu in his struggle against Delhi, his successor had invaded Warangal and seized the strong-hold of Kaulas and the hill fort of Golconda. Vijayanagar had been too busy in the south to intervene. The Bahmani Sultan fixed Golconda as the boundary of his kingdom and promised that neither he nor his successor would encroach against Warangal any further. To seal this agreement, the ruler of Warangal presented to the Bahmani sultan a throne set with valuable jewels. It is said that it had been originally prepared as a present to Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The alliance of the Bahmani kingdom and Warangal lasted for over 50 years and was a major factor in the inability of Vijayanagar to overrun the Tungabhadra doab, or to stem the Bahmani offensive in the area.

The battles between Vijayanagar and the Bahmanis are described in great detail by medieval writers. However, they are not of much historical importance to us, the position of the two sides remaining more or less the same, with the fortune of war swinging sometimes to one side, and sometimes to the other. Harihara II was able to maintain his position in the face of the Bahmani-Warangal combine. His greatest success was in wresting Belgaum and Goa in the west from the Bahmani kingdom. He also sent an expedition to the north of Sri Lanka.

After a period of confusion, Harihar II was succeeded by Deva Raya I (1404-1422). Early during his reign, there was renewed fight for the Tungabhadra doab. He was defeated by the Bahmani ruler, Firuz Shah, and had to pay ten lakhs of huns, pearls and elephants as an indemnity. He also agreed to marry his daughter to the Sultan, ceding to him in dowry Bankapur in the doab in order to obviate all future disputes. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and show. When Firuz Shah Bahmani arrived near Vijayanagar for the marriage, Deva Raya came out of the city and met him with great pomp. From the gate of the city to the palace, which was a distance of ten km, the road was spread with cloths of gold, velvet, satin and other rich stuffs. The two monarchs rode on horseback together from the centre of the city square. The relations of Deva Raya joined the cavalcade, marching on foot before the two kings. The festivities lasted three days.

This was not the first political marriage of this type in south India. Earlier, the ruler of Kherla in Gondwana had married his daughter to Firuz Shah Bahmani in order to effect peace. It is said that this princess was the favourite queen of Firuz. However, these marriages by themselves could not bring about peace. The question of the Krishna-Godavari basin led to a renewed conflict between Vijayanagar, the Bahmani kingdom and Orissa. Following a confusion in the Reddi kingdom, Deva Raya entered into an alliance with Warangal for partitioning the Reddi kingdom between them. Warangal's defection from the side of the Bahmani kingdom changed the balance of power in the Deccan. In consequence, Deva Raya was able to inflict a shattering defeat on Firuz Shah Bahmani, and annexed the centre territory up to the mouth of the Krishna River.

Deva Raya I did not neglect the arts of peace. He constructed a dam over the Tungabhadra so that he could bring a canal into the city to relieve the shortage of water. It irrigated the neighbouring fields also, for we are told that the canal increased his revenues. He also build a dam on the river Haridra for irrigation purposes.

After some confusion, Deva Raya II (1425-1446), who is considered the greatest ruler of the dynasty, ascended the throne at Vijayanagar. In order to strengthen his army he inducted more Muslims into it. According to Ferishta, Deva Raya II felt that the superiority of the Bahmani army was due to their sturdier horses and their large body of good archers. He, therefore, enlisted 2000 Muslims, gave them jagirs, and

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commended to all his Hindu soldiers and officers to learn the art of archery from them. The employment of Muslims in the Vijayanagar army was not new, for Deva Raya I is said to have kept 10,000 Muslims in his army. Ferishta tells us that Deva Raya II assembled 60,000 Hindus well skilled in archery, besides 80,000 cavalry, and 2, 00,000 infantry. These figures may be exaggerated. However, the collection of a large cavalry must have put a strain on the resources of the State since most of the good mounts had to be imported, and the Arabs, who controlled the trade, charged high prices for them.

With his new army, Deva Raya II crossed the Tungabhadra river in 1443 and tried to recover Mudkal, Bankapur, etc., which were south of the Krishna river and had been lost to the Bahamani sultans earlier. Three hard battles were fought, but in the end the two sides had to agree to the existing frontiers. Nuniz, a Portuguese writer of the sixteenth century, tells us that the kings of Quilon, Sri Lanka, Pulicat, Pegu, Tenasserim (in Burma) and Malaya paid tribute to Deva Raya II. It is doubtful whether the Vijayanagar rulers were powerful enough on the sea to extract regular tribute from Pegu and Tenasserim. Perhaps, what was meant was that the rulers of these countries were in contact with Vijayanagar, and had sent presents to secure its goodwill. Sri Lanka, however, had been invaded a number of times. This could have not been attained without a strong navy.

Under a series of capable rulers, Vijayanagar emerged as the most powerful and wealthy state in the south during the first half of the fifteenth century. A number of travellers who visited Vijayanagar during the period have left a graphic account of the city and the country. The Italian traveller, Nicolo Conti, who visited Vijayanagar in 1420, says of the city "The circumference of the city is sixty miles; its walls carried up to the mountains, and enclose the valley at their foot.... In this city there are estimated to be ninety thousand men fit to bear arms. Their king is more powerful than all the other kings in India." Ferishta also says: "The princes of the House of Bahmani maintained their superiority by valour only; for in power, wealth and extent of the country, the Rayas of Bijarnagar (Vijayanagar) greatly exceeded them."

Abdur Razzaq who had travelled widely in and outside India, and was an ambassador at the court of Deva Raya II, says: "This latter prince has in his dominions three hundred ports, each of which is equal to Calicut, and on terra firma his territories comprise a space of three months journey." All travellers agree that the country was thickly populated with numerous towns and villages. Abdur Razzaq says: "The country is for the most part well cultivated, very fertile. The troops amount in number to eleven lakhs."

Abdur Razzaq considers Vijayanagar to be one of the most splendid cities anywhere in the world which he had seen or heard of. Describing the city, he says: "It is built in such a manner that seven citadels and the same number of walls enclose each other. The seventh fortress, which is placed in the centre of the others, occupies an area ten times larger than the market place of the city of Herat." Starting from the palace, there were four bazars "which were extremely long and broad." As was the Indian custom, people belonging to one caste or profession lived in one quarter of the town. The Muslims appear to have lived in separate quarters provided for them. In the bazars as well as the king's palace, "one sees numerous running streams and canals formed of chiselled stone, polished and smooth." Another later traveller says that the city was larger than Rome, one of the biggest towns in the western world at that time.

The kings of Vijayanagar were reputed to be very wealthy. Abdur Razzaq mentions the tradition that "in the king's palace are several cell-like basins filled with bullion, forming one mass." The hoarding of wealth by the ruler was an ancient tradition. However, such hoarded wealth remained out of circulation, and sometimes invited foreign attack.

There has been a good deal of debate among scholars about the nature of the Vijayanagar state. Nilkanth Shastri considered it the nearest to a war state. He traces this to the view put forward by a Vijayanagar ruler that the income of the state should be divided into four parts, one part for various works, two, i.e. half for warfare, and the remainder saved for an emergency. He also lays emphasis on the amaram system whereby its holder, the nayak, who was granted a piece of territory had, in return, to maintain a number of troops, horses and elephants for the service of the ruler, and swear loyalty to him.



Vijayanagar was a war state only in the sense that all medieval states had to be constantly ready for war. The success of the rulers of Vijayanagar in meeting their Muslim opponents was largely based on the fact that they not only copied their mode of cavalry warfare but also, as we have seen, inducted a large number of mounted Muslim archers in their army. The rulers of Vijayanagar also maintained a large standing army which, we are told, was paid in cash. Thus, while continuing traditional forms, the rulers of Vijayanagar also tried to adopt some new features.

There is a difference of opinion whether the Vijayanagar state was a loose association of semi-autonomous military and territorial leaders, the nayaks, or was a centralised state on the model of the Delhi Sultanat. In this context it should be remembered that the amaram cannot be equated to the Turkish iqta system. The nayaks were not former slaves or subordinates of the ruler in whose service they rose, with the ruler having the power to transfer them at will or even to remove them. The nayaks were hereditary territorial lords in their own right. While they promised service and loyalty to the ruler whose grant legitimized their position, they ran their own administration, and paid a part of their income to the ruler. We are told that there were 200 nayaks in the Vijayanagar kingdom. The rulers tried to control them, but could not remove them. Also, in some of the outlying areas in the south and the west, local rulers who had accepted the Vijayanagar suzerainty continued to rule. Thus, the area administered directly by the Vijayanagar rulers must have been much smaller than the size of the empire. For the purpose, apart from the usual council of ministers headed by a Pradhani or chief, there was a secretariat in which a large number of scribes (kayasthas) were employed. According to Abdur Razzak, near the ruler's palace was the diwan-khana "which is extremely large and presents the appearance of a chihal situn, or a forty-pillared hall where the records are kept and the scribes seated." However, we know little about the method of administration, or the size of the area under direct administration.

The Vijayanagar state has been called "a citadel of (Hindu) orthodoxy and conservatism". Thus, it is argued, the rulers spent a lot of time and attention in building and repairing temples and maths, and prided themselves on bearing the titles of "protectors of the Vedas, and the Vedic path". They also gave great favours to the Brahmans, who were not only given grants of revenue-free lands, but were appointed commanders of armies and forts. The military assignment given to the Brahmans, and their important political role was, however, motivated not by religious sentiments but by a desire to use the Brahmans as a balancing factor against the powerful Kannad nayaks. In matters of religion, the Vijayanagar rulers were not narrow. Although Saivites to begin with, they did not discriminate against the other sects among the Hindus. They also gave patronage to Jainism. The Christian missionaries who had settled down in south India were allowed to do missionary work, and make conversions among the Hindus. The Muslim soldiers employed in the army were given freedom for offering namaz, and in general there were good relations among the Hindus and the Muslims. The only case of blatant intolerance that can be cited is when in 1469, the Vijayanagar ruler, Mallikarjuna Raya, in a fit of anger hearing that the Muslim traders of Bhatkhal had sold horses to the Bahmani ruler, ordered the extirpation of all Muslims in the city. We are told that 1000 Muslims were massacred, and the survivors fled to Goa. This folly and crime led to retaliation from the Bahmani ruler, and the loss of Belgaum and the surrounding region to the Bahmani ruler.

## **THE BAHMANI-ITS GROWTH AND DISINTEGRATION**

We have already traced the rise of the Bahmani kingdom, and its conflict with the Vijayanagar Empire till the death of Deva Raya II (1446). The most remarkable figure in the Bahmani kingdom during the period was Firuz Shah Bahmani (1397-1422). He was well-acquainted with the religious science, that is, commentaries on the Quran, jurisprudence, etc., and was particularly fond of logic, and of the natural sciences such as botany, geometry etc. He was a good calligraphist and a poet and often composed extempore verses. According to Ferishta, he was well versed not only in Persian, Arabic and Turkish, but also in Telugu, Kannada and Marathi. He had a large number of wives in his harem from various countries and regions, including many Hindu wives, and we are told that he used to converse with each of them in their own language.

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Firuz Shah Bahmani was determined to make the Deccan the cultural centre of India. The decline of the Delhi Sultanat helped him, for many learned people migrated from Delhi to the Deccan. The king also encouraged learned men from Iran and Iraq. He generally spent his time till midnight in the company of divines, poets, reciters of history and the most learned and witty among his courtiers. He had read the Old and New Testaments, and he respected the tenets of all religions. Ferishta calls him an orthodox Muslim, his only weakness being his fondness for drinking wine and listening to music.

The most remarkable step taken by Firuz Shah Bahmani was the induction of Hindus in the administration on a large scale. It is said that from his time the Deccani Brahmans became dominant in the administration. The Decanni Hindus also provided a balance against the influx of foreigners called afaqis or gharibs. Many of the foreigners from West Asia were Persians, under whose influence Persian culture and also Shia doctrines grew in the kingdom. The Bahmani rulers were tolerant in religious matters, and though most of them were Sunnis, they did not persecute Shiism. Nor was jizyah levied on the Hindus during the early phase of Bahmanid rule. We have no reference to jizyah in the subsequent period also. If collected later on, it was collected as a part of land-revenue (kharaj). Firuz Shah Bahmani encouraged the pursuit of astronomy and built an observatory near Daultabad. He paid much attention to the principal ports of his kingdom, Chaul and Dabhol, which attracted trading ships from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and poured in luxury goods from all parts of the world.

Firuz Bahmani started the Bahmani expansion towards Berar by defeating the Gond Raja Narsingh Rai of Kherla. The Rai made a present of 40 elephants, 5 maunds of gold and 50 maunds of silver. A daughter of the Rai was also married to Firuz. Kherla was restored to Narsingh who was made an amir of the kingdom and given robes of state, including an embroidered cap. Firuz Shah Bahmani's marriage with a daughter of Deva Raya I and his subsequent battles against Vijayanagar have been mentioned already. The struggle for the domination of the Krishna-Godavari basin, however, continued. In 1419, the Bahmani kingdom received a setback, Firuz Shah Bahmani being defeated by Deva Raya I. This defeat weakened the position of Firuz. He was compelled to abdicate in favour of his brother Ahmad Shah I, who is called a saint (wali) on account of his association with the famous Sufi saint Gesu Daraz. However, Ahmad Shah was also considered a saint by the Hindus, so much so that his urs (death anniversary) continued to be celebrated jointly till recent times. Ahmad Shah continued the struggle for the domination of the eastern seaboard in south India. He could not forget that in the last two battles in which the Bahmani sultan had been defeated, the ruler of Warangal had sided with Vijayanagar. In order to wreck vengeance, he invaded Warangal, defeated and killed the ruler in the battle, and annexed most of its territories. In order to consolidate his rule over the newly acquired territories, he shifted the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. After this, he turned his attention towards Malwa, Gondwana and the Konkan.

### **AGE OF MAHMUD GAWAN (1463-1482)**

The second half of the fifteenth century saw the gradual rise of the Bahmani kingdom as the leading power in the south. This had been presaged by the conquest of Warangal by Ahmad Shah which showed that the balance of power was shifting in favour of the Bahmanids. Following the death of Deva Raya II, there was confusion in Vijayanagar which provided an opportunity to the Gajpati rulers of Orissa to expand their power and influence in the area. The Bahmanids used the opportunity to consolidate their position in the south, and to expand northwards towards Berar and Khandesh, and westwards towards the Konkan. This brought them into conflict with the rulers of Malwa and Gujarat.

During this period, struggle between the Afaqis (Newcomers), and the Deccanis (Old comers) created confusion in the internal affairs of the Bahmani kingdom till Mahmud Gawan rose to power and prominence. Not much is known about the early life of Mahmud Gawan. An Iranian by birth he comes first to our notice in 1456 when he was put at the head of a force to deal with a pretender who had risen against the reigning sultan. Mahmud Gawan was introduced to the ruler, and steadily gained in influence so that in 1461 when the sultan died, and a minor succeeded him, Mahmud Gawan was appointed a member of the council of regency, set up to look after the affairs of the state. Following a series of invasions by the

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ruler of Malwa, the council of regency was dissolved, and in 1463 a new prince was seated on the throne who appointed Mahmud Gawan as wakil-i-sultanate (prime minister), with the title of Khwaja-i-Jahan and Malik-ut-Tajjar. Although Mahmud Gawan had never been a trader (tajjar), this title had been awarded by some preceding rulers upon leading nobles.

Mahmud Gawan dominated the affairs of the state for twenty years. During the period, Mahmud Gawan tried to extend the frontiers of the kingdom towards the east and the west. In the east, he came into conflict with the Gajapati ruler of Orissa, and joined hands with Vijayanagar to oust him from the Caromondal coast. He also made further conquest at the cost of Orissa.

Mahmud Gawan's major military contribution, however, was the over-running of the western coastal areas, including Dabhol and Goa. The loss of these ports was a heavy blow to Vijayanagar. Control of Goa and Dabhol led to further expansion of the overseas trade with Iran, Iraq, etc. Internal trade and manufactures also grew.

Mahmud Gawan also tried to settle the northern frontiers of the kingdom. Since the time of Ahmad Shah I, the kingdom of Malwa ruled by the Khalji rulers had been contending for the mastery of Gondwana, Berar and the Konkan. In this struggle, the Bahmani sultans had sought and secured the help of the rulers of Gujarat. After a great deal of conflict, it had been agreed that Kherla in Gondwana would go to Malwa and Berar to the Bahmani sultan. However, the rulers of Malwa were always on the lookout for seizing Berar. Mahmud Gawan had to wage a series of bitter battles against Mahmud Khalji of Malwa over Berar. He was able to prevail due to the active help given to him by the ruler of Gujarat.

It would thus, be seen that the pattern of struggle in the south did not allow divisions along religious lines, political and strategic considerations and control over trade and commerce being more important causes of the conflict. Secondly, the struggle between the various states of north India and in south India did not proceed completely in isolation from each other. In the west, Malwa and Gujarat were drawn into the affairs of the Deccan, and in the east, Orissa was involved in a struggle with Bengal and also cast covetous eyes on the Coromandel Coast.

The expansion of the Bahmani kingdom towards the east and the west led to a resurgence of the conflict with Vijayanagar. But by this time Vijayanagar was no match for the Bahmani kingdom. Mahmud Gawan not only annexed the Tungabhadra doab, but made a deep raid into the Vijayanagar territories, reaching as far south as Kanchi.

Mahmud Gawan carried out a number of internal reforms. Some of these were aimed at limiting the power of the nobles. Thus, the old provinces (tarafs) were further sub-divided from four into eight, and the governor of each fort was to be appointed directly by the sultan. The salaries and obligations of each noble were fixed. For maintaining a contingent of 500 horses, a noble received a salary of 1, 00,000 huns per year. The salary could be paid in cash or by assigning a jagir. Those who were paid by means of jagir were allowed expenses for the collection of land revenue. In every province, a tract of land (khalisa) was set apart for the expenses of the Sultan. Efforts were made to measure the land and to fix the amount to be paid by each cultivator to the state.

Mahmud Gawan was a great patron of the arts. He built a magnificent madrasa or college in the capital, Bidar. This fine building, which was decorated with coloured tiles, was three storeys high, and had accommodation for one thousand teachers and students who were given clothes and food free. Some of the most famous scholars of the time belonging to Iran and Iraq came to the madrasa at the instance of Mahmud Gawan.

One of the most difficult problems which faced the Bahmani kingdom was strife among the nobles. The nobles were divided into old-comers and new-comers or Deccanis and Afaqis. As a newcomer, Mahmud Gawan was hard put to win the confidence of the Deccanis. Though he adopted a broad policy of conciliation, the party strife could not be stopped. His opponents managed to poison the ears of the young Sultan

who had him executed in 1482. Mahmud Gawan was over 70 years old at the time. The party strife now became even more intense. The various governors became independent. Soon, the Bahmani kingdom was divided into five principalities; Golconda, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Berar and Bidar. Of these, the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda played a leading role in the Deccan politics till their absorption in the Mughal Empire during the seventeenth century.

The Bahmani kingdom acted as a cultural bridge between the north and the south. It also established close relations with some of the leading countries of West Asia, including Iran and Turkey. The culture which developed as a result had its own specific features which were distinct from north India. These cultural traditions were continued by the successor states and also influenced the development of Mughal culture during the period.

## **CLIMAX OF THE VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE AND ITS DISINTEGRATION**

As mentioned earlier, there was confusion in the Vijayanagar Empire after the death of Deva Raya II. Civil wars broke out among various contenders to the throne. Many feudatories assumed independence in the process. The authority of the Raya shrunk to Karnataka and to some portions of the western Andhra region. After some time, the throne was usurped by the king's minister, Saluva. The earlier dynasty, thus, came to an end. Saluva restored internal law and order, and founded a new dynasty. This dynasty also soon came to an end and a new dynasty (called the Tuluva dynasty) was founded by Krishna Deva Raya (1509-30) who was the greatest figure of this dynasty. Some historians consider him to be the greatest of all the Vijayanagar rulers. Krishna Deva had not only to re-establish internal law and order, but he had also to deal with the old rivals of Vijayanagar, viz., the successor states of the Bahmani kingdom and the state of Orissa which has usurped many Vijayanagar territories. In addition, he had to contend with the Portuguese whose power was slowly growing. They were using their control over the seas to browbeat the smaller vassal states of Vijayanagar in the coastal areas in order to gain economic and political concessions. They had even offered to buy the neutrality of the Raya by promising him assistance in recovering Goa from Bijapur and giving him a monopoly in the supply of horses.

In the series of battles lasting seven years, Krishna Deva first compelled the ruler of Orissa to restore to Vijayanagar all the territories up to the river Krishna. Having thus strengthened himself, Krishna Deva renewed the old struggle for the control of Tungabhadra doab. This led to a hostile alliance between his two main opponents, Bijapur and Orissa. Krishna Deva made grand preparations for the conflict. He opened the hostilities by overrunning Raichur and Mudkal. In the battle which followed, the Bijapur ruler was completely defeated (1520). He was pushed across the river Krishna, barely escaping with his life. The Vijayanagar armies also reached Belgaum in the west, occupied and sacked Bijapur for a number of days and destroyed Gulbarga before a truce was made.

Thus, under Krishna Deva, Vijayanagar emerged as the strongest military power in the south. However, in their eagerness to renew the old feuds, the southern powers largely ignored the danger posed to them and to their commerce by the rise of the Portuguese. Unlike the Cholas and some of the early Vijayanagar rulers, Krishna Deva seems to have paid scant attention to the development of a navy.

The conditions in Vijayanagar during this period are described by a number of foreign travellers. Paes, an Italian who spent a number of years at Krishna Deva's court, has given a glowing account of his personality. He remarks: "He is a great ruler and a man of much justice, but subject to sudden fits of rage." He cherished his subjects, and his solicitude for their welfare became proverbial.

Krishna Deva was also a great builder. He built a new town near Vijayanagar and dug an enormous tank which was also used for irrigation purposes. He was a gifted scholar of Telugu and Sanskrit. Of his many works, only one in Telugu on polity, and a drama in Sanskrit are available today. His reign marked a new era in Telugu literature when imitation of Sanskrit works gave place to independent works. He extended his patronage to Telugu, Kannada and Tamil poets alike. Foreign travellers like Barbosa, Paes and Nuniz speak of his efficient administration and the prosperity of the empire under his sway. The greatest



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achievement of Krishna Deva lay in the broad toleration that prevailed in his empire. Barbosa says: "The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering from annoyance, without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or heathen." Barbosa also pays a tribute to Krishna Deva for the justice and equity prevailing in his empire.

After the death of Krishna Deva, there was a struggle for succession among his relations since his sons were all minors. Ultimately, in 1543, Sadashiva Raya ascended the throne and reigned till 1567. But the real power lay in the hands of a triumvirate in which the leading person was Rama Raja. Rama Raja was able to play off the various Muslim powers against one another. He entered into a commercial treaty with the Portuguese whereby the supply of horses to the Bijapur ruler was stopped. In a series of wars he completely defeated the Bijapur ruler and also inflicted humiliating defeats on Golconda and Ahmadnagar. It seems that Rama Raja had no larger purpose than to maintain a balance of power favourable to Vijayanagar between these three powers. At length, they combined to inflict a crushing defeat on Vijayanagar at Bannihatti, near Talikota, in 1565. This is called the battle of Talikota or the battle of Rakshasa-Tangadi. Rama Raja was surrounded, taken prisoner and immediately executed. It is said that 1, 00,000 Hindus were slain during the battle. Vijayanagar was thoroughly looted and left in ruins.

The battle of Bannihatti is generally considered to mark the end of the great age of Vijayanagar. Although the kingdom lingered on for almost a hundred years, its territories decreased continually and the Raya no longer counted in the political affairs of south India.

The concept of kingship among the Vijayanagar rulers was high. In his book on polity, Krishna Deva Raya advises the king that "with great care and according to your power you should attend to the work of protecting (the good) and punishing (the wicked) without neglecting anything that you can see or hear." He also enjoined upon the king to "levy-taxes from his people moderately."

In the Vijayanagar kingdom the king was advised by a council of ministers which consisted of the great nobles of the kingdom. The kingdom was divided into rajyas or mandalam (provinces) below which were nadu (district), sthala (sub-district) and grama (village). However, the Chola traditions of village self-government were considerably weakened under Vijayanagar rule. The growth of hereditary nayakships tended to curb their freedom and initiative.

Historians are not agreed about the condition of the peasantry under the Vijayanagar rule, because most of the travellers had little knowledge about village life and, thus, spoke of it in very general terms. In general, it may be presumed that the economic life of the people remained more or less the same; their houses were mostly thatched with a small door; they generally went about barefooted and wore little above the waist. People of the upper classes sometimes wore costly shoes and a silk turban on their heads, but did not cover themselves above the waist. All classes of people were fond of ornaments, and wore them "in their ears, on their necks, on their arms, etc."

We have very little idea about the share of the produce the peasants were required to pay. According to an inscription, the rates of taxes were as follows:

- One-third of the produce of kuruvai (a type of rice) during winter.
- One-fourth of sesame, ragi, horsegram, etc.
- One-sixth of millet and other crops cultivated on dry land.

Thus, the rate varied according to the type of crops, soil, method of irrigation, etc.

In addition to the land-tax, there were various other taxes, such as property tax, tax on sale of produce, profession taxes, military contribution (in times of distress), tax on marriage, etc. The sixteenth century traveller, Nikitin, says: "The land is overstocked with people, but those in the country are very miserable while the nobles are extremely affluent and delight in luxury." Trade and agriculture grew under the

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Vijayanagar rule. As village self-rule declined, there was the growth of a class of locally powerful people who used their position for developing agriculture by providing additional irrigation facilities for which an extra charge was made. Many temples, which enjoyed rent-free villages, also used their resources for this purpose.

Urban life grew under the Vijayanagar empire and trade flourished. Many of the towns grew around temples. The temples were very large and needed supply of food stuff and commodities for distribution of prasadam to the pilgrims, service of God, the priests, etc. The temples were rich and also took active part in trade, both internal and overseas. Thus, despite continuous wars, there was growth of trade and urbanisation in south India between 14th and 16th centuries. Agriculture also developed. This was reflected in the cultural growth during the period.

# UNIT-X

## ESTABLISHMENT OF PORTUGUESE CONTROL

### INTRODUCTION

The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in 1498 with three ships, guided by a Gujarati pilot, Abdul Majid, is generally regarded as the beginning of a new era in world history, especially in the relationship between Asia and Europe. Although Asia and Europe had been in commercial relations with each other since antiquity, the opening of direct sea-relations between the two was not only the fulfilment of an old dream—according to the Greek historian, Herodotus, the Phoenicians had rounded Africa in the 6th century BC, it presaged big increase of trade between the two. This, however, was only one of the objectives of the Portuguese. For the Portuguese, the opening of a sea-route to India would give a big blow to the Muslims—the Arabs and Turks, who were the traditional enemies of Christianity, and were posing a new threat to Europe by virtue of the growing military and naval power of the Turks. A direct sea-link with India would displace the virtual monopoly of the Arabs and Turks over the trade in eastern goods, especially spices. They also vaguely hoped that by their exploration of Africa they would be able to link up with the kingdom of the legendary prior John, and be in a position to attack the Muslims from two sides. Thus, the commercial and religious objectives supported and justified each other.

A search for a sea route to India had been attempted in post-Roman times by Genoa. In 1291, a Genoese, Ugolino di Vivaldo, had set out with two galleys to find his way to India by the ocean route, but was never heard of. Subsequently, the lead in this search was taken by Portugal. From 1418, Dom Henrique, the ruler of Portugal, called Henry the Navigator, sent two to three ships every year for the exploration of the West Coast of Africa. The occupation of Africa upto the mouth of the river Congo between 1443 and 1482 gained Portugal trade in ivory, slaves, and gold dust, and whetted their appetite. The rounding of the southern tip of Africa in 1487 by Megellan opened the sea-route to India. But it was another ten years before it was taken up by Vasco da Gama.

At the outset, it should be made clear that while the Europeans had their own objectives, their seeking a direct sea-route to India was not because the Arabs and Turks hindered in any way the trade of eastern good to Europe or were charging excessive taxes. In fact, with the rise of Islam, the Arabs had emerged as the principal traders of the world, especially in the field of long distance trade. Their merchants, sailors and geographers linked even more closely than before the sea-trade between the Mediterranean and Asia, and in Asia between West Asia, India, East Africa, South-East Asia and China.

Nor were the Turks allergic to trade. The trade from the Orient flowed from the Persian Gulf via Hormuz and Basra to the Levant, and from the Red Sea via Jeddah to Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt. There were also land-routes leading to Black Sea ports. The custom duties levied on these goods was a rich source of profit to the Arab and Turkish rulers, and they had every reason to protect and cherish this trade. Despite the Pope banning trade with the heathens, i.e. Muslims, Genoese and Venetian merchants were active in the trade in oriental goods. In fact, the Venetian merchants had a virtual monopoly of buying the oriental goods in Egypt and the Levant, and distributing them all over Europe. Though the Venetians and the Turks fought long and bitter naval battles, neither side pushed it to a level which might harm their mutual trade. They were hence considered “complementary enemies”. The principal rivals of the Venetians in Europe were the Genoese. The Genoese were also active in distributing oriental goods in Europe, but had been side-lined by the Venetians. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 was a big blow to the Genoese because the Black Sea ports, their principal mart for oriental goods, were gradually closed to them. This, and their old rivalry with Venice were the main factors which led Genoa to help Portugal and Spain with ships, money and nautical skills in searching for a sea-route to India. As is well known, Chris-

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topher Columbus who 'discovered' America (or re-discovered, because the Norsemen had reached there earlier, as also the Red Indians) in 1492 in his effort to find a sea-route to India was a Genoese.

Interest in the search for a sea-route to India was spurred also by the Renaissance which challenged rooted modes of thought, and created a new spirit of daring. At its background was the economic growth of Europe from the 11th century. Recent research shows that with growing prosperity and growth, the dietary habits of the Europeans had also changed, with more meat being consumed. Much of the cattle in Europe had to be killed during winter due to shortage of fodder, and the meat salted away. Oriental spices were even more in demand in order to make the salted meat more palatable.

Growing interest in oriental trade was shown by the arrival of many Genoese traders in the Indian Ocean from the thirteenth century onwards. The names of the Venetians, Nicolo Conti and Barbosa, of the Russian Nikitin are only a few among the many others who travelled on the Indian Ocean, and reached India during this period. The Pope also showed his growing interest in the search for a sea-route to India when in 1453, he issued a Bull granting Portugal "in perpetuity" whichever lands it "discovered" beyond the Cape in Africa upto India, on condition of converting the "heathens" of those lands to Christianity. It will be seen that this also implied excluding the other Christian powers from participating in this noble enterprise!

## THE ASIAN OCEANIC TRADE NETWORK BEFORE THE PORTUGUESE

In order to understand the impact of the Portuguese on Indian and Asian trade and economy, a brief review of the nature, structure and working of the Asian oceanic trade net work before the coming of the Portuguese is necessary. This is specially so because during the hey-day of European colonial domination, many wrong and unfounded notions about Asian trade and economy, and the role of the European traders in the region were put forward. Many of these have had to be discarded or modified as a result of the researches carried out in recent years, both by European and Asian scholars. Their researches themselves have been shaped by the new outlook which emerged following the end of the era of colonialism, the economic growth of the countries of the region, and their efforts to re-explore their roots, and mutual linkages.

First and foremost, the new researches have tended to show that there was no basic difference in the internal structure of trade and commerce between Asia and Europe before the rise of industrial capitalism in the west. Thus, both European and Asian merchants sought exclusive information about the markets they operated in. The bigger traders in Asia were remarkably flexible in their approach. They were prepared to trade in any commodity which was anticipated to yield a good profit. There was, thus, much less specialisation than in the modern times. There was, however, a clear distinction between wholesale traders and retailers. The big merchants who were the most active in emporia or long distance trade, could be active both in domestic and foreign trade. They could also be bankers, money-lenders and insurance agents. Some of them had their own ships, although the carrying of goods, both over-land and over-seas, was also a specialised vocation. A definite pattern of trade between different regions and ports had developed, as a result of wind movements, ocean currents, and distances. Thus, journeys originating in the Red Sea, or the Persian Gulf ports did not generally go beyond Gujarat, or the Malabar ports. Goods for south-east Asian ports were shipped from Gujarat, Malabar or the Coromondal. Chinese traders, and Chinese junks, or ocean going ships had earlier come to Malabar. But following a ban on foreign trade by the Ming rulers in the fifteenth century, Chinese traders did not go beyond the south-east Asian states.

The captaincy of ships over these vast distances needed nautical skills and experience for which the Asian sailors—Arabs, Indians, Malays and Chinese were not wanting. The captains (nakhudas) of ships were highly esteemed. They commanded good wages, and also had a part interest in the goods they were carrying. The ships also contained many small traders, to whom the word peddler can be applied. The big traders, however, did not fall in this category. Apparently, they stayed at their base of operations. In their working, Asian merchants, like Europeans, drew upon family connections, as also on associations based on community of interest, region etc. Thus, we hear of the association of merchants called Karimi, located



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at Aden in the Yemen, whose activities extended upto China. Burmese merchants also had their own trade associations, as also the Indians. Thus, Maniraman was an association of South Indian merchants which remained active in domestic and foreign trade for a long time.

We do not have much information about the rich trading families of Asia during this period, because such records never found their way to national archives. However, we do hear of rich merchant, such as the Iranian, Ramist, who around 1100 AD organised commercial activity extending from Aden to India and to China; of Gamel-al-Din Ibrahim Tibe who in the thirteenth century organised a fleet of one hundred ships which travelled to South India and the Far East. The names of Vastupal and Tejpal in Gujarat are well-known. They were also very rich Chetti merchants in Tamilnadu, in Bengal and the Maraccars in Malabar. Considering that the Asian trade at the times was much bigger than the European trade—some modern historians assess it at ten times the volume of European trade, it is not surprising that some of the richest merchants were to be found in Asia at the time. Yet, for a long time, the Asian traders were indiscriminately called peddlers by some European scholars, and many of our own scholars accepted it. However, it is not these merchant-princes who mattered. What mattered or is significant, in fact, was the size and range of the trading communities in Asia, the multiplicity of their activities, their undoubted entrepreneurial skills, and the financial and shipping resources which they disposed of. Also, unlike many of the European traders, the Asian traders did not depend upon their states for political or military support.

A second misnomer was the concept that the oriental trade consisted only of “the great and the trifling,” i.e. luxury goods. This may have been largely true for trade with Europe which imported in the main, silk and jade from China, spices from the Spice Islands and India, and some types of cloth from the Middle East. But in the Indian Ocean region, the items exchanged included the basic necessities of life, such as salt, sugar, grains and clothing, in addition to luxury items such as spices, horses, silk, Chinese porcelain, incense, ivory, glass, jewellery and finely cut precious stones, slaves etc. Trade in the necessities of life was necessary because in areas such as the south-east Asian Islands, rice production was very limited, as also clothing. Salt, sugar and food-grains were needed in the Middle East. Also, pre-modern merchant ships could not have operated without low value bulk cargo which could serve as ballast. Thus, goods brought to India or China included heavy cargoes, such as dates, sugar, building material, and timber. Climate and geography also dictated the movement of goods, and the direction of trade. Thus, ships from the Middle East reached the Indian sea ports before the arrival of the monsoon. The goods were transhipped there, and carried in different bottoms to the Southeast Asian countries or China. Malacca was also another point of transshipment. While the Chinese did not go beyond Java-Sumatra, the Arabs and Indians traded right upto China. Thus, both the range of trade, and the bulk of the goods carried was impressive for the pre-modern world.

A third misnomer is that Asian ships could not carry out long distance voyages across open seas because their ships were frail, and Asians lacked the necessary nautical techniques. Modern research shows that these ideas lack a foundation. It were the Indians who had started the open sea voyage from Gujarat to Aden, and across the Indian Ocean to South-East Asia and to east Africa. Thus, when Vasco da Gama sailed for Calicut from Malindi in East Africa, he found four Indian ships there. The Portuguese Covilhan, travelling on Arab ships, had covered the itinerary which was later followed by Vasco da Gama. It has been shown that even frail boats could sail on the open seas, from the Malay peninsula to the Mauritius on the basis of ocean currents. But these were not important for trade.

Much has been made of the Indian tradition of sewing ships instead of nailing them. According to the Arab geographers, the nailing of ships began in the region of the Persian Gulf region in the 10th century. However, sewn ships continued to be used because these had greater flexibility than nailed ships, and could be repaired more easily. This was an advantage in the shallow waters and swift currents of the Persian Gulf region. That both sewn and nailed ships were in operation in the Indian waters was noted by the Portuguese, Gaspar Correa, writing in the early part of the sixteenth century. He says that the sewn ships “remain as secure as if they were nailed. There are other ships which have the planks nailed with thin nails with broad heads.” Perhaps, it was the nailed ships which sailed across the open seas.

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Nor were these ships small in size. By the time the Portuguese came, the boats plying in the region were from 350 to 400 tonnes which was heavy tonnage for the time, and had several masts. Although the Chinese junks which were several storeys high were the most advanced in ship construction at the time, the type of ship used in the Indian waters was the Arab boom. Since timber for ships was not available in Arabia or Persia, most of these ships were generally built in the Gujarat or the Malabar region. Thus, Indian and Arab ship building traditions had mutually influenced each other, and their trading ships were not inferior to the European. Regarding nautical techniques, the Chinese had a mariner's compass since the 10th century, but it was not widely used. Arab and Indian sailors fixed their position on the open sea with the help of stars, using the azimuthal sidereal-rose (compass card or kamal). However, the mariners compass was of great use for sailing over uncharted waters.

The traders who actively participated in the sea-borne sea-trade of Asia followed well established conventions which had developed in course of time. The traders were not only Arabs and Iranians but Jews, Armenians and even Genoese. Apart from Gujaratis and Tamil Chettis, the Javanese were also active in the sea trade. The life and property of these traders were protected by the rulers, and certain well defined commercial laws were observed. Custom duties were generally kept within limits. While the conventions were violated sometimes, such violation would harm the concerned state since trade was highly competitive, and in the situation, traders would move away to another port. According to convention, the rulers, while taxing trade, did not try to dominate the seas, or protect or expand their trade by armed intervention on land or sea, though while conducting military operations on land, they were not forgetful of commercial advantages.

In Asia, the only armaments the ships carried were soldiers and rockets as a safeguard against sea-pirates who were active on the coasts of Oman and Malabar, as also in south-east Asia and China. Notable exceptions to this had been the Chola naval expeditions against Java-Sumatra in the 14th century, and Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho's seven voyages between 1417 and 1433, carrying a large flotilla of ships armed with rockets and thousands of soldiers upto East Africa and Jeddah. While these ships conducted some trade, their primary purpose was of showing the Chinese flag and making the governments of the region more receptive to Chinese trade, influence and culture. But due to domestic reasons, the Chinese discontinued such expeditions and even banned foreign trade. These two examples suggest that under different circumstances, the tradition of trading under the protection of armed ships might have risen in Asia also. But this did not happen, and even the Chinese expeditions made so little impact that they are not even mentioned by any of the native observers in the countries visited by the Chinese fleet.

Due to all these factors, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were unusually prosperous in the history of the Indian Ocean. Although by the second half of the 15th century, Chinese traders had withdrawn under the orders of the Chinese Court, and the Karimi merchants of Yemen, as well as the Jews had stopped their operations—perhaps in the face of Arab competition, there was no “commercial vacuum”, as has been argued by some historians. Nor was there any Arab monopoly of trade in the western India Ocean, though the Arabs were certainly the richest and the most powerful group of long distance traders in the region.

These factors explain why the Portuguese, who came to Asia for capturing the trade in Asian goods to Europe, stayed behind to capture the trans-Asian trade through use of force.

## **THE PORTUGUESE ESTADO DA INDIA**

When Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut, he was cordially received by the Zamorin, and permitted to trade in spices, and to set up a factory (ware-house) on the coast. The spices carried back by Vasco da Gama were computed at sixty times the cost of the entire expedition. But this did not satisfy the Portuguese ruler. The Portuguese wanted to enforce a monopoly over the spice trade to Europe, and claimed the right of searching the ships of Arab traders. This led to a fight in which the Portuguese living in their factory were massacred. In retaliation, the Portuguese ships bombarded Calicut before they withdrew. In 1502, Vasco da Gama returned with a fleet of twenty-five vessels, and demanded that the Zamorin should expel all the

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Muslim merchants settled there, and not to allow any Muslim merchants to land at any of his ports, or to have any trade relations with them. The Zamorin rejected these demands on the ground that the port of Calicut was open to all, and that it would be impossible to prohibit anyone from trade, whether he was a Muslim or not. Gama's answer was a brutal assault on Calicut. This was followed by establishing a number of forts at Cochin, Quilon etc. to dominate the Malabar trade.

What was at issue here were two different philosophies of relationship between trade and the state. The Asian convention was of open trade, with the governments backing and supporting trade but not using their military or naval strength to promote or protect it. This was so even in China where the Court had always exercised close control over foreign trade, and treated items of import as "tribute". On the other hand, the Mediterranean tradition which the Portuguese brought with them was of a combination of trade with warfare on land and sea. This approach was profoundly upsetting to the Asian traders, as well as to many of the small states of the region, such as Calicut, Cochin, etc. which, like some of the city states of Europe, were heavily dependent on trade, but followed the convention of open trade without the use of military or naval force.

Alarmed at the growing power of the Portuguese, the Sultan of Egypt fitted a fleet and sent it towards India. The fleet was joined by a contingent of ships from the ruler of Gujarat. The Zamorin of Calicut also lent his support, as also the rulers of Bijapur and Ahmednagar. After an initial victory in which the son of the Portuguese governor, Don Almada, was killed, this combined fleet was routed by the Portuguese in 1509. This naval victory made the Portuguese navy supreme in the Indian Ocean for the time being, and enabled the Portuguese to extend their operations towards the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

Shortly afterwards, Albuquerque succeeded as the governor of the Portuguese possessions in the east. He advocated and embarked upon a policy of dominating the entire oriental commerce by setting up forts at various strategic places in Asia and Africa. This was to be supplemented by a strong navy. Defending his philosophy, he wrote "A dominion founded on a navy alone cannot last." Lacking forts, he argued, "neither will they (the rulers) trade or be on friendly terms with you."

Albuquerque initiated this new policy by capturing Goa from Bijapur in 1510. The island of Goa was an excellent natural harbour and fort. It was strategically located, and from it the Portuguese could command the Malabar trade and watch the policies of the rulers in the Deccan. It was also near enough to the Gujarat seaports for the Portuguese to make their presence felt there. Goa was, thus, suited to be the principal centre of Portuguese commercial and political activity in the east. The Portuguese were also able to extend their possession on the mainland opposite Goa, and to blockade and sack the Bijapuri ports of Danda-Rajouri and Dabhol, thus paralysing Bijapur's sea-trade on the mainland. They sacked and blockaded the Bijapuri ports of Danda-Rajouri and Dabhol till the Adil Shah came to terms by ceding Goa. From their base at Goa, the Portuguese further strengthened their position by establishing a fort at Colombo in Sri Lanka, and at Achin in Sumatra, and the Malacca port which controlled the exit and entry to the narrow gulf between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. The Portuguese also established a station at the island of Socotra at the mouth of the Red Sea, and besieged Aden. Vasco da Gama failed to capture Aden—his only failure in the area. However, he forced the ruler of Ormuz which controlled entry into the Persian Gulf to permit them to establish a fort there.

During this period, a major concern of the Portuguese was to bring under control the forts of Diu and Cambay which were the centres of Gujarati trade to the Red Sea. The Portuguese made two attempts in 1520-21 to capture Diu but both were defeated by its governor, Ahmad Ayaz.

The Ottoman Turks, under Sulaiman, were passing through the most magnificent period of their history; they were poised to attack Europe, and also to complete their conquests in Asia. In 1529, the Turks besieged Vienna which was saved by the timely intervention of the Poles. Earlier, the Turks had defeated the ruler of Iran in 1514 and then conquered Syria, Egypt and Arabia. This implied an increasing role of the Ottoman Turks in the Indian Ocean.

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The sultan of Gujarat sent an embassy to the Ottoman ruler congratulating him on his victories, and seeking his support. In return, the Ottoman ruler expressed a desire to combat the infidels, that is the Portuguese, who had disturbed the shores of Arabia. From this time onwards, there was a continuous exchange of embassies and letters between the two countries. After ousting the Portuguese from the Red Sea in 1529, a strong fleet under Sulaiman Rais was despatched to aid Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat. Bahadur Shah received it well, and two of the Turkish officials, who were given Indian names, were appointed governors of Surat and Diu respectively. Of these two, Rumi Khan was later to earn a great name for himself as a master-gunner.

In 1531, after intriguing with local officials, the Portuguese attacked Daman and Diu, but the Ottoman commander, Rumi Khan, repulsed the attack. However, the Portuguese built a fort at Chaul lower down the coast.

Before the Gujarat-Turkish alliance could be consolidated, a bigger threat to Gujarat appeared from the side of the Mughals. Humayun attacked Gujarat. In order to meet this threat, Bahadur Shah granted the island of Bassein to the Portuguese. Following the expulsion of the Mughals from Gujarat, he once again appealed to the Ottoman sultan for help and tried to limit the Portuguese encroachments at Diu.

However, Bahadur Shah was killed in 1536 in a fracas with the Portuguese. Subsequent efforts to recapture Diu failed.

The Turks made their biggest naval demonstration against the Portuguese in Indian waters in 1536. Their fleet consisted of 45 galleons carrying 20,000 men, including 7000 land soldiers or janissaries. Many of the sailors had been pressed into service from the Venetian galleys at Alexandria. The fleet, commanded by Sulaiman Pasha, an old man of 82, who was the most trusted man of the Sultan and had been appointed the governor of Cairo, appeared before Diu in 1538 and besieged it. Unfortunately, the Turkish admiral behaved in an arrogant manner so that the Sultan of Gujarat withdrew his support. After a siege of two months, the Turkish fleet retired, following news of the arrival of a formidable Portuguese armada to relieve Diu.

The Turkish threat to the Portuguese persisted for another two decades. In 1531, Peri Rais, who was assisted by the Zamorin of Calicut, attacked the Portuguese forts at Muscat and Ormuz. Meanwhile, the Portuguese strengthened their position by securing Daman from its ruler. A final Ottoman expedition was sent under Ali Rais in 1554. The failure of these expeditions resulted in a change in the Turkish attitude. In 1566, the Portuguese and the Ottomans came to an agreement to share the oriental trade, including spices, and not to clash in the Arab seas. Following this, the Ottomans shifted their interest once again to Europe. This precluded a future alliance with the rising Mughal power and the Turks against the Portuguese.

## **THE PORTUGUESE IMPACT ON THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE**

The Portuguese ended the era of unarmed open sea- trade in the Indian waters, and gave a big blow to the virtual Muslim monopoly of the trade in the western part of the Indian Ocean, and their trade of eastern goods to Europe.

However, the Portuguese effort to push out the Muslims from the trade in oriental goods, and to establish a Portuguese monopoly over the trade in West Asia had only limited success. Thus, by the middle of the sixteenth century, inspite of the large volume of spices brought to Lisbon and marketed in Europe, mainly through Antwerp, the Black Sea ports and the markets of the Levant and Egypt were as well supplied with eastern goods—spices, dyes, and cotton and silk textiles as before. It may be noted that right from the beginning, the Portuguese king had declared trade in spices, drugs, dyes including

indigo, copper, silver and gold, and arms and ammunition to be royal monopolies. Traders of no other country, whether in Asia or Europe, including Portuguese private traders and royal officials, were permit-



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ted to trade in these commodities. Even ships engaged in trade in other commodities had to take a permit or cartaze from Portuguese officials. The Portuguese attempted to force all ships going to Malacca or to East Africa to pass through Goa, and to pay tolls there. Any ship which was suspected of carrying “contraband” or banned goods, or which refused to be searched could be treated as a prize of war, and sunk or captured, and the men and women aboard treated as slaves.

The Portuguese soon found that they stood to lose more on land than gain on sea by continuing such practices, because traders who lost on sea put pressure on their governments to retaliate against Portuguese trade in their areas. Also, it was impossible to police the trade along all the lagoons on the coasts in Asia. Sea-pirates preying on Portuguese ships were active in areas such as Oman, Malabar, and South-East Asia, and Portuguese policies brought them greater encouragement and support from traders and small rulers.

Hence, the rules regarding giving cartazes to local traders had to be liberalised. This included Muslims traders. Trade in horses which was exclusively in the hands of Muslims, was a highly profitable trade. It was also of great strategic importance to various rulers. The Muslims were also active in trade in many other commodities, such as textile products, glass, aromatics and coffee in which the Portuguese had neither the money nor the ships to engage themselves. Hence, the dictates of trade and profit soon overcame religious prejudices.

The Portuguese were unable to monopolise even the trade in pepper and spices. This was so because, in the first place, the Portuguese private traders were unhappy with the royal attempt to monopolise the trade in these commodities. Royal officials, who received small salaries, were often in league with private traders, Portuguese as well as Arabs, Gujaratis etc. to line their own pockets. In consequence, the cartaze system proved to be both corrupt and leaking like a sieve.

The Arab and Gujarati traders in these commodities also found ways and means to get round the Portuguese trade embargo. The Portuguese control over the Indian Ocean waters remained incomplete because of their failure to capture Aden and thereby control entry to the Red Sea. The Turkish conquest of Syria, Egypt and Arabia, and the expansion of their naval power, both in the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea, made it difficult for the Portuguese to effectively carry out their blockade of Bab-el-Mendel, the entrance to the Persian Gulf. At the other end of the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese control even on the Spice Islands weakened. The Portuguese had to contend with a naval power there willing to

take on their warships. This was the north Sumatra ruler, Sultan Ali Mughayat Shah. Using the traditional Javanese naval skills, he was able to defeat the Portuguese in many naval skirmishes, and to capture large number of guns from the Portuguese to fortify Acheh. He also approached the Ottoman Sultan for military equipment. The Ottomans had a high reputation in the field of casting guns. They supplied bronze guns of a calibre to enable Acheh in north Sumatra to withstand a siege. This enabled Acheh to emerge as a major centre of the export of spices, in competition to Malacca which was under Portuguese control. Arabs and Gujaratis who were well entrenched at Malacca, used Acheh as a centre for export of spices to the Red Sea via the Laccadives, thereby by-passing the Portuguese controlled Malabar waters.

Thus, the structure of the Asian trade net-work; the strength and resourcefulness of the Asian merchants, Arabs, Gujaratis, Tamils and others, who had long experience of operating the system; the naval and military strength of Turkey and of the ruler of north Sumatra, and the internal limitations of the Portuguese and of the working of the cartaz system in the Portuguese Empire of India—or the *Estado da India*—were important factors in limiting the success of the Portuguese. It should be kept in mind that Portugal itself was a small country, and though it had developed rapidly in the field of commerce, its financial resources were limited. Thus, German and Italian merchants and merchant-houses became the principal agents for distributing all over Europe the eastern goods brought to Lisbon by the Portuguese. Demand in Asia for European goods which could be exchanged for purchase of pepper and other eastern goods was limited. Hence, precious metals, especially silver had to be exported. But unlike Spain, Portugal did not have the silver mines in America to fall back on, and had to depend heavily on Italian and German financiers. The expectation of the Portuguese king that Portuguese control of the coastal trade of India would pay for the

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export of pepper and other eastern goods to Europe also remained a misnomer. Hence, the Portuguese trade to Europe remained confined to only twelve to thirteen ships being sent each year from Lisbon to India. However, this picture changed by the end of the 16th century. The share of the private Portuguese traders—mainly New Christians—in the Portuguese trade to Europe rose sharply, amounting to over 90 per cent of the total. The additional cargo consisted mainly of textiles and precious stones. The Portuguese private traders financed this trade by large scale involvement in Asian trade. However, for the Portuguese government the Portuguese enterprise in the western part of the Indian Ocean remained, what Steensgaard calls, largely a “redistributive enterprise”, i.e. its main source of income was taxing the trade of others rather than expanding trade, or opening up new lines of trade. A real expansion of trade between Europe and the East had to await the coming of the Dutch and the English in the 17th century.

However, it was in the Far East that the Portuguese had some limited success in expanding trade and opening up new avenues. They took over the export of textiles from the Coromondal Coast to the Indonesian Archipelago where, in exchange, they could purchase spices. There was never any question of monopolising the trade in spices there, the Javanese and the Malays being active in the field. The Portuguese carried spices to China, buying Chinese silk in exchange, and taking it to Japan in exchange for silver. This exchange was very profitable because the Peking court had banned the Chinese from foreign trade for fear of piracy. Hence, the Portuguese could step in. But the Portuguese could take only one great ship every year from Macau to Japan.

Apart from this trade, another avenue of trade which the Portuguese opened up was trade to south America via the Philippines. There was a consistent demand for Indian cotton goods in the Philippines. Since the Spanish rulers had banned Muslims and Protestants from trading with the Philippines, it gave a good opening to the Portuguese. They also accommodated some Armenians and Gujaratis in the trade. From the Philippines, Spanish galleons took the Indian textiles to South America where they were exchanged for silver. The profits of the Far Eastern trade was so profitable that Portugal could afford to take a more relaxed stand on its pepper trade in the Indian Ocean.

Thus, the second half of the sixteenth century emerges as an era of growing partnership between the Portuguese and Asian merchants. Many Arabs and Gujarati merchants found it more profitable to load their goods on Portuguese ships, while Portuguese private traders or officials used Asian ships to evade the royal monopolies.

It has been argued that the Portuguese established transparency in the eastern trade by setting up a network of factories or warehouses in widely separated areas whereby markets and prices became more stabilised, hence transparent. Modern research does not support this argument. Wide fluctuation in prices was a characteristic of pre-modern trade. Also, Indian and Arab merchants knew the distinction between spot and future markets. For spot markets, they had ware-houses which were necessary in order to get the best prices, buying when there was a glut, and selling when there was a shortage. Coffee was an example of such a commodity. But for fine textiles, and goods such as spices, the goods and prices had to be fixed in advance. The Asians managed this through their own trade associations and family network. The Portuguese tried to fix the prices of black pepper in advance by pressurising or giving inducements to local rulers in Malabar to supply pepper to them at fixed prices, leaving it to the ruler to procure the supplies through local traders, or to deal directly with the cultivators. The Portuguese policy was unpopular because they tried to use political pressure to depress the prices paid to the cultivators and of trying to prevent their competitors from bidding. Hence, any expansion of the production of spices was of little benefit to the cultivators.

Despite claiming to be lords of the territories of the East, the Portuguese impact on the political system in Asia was small. They were too few in numbers to try to capture and keep hold of any large territories on the mainland in India or elsewhere. Hence, they wisely decided to keep their control confined to islands, and to forts on the coast which could be defended and supplied by sea. The island of Goa, which became their seat of government, was a prime example of this. Apart from this, they could, by threats and persua-

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sions, induce rulers of small states, such as Calicut, Cochin, Craganore etc. to act as their agents or brokers in the spice trade.

The Portuguese set-up at Goa was controlled by a Governor-General, assisted by a Council which included the Ecclesiastical Head. On account of their small numbers, the Portuguese encouraged mixed marriages and, in course of time, a new Indo-Portuguese or Goanese society came into being. But the society and government itself was organised on rigid racial lines, people of pure Portuguese origin being at the head of the society, and people of mixed origins at the bottom. Nor were the latter given any share in political power. The Church exercised on occasions the dreaded “auto da fe” or burning at the stake to root out heresy among Christians.

Thus, the contribution of the Portuguese in the field of politics or expansion of world trade remained negligible. However, the significance of the Portuguese opening the direct sea-route to India cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. It opened the way for India’s closer integration with the growing world economy, and contributed to the further growth of a market economy in India. It was also a blow (though not a breach) to what a modern historian, Kirti Chaudhuri, calls India’s “introspectiveness”. As a result of the Portuguese contact, many products of the Latin American world—potato, corn, pineapple entered the Indian rural economy, just as new breeds of fruits had come in the wake of the Turks. Thus, the Indian peasant was not allergic to accepting new products if it meant a profit for him. Under Portuguese supervision, ship-building, using western techniques, was started at Cochin. However, for reasons which are not yet fully understood, some other technologies which had made an impact or had far-reaching effects, such as printing, clocks etc. though introduced in Goa, did not find acceptance on the mainland.

The crucial question remains: why did Indian powers permit the domination of the Indian Ocean by a small, and economically backward state such as Portugal for more than a century? As is well known, the Portuguese domination of the Indian Ocean was ended in the seventeenth century, not by Asian powers but by the Dutch and the British. We shall take this question up in the context of the rise of the Dutch and the British.

The basis of Portugal’s success in establishing its naval domination of the Asian seas has been much debated. It is now accepted that technologically, the Indo-Arab boom and the Chinese junk could match the Portuguese galleons and caravelles in their strength, holding capacity for goods in view of its tonnage, and capacity to sail even in the face of the wind with their lateen (triangular) sail. They had sufficient nautical skills to travel on open seas. Where the Portuguese were superior was the maneuvering capacity of their ships, the Indo-Arab ships being slow and clumsy on account of their heavy sails. Also, the hulls of the Portuguese ships were stronger to withstand the shock of firing cannons. But, it has been argued, it was above all the determination of the Portuguese sailors which decided the issue. The Indians, more used to fighting pirates, had no stomach for fighting on sea, unbacked by their own rulers.

Thus, it was not military and naval technology alone, but a number of other factors which enabled the Portuguese to establish a naval domination over the Indian seas for more than a century. The Indian powers reconciled themselves to this dominations because it did not threaten their own political positions on the mainland. Nor did it adversely effect their income from overseas trade. Hence, the task of undertaking a naval conflict with the Portuguese appeared difficult, uncertain of success, and likely to yield little financial returns.

# UNIT-XI

## REGIONAL KINGDOMS IN NORTH INDIA

### RISE OF REGIONAL KINGDOMS

Timur's invasion of Delhi in 1398 hastened the downfall of the Tughlaq dynasty, and the end of the Sultanat of Delhi. Even before Timur's invasion, the weakness of the Sultanat of Delhi had become manifest to all, with the emergence of two kings, one at Firuzabad and another at Delhi and the breaking away of many provincial kingdoms. The Deccani states and Bengal in the east, and Sindh and Multan in the west had broken away towards the end of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's rule, and after some feeble efforts, Firuz had reconciled himself to their loss. Following the Timurid invasion, the governors of Gujarat, Malwa, and Jaunpur (in the east Uttar Pradesh) declared themselves independent, while Khizr Khan assumed full powers in the Punjab. With the expulsion of the Muslim governor from Ajmer, the various states of Rajputana also asserted their independence. Even within the Delhi region, the rulers were hard put to assert their control.

While these various provincial kingdoms and Rajput states fought against each other, it would be wrong to consider the 15th century a period of decadence and decline in north India. Politically, warfare between the various states rarely extended beyond the border regions, with a definite pattern of balance of power emerging between the states located in the various regions—east, west and north. In the west, Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar balanced and checked the growth of each other's power. In the east, Bengal was checked by the Gajapati rulers of Orissa, as also by the Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur. In the north, while Kashmir remained aloof, the rise of the Lodis at Delhi towards the middle of 15th century led to a long drawn-out struggle between them and the rulers of Jaunpur for the mastery of the Ganga-Jamuna doab.

The balance of power began to break down by the end of the 15th century. With the final defeat of Jaunpur by the Lodis, and the extension of their rule from Punjab up to the borders of Bengal, the Sultanat of Delhi had been virtually re-established, and the heat was on eastern Rajasthan and Malwa. Meanwhile, Malwa itself had started disintegrating due to internal factors, leading to a sharpened rivalry between Gujarat and Mewar. The Lodis, too, were keen to use the situation in order to extend their rule over the region. Thus, Malwa once again became the cock-pit of the struggle for mastery of north India.

Culturally, the new kingdoms which arose tried to utilise local cultural forms and traditions for their own-purposes. This was mostly manifested in the field of architecture where efforts were made to adopt and adapt the new architectural forms developed by the Turks by utilising local forms and traditions. In many cases, encouragement was given to local languages, while political necessity compelled many of them to establish a closer association with Hindu ruling elites. This, in turn, had an effect on the processes of cultural rapprochement between the Hindus and the Muslims which had been working apace.

### EASTERN INDIA-BENGAL, ASSAM AND ORISSA

#### Bengal

As we have noted earlier, Bengal had frequently asserted its independence from Delhi, taking advantage of its distance, difficulty of communications by land or water, and the fact that its hot and humid climate often did not suit soldiers and others used to the drier climate of north-western India.

Due to the preoccupation of Muhammad Tughlaq with rebellions in various quarters, Bengal again broke away from Delhi in 1338. Four years later, one of the nobles, Ilyas Khan, captured Lakhnauti and Sonargaon, and ascended the throne under the title Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Khan. Ilyas Khan extended his dominions in the west from Tirhut to Champaran and Gorakhpur, and finally upto Banaras. This forced Firuz Tughlaq to undertake a campaign against him. Marching through Champaran and Gorakhpur, the



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territories newly acquired by Ilyas, Firuz Tughlaq occupied the Bengali capital Pandua, and forced Ilyas to seek shelter in the strong fort of Ekdala. After a siege of two months, Firuz tempted Ilyas out of the fort by feigning flight. In a hard fought battle, the Bengali forces were defeated. But Ilyas Khan once again retreated into Ekdala.

Finally, a treaty of friendship was concluded by which the river Kosi in Bihar was fixed as the boundary between the two kingdoms. Though Ilyas exchanged regular gifts with Firuz, he was in no way subordinate to him. Friendly relations with Delhi enabled Ilyas to extend his control over the kingdom of Kamrup (in modern Assam). He also made plundering raids upto Kathmandu in Nepal, and in Orissa.

Ilyas Shah was a popular ruler and had many achievements to his credit. When Firuz was at Pandua, he tried to win over the inhabitants of the city to his side by giving liberal grants of land to the nobles, the clergy and other deserving people. His attempt failed. The popularity of Ilyas enabled him to set up a dynasty which, in one form or another, ruled for more than a hundred years.

Firuz Tughlaq invaded Bengal a second time when Ilyas died and his son, Sikandar, succeeded to the throne. Sikandar followed the tactics of his father, and retreated to Ekdala. Firuz failed, once again, to capture it, and had to beat a retreat. After this, Bengal was left alone for about 200 years and was not invaded again till 1538 after the Mughals had established their power at Delhi. It was overrun by Sher Shah in 1538, but Akbar had to reconquer it after the end of the Sur dynasty.

The most famous sultan in the dynasty of Ilyas Shah was Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1389-1409). He was known for his love of justice. It is said that once he accidentally killed the son of a widow who complained to the qazi. The Sultan, when summoned to the court, humbly appeared and paid the fine imposed by the qazi. At the end of the trial, the Sultan told the qazi that if he had failed in his duty, he would have had him beheaded. The qazi told him that he would have had him scourged if he had not obeyed his orders.

Azam Shah had close relations with the famous learned men of his times, including the celebrated Persian poet, Hafiz of Shiraz. He re-established friendly relations with the Chinese. The Chinese emperor received his envoy cordially and, in 1409, sent his own envoy with presents to the sultan and his wife, and a request to send Buddhist monks to China. This was accordingly done. Incidentally, this shows that Buddhism had not died completely in Bengal till then. Six years later, his successor, Sultan Saifuddin, again sent a letter written on a gold plate, and a giraffe to the Chinese emperor.

The revival of contact with China helped in the growth of the overseas trade of Bengal. Chittagong became a flourishing port for trade with China. Ocean going ships were built in Bengal, and its exports included fine quality textiles. Bengal also became a centre for the re-export of Chinese goods. Mahuan, the Chinese interpreter to the Chinese envoy, has left an account, and mentions mulberry trees, and the production of silk in Bengal, and paper which was as glossy as deer's skin.

During this period, many sufis came to Bengal. They were welcomed by the Sultan, and encouraged with grant of rent-free lands. These saints impressed the people by their simple style of living, and their deep devotion and saintliness. These saints are credited with effecting conversions to Islam on a large scale, particularly in the eastern part of Bengal where Buddhism was widely prevalent, and poverty was widespread. Perhaps, the conversions were due in large measure to social, cultural and other factors, but credit for conversion was given to the blessing (barkat) of the saints.

Powerful Hindu rajas continued to live under the Muslim rulers of Bengal, and to be associated with the affairs of the state. Thus, Raja Ganesh of Dinajpur, who had a large estate and his own army, first became a king-maker to the successors of Sultan Saifuddin, and later assumed the throne himself. The basis of Ganesh's support is not clear. Some of the Turkish nobles and theologians sent an invitation to the ruler of Jaunpur to deliver the land of Islam from kufr. A Jaunpur army was sent to Gaur for the purpose, and won a victory. But it could not stay on because of the active struggle between the rulers of Jaunpur and Delhi. Raja Ganesh, who was an old man, died soon after, and was succeeded by his son who preferred to rule as

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a Muslim. However, the affairs in the kingdom remained unsettled till Alauddin Husain succeeded to the throne in 1493, and set up a new dynasty which continued to rule till the rise of Sher Shah.

Freed from threat of military invasion from Delhi as a result of agreement with Firuz, and the subsequent weakness of the Delhi Sultanat, the Sultans of Bengal adorned their capitals, Gaur (old Lakhnauti) and Pandua 25 kms to the north, with magnificent buildings. However, only a few of them have survived, though the ruins over a large area indicate the extensive scale of the building activities. The largest building which has survived is the Adina mosque. This mosque was large enough to accommodate several thousand people. Although the stones used in the mosque were mostly those pillaged from temples and other buildings from Lakhnauti, the use of broad sloping arches (called 'drop' arches), pillars of a special type, and curvilinear roofs indicate that a new style of architecture, independent of Delhi, and using local traditions had developed. This mature style of architecture is to be seen in the Dakhil Darwaza (second half of 15th century). The buildings were mostly of brick and mortar, stone being used sparingly. The adoption of the lotus, swan etc., as decorative motifs showed the influence of Hindu traditions.

The Sultans also patronised the Bengali language. The celebrated poet, Maladhar Basu, compiler of Sri-Krishna-Vijaya, was patronised by the sultans and was granted the title of Gunaraja Khan. His son was honoured with the title of Satyaraja Khan. But the most significant period for the growth of the Bengali language was the rule of Alauddin Hussain (1493-1519). Some of the famous Bengali writers of the time flourished under his rule.

A brilliant period began under the enlightened rule of Alauddin Hussain. The Sultan restored law and order, and adopted a liberal policy by offering high offices to Hindus. Thus, his wazir was a talented Hindu. The chief physician, the chief of the bodyguard, the master of the mint were all Hindus. The two famous brothers who were celebrated as pious Vaishnavas, Rupa and Sanatan, held high posts, one of them being the sultan's private secretary. Krittibas, the translator of Ramanayana into Bengali, was said to have been closely associated with Sanatan. Some of the nobles of Alauddin Hussain gave patronage to Bengali poets. The sultan is also said to have shown great respect to the famous Vaishnavite saint, Chaitanya, and no obstacles were placed in his path of giving a new spiritual ethos to Bengali life.

Hussain Shah tried to extend his territories in the north into Assam, in the south-west towards Orissa, and south-east towards Chittagaon and Arakan. Of these, he was most successful in extending his empire towards Chittagaon and Arakan. Although details of the conquest are lacking, control over the port of Chittagaon was an important link with the overseas trade with south-east Asia, extending upto China, on the one hand, and with Africa on the other. In a series of hard fought battles, Tipperah in the east was also captured and annexed.

## **Assam**

The rulers of Bengal had always tried to bring the rich and fertile valley of Brahmaputra in modern Assam under their control. With the decline of the Palas by the middle of the 12th century, the Brahmaputra valley was divided into a number of warring principalities. Gradually, the rulers of Kamrup and Kamta in the west (Persian historians use them interchangeably) brought under their control the area between the Kartoya and the Barnadi rivers. To their east were the Ahoms. The Ahoms belonged to the great Tai group of tribes which dominated south China and many south-east Asian countries. They came to the Brahmaputra valley from Yunan in the first half of the 13th century and, under their ruler Sukapha, established their control over the modern districts of Dibrugarh and Sibsagar. In course of time, the entire valley began to be called Assam after their name.

We have already seen how Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji had led an expedition in Kamrup, aimed at Tibet, but had to suffer a disastrous defeat in an area which was little known to him. The subsequent efforts of Turkish governors and rebel rulers of Bengal to bring the area under their subservience and to establish themselves in Gauhati also failed due to climate, geography and the stout resistance of the local people. However, for some time the rulers of Kamrup/Kamta was forced to pay an annual tribute in gold and elephants to Bengal, and this became a basis of its future claims.

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The independent sultans of Bengal took up where their predecessors have failed. Ilyas Shah invaded Kamrup, and occupied its capital. However, the Ahoms were not happy at the presence of Turks so near their frontier, and shortly, with their help, the ruler of Kamrup threw the Turks across the river Kartoya which was now accepted as the north-eastern boundary of Bengal.

However, the rulers of Bengal were determined to bring Kamrup under their control at the first suitable opportunity. This they found an account of the hostility between the ruler of Kamrup and the Ahoms. Alauddin Hussain Shah invaded, occupied and annexed the western part, consisting of modern Cooch-Bihar upto Hajo.

Despite the internal political situation, and recurrent fights, both within the valley and with the governors and the sultans of Bengal, Kamrup and Kamta maintained their ancient traditions of scholarship, and of Sanskrit learning. Simultaneously, a new language, Assamese, based on the intermingling of the various people and tribes, emerged. The first literary work in Assamese is supposed to be Hem Saraswati's Prahlaḍ Charit. A new incentive was given with the rise of neo-Vaishnavite movement under Shankardeva (b. 1449). Like the bhakti saints of north-western India, Shankardeva and his followers emphasised prayers and devotion in preference to ritual. In order to reach the people, these saints spoke and wrote in Assamese. Their centres, called namghoras, became active centres for the dissemination of the new faith, and its literature.

Thus, the 15th century can be called a period of literary and cultural renaissance in Assam. Another development of the period was the steady Hinduization of the Ahoms, by incorporating their gods into the Hindu pantheon, marriage with Hindu noble families etc. The Ahom rulers were aware that accepting Hinduism implied giving the ruler a divine status which strengthened his position vis-a-vis the nobles. Also, by incorporating the cognate clans and bordering tribes, Hinduism strengthened the new polity.

## Orissa

In those days, the boundaries of Orissa were not clearly demarcated from Bengal. The Ganga rulers, who came to power in middle of the 11th century and ruled till the middle of the 15th century, unified the three areas—Utkal, Kalinga, and Kosala which constitute present Orissa. The Ganga rulers were great warriors and temple builders. Narsinghdeo, (d. 1264) considered one of the greatest rulers, built the famous sun temple at Konark. He invaded and occupied Radha in south Bengal, and even invested Lakhnauti more than once which was saved by the timely intervention of a Delhi army. At the time, the Orissa frontier with Bengal was the Saraswati River which then carried much of the waters of the Ganga. Thus, a large part of the modern Midnapore district and parts of the Hugli district were included in Orissa. The Orissa rulers, it seemed, tried to extend their frontiers upto the Bhagirathi, but could not do so in the face of opposition from the rulers of Bengal.

At the beginning of his reign, Ilyas Shah raided Jainagar (Orissa). It is said that overcoming all opposition, he advanced up to the Chilka Lake and returned with a rich booty, including a number of elephants. A couple of years later, in 1360, while returning from his Bengal campaign, Firuz Tughlaq also raided Orissa. He occupied the capital city, massacred a large number of people, and desecrated the famous Jagannath temple. These two raids destroyed the prestige of the royal dynasty but it lingered on till the middle of 15th century when a new dynasty, called the Gajapati dynasty, came to the fore. The Gajapati rule marks a brilliant phase in Orissa history. The Gajapati rulers were mainly instrumental in extending their ruler in the south toward Karnataka. As we have seen, this brought them into conflict with Vijayanagar, the Reddis and the Bahmani sultans. Perhaps, one reason why the Gajapati rulers preferred aggrandizement in the south was their feeling that the sultans of Bengal were too strong to be easily dislodged from the Bengal-Orissa border. While this brought them glory and booty, the Orissa rulers could not hold on to their southern conquests for any length of time, due to the power and capabilities of the Vijayanagar and Bahmani rulers. That the Orissa rulers were able to engage successfully in battles at the same time in such far-flung areas in Bengal and Karnataka testifies to their strength and prowess. The Orissa language also developed during the period, with many works being produced in poetry and prose.

Thus, the various regions of the east prospered during the period. Although Bengal was the most powerful among the various kingdoms of the regions, it was not, despite plundering them, able to bring the states of Assam and Orissa under its control. A threat to the freedom of Bengal developed when the Lodi rulers over-ran Jaunpur with whom the rulers of Bengal had friendly relations. The defeated ruler of Jaunpur took shelter in the Bengal kingdom and was accorded a warm welcome. A threatened collision was averted, although the armies of Bengal and Delhi stood face to face for some time. As a result of the agreement, Bihar was silently partitioned between the two.

## **WESTERN INDIA-GUJARAT, MALWA AND RAJASTHAN**

On account of their size, rich and fertile lands and salubrious climate, Gujarat and Malwa were always regarded as rich prizes. Gujarat was famous for its excellent handicrafts and its flourishing sea-ports from which much of north India's sea-trade was conducted. Malwa and Rajasthan were important transit centres, linking the products of the Ganga valley with the sea-ports of Gujarat. Hence, control over Malwa and Gujarat and the road link across Rajasthan had always been the concern of any imperial power in the north or south.

During the 15th century, Malwa and Gujarat balanced each other. While both tried to bring the border states of Rajasthan under their domination, they were unable to make deep in-roads into Rajasthan, mainly on account of the rise of Mewar under Rana Kumbha. But this balance began to break down during the early decades of the 16th century, leading to a new, emerging situation.

### **Gujarat**

Under Firuz Tughlaq, Gujarat had a benign governor who, according to Ferishta, "encouraged the Hindu religion and thus promoted rather than suppressed the worship of idols." He was succeeded by Zafar Khan whose father, Sadharan, was a Rajput who was converted to Islam, and had given his sister in marriage to Firuz Tughlaq. After Timur's invasion of Delhi, both Gujarat and Malwa became independent in all but name. However, it was not till 1407 that Zafar Khan formally proclaimed himself the ruler in Gujarat, with the title Muzaffar Shah. Dilawar Khan Ghuri, the governor of Malwa, had declared himself independent at Mandu a few years earlier.

The real founder of the kingdom of Gujarat was, however, Ahmad Shah I (1411-42), the grandson of Muzaffar Shah. During his long reign, he brought the nobility under control, settled the administration, and expanded and consolidated the kingdom. He shifted the capital from Patan to the new city of Ahmedabad, the foundation of which he laid in 1413. He was a great builder, and beautified the town with many magnificent palaces and bazars, mosques and madrasas. He drew on the rich architectural tradition of the Jains of Gujarat to devise a style of building which was markedly different from Delhi. Some of its features are: slender turrets, exquisite stone-carving and highly ornate brackets. The Jama Masjid in Ahmedabad and the Tin Darwaza are fine examples of the style of architecture during the time. Ahmad Shah tried to extend his control over the Rajput states in the Saurashtra region, as well as those located on the Gujarat-Rajasthan border. In Saurashtra, he defeated and captured the strong fort of Girnar, but restored it to the Raja on his promise to pay tribute. He then attacked Sidhpur, the famous Hindu pilgrim centre, and levelled to the ground many of the beautiful temples there. In addition to peshkash or annual tribute, he imposed jizyah on the Hindu rulers in Gujarat which had never been imposed on them earlier. However, just as jizyah was collected as a part of the land-revenue (kharaj) from individuals in the Sultanat of Delhi, jizyah and peshkash must have been collected together from the rajas. All these measures led many medieval historians to hail Ahmad Shah as a great enemy of the infidels, while many modern historians have called him a bigot. The truth, however, appears to be more complex. While Ahmad Shah acted as a bigot in ordering the destruction of Hindu temples, he did not hesitate to induct Hindus in government. Manik Chand and Motichand, belonging to the bania or commercial community, were ministers under him. He was so strict in his justice that he had his own son-in-law executed in the market-place for a murder he had committed. Although he fought the Hindu rulers he fought no less the Muslim rulers of the time, i.e.



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the Muslim rulers of Malwa, Khandesh and the Deccan. He subordinated the powerful fort of Idar, and brought the Rajput states of Jhalawar, Bundi, Dungarpur, etc., under his control.

From the beginning, the kingdoms of Gujarat and Malwa were bitter rivals and were generally found in opposite camps on almost every occasion. The warfare between them, like the warfare between the rulers of Vijayanagar and the Bahmanis, did not, however, lead to any lasting change in their frontiers.

Muzaffar Shah had defeated and imprisoned Hushang Shah who succeeded Dilawar Khan as the ruler of Malwa. Finding it difficult to control Malwa, he had, however, released Hushang Shah after a few years and reinstated him. Far from healing the breach, it had made the rulers of Malwa even more apprehensive of Gujarat's power. They were always on the lookout for weakening Gujarat by giving help and encouragement to disaffected elements there, be they the rebel nobles, or Hindu rajas at war with the Gujarat ruler. The rulers of Gujarat tried to counter this by trying to install their own nominee on the throne of Malwa. This bitter rivalry weakened the two kingdoms, and made it impossible for them to play a larger role in the politics of north India.

### **Mahmud Begarha**

The successors of Ahmad Shah continued his policy of expansion and consolidation. The most famous sultan of Gujarat was Mahmud Begarha. Mahmud Begarha ruled over Gujarat for more than 50 years (from 1459 to 1511). He was called Begarha because he captured two of the most powerful forts (garhs), Girnar in Saurashtra (now called Junagarh) and Champaner in south Gujarat.<sup>1</sup> The ruler of Girnar had paid tribute regularly, but Mahmud Begarha decided to annex his kingdom as a part of his policy of bringing Saurashtra under full control. Saurashtra was a rich and prosperous region and had many fertile tracts and flourishing ports. Unfortunately, the Saurashtra region was also infested by robbers and sea-pirates who preyed on trade and shipping. The powerful fort of Girnar was considered suitable not only for administering Saurashtra, but also as a base of operations against Sindh.

Mahmud Begarha besieged Girnar with a large force. Though the raja had only a few guns in the fort, he resisted gallantly, but to no avail. It is said that the conquest of this inaccessible fort was due to treason. The ruler of Girnar had forcibly taken the wife of his kamdar (minister/agent) who schemed in secret the downfall of his master. After the fall of the fort, the raja embraced Islam and was entrolled in the service of the sultan. The sultan founded at the foot of the hill a new town called Mustafabad. He built many lofty buildings there and asked all his nobles to do the same. Thus, it became the second capital of Gujarat.

Later in his region, Mahmud Begarha sacked Dwarka, largely because it harboured pirates who ravaged the traders. Thus, the immediate occasion for Mahmud's attack was the complaint of Maulana Mahmud Samarquandi that while returning to Hormuz, he was driven ashore and all his property looted by the pirates who were sheltered by the local ruler. The campaign was, however, also used to raze the famous Hindu temples there.

The fort of Champaner was strategically located for the Sultan's plans of bringing Khandesh and Malwa under his control. The ruler, though a feudatory of Gujarat, had close relations with the sultan of Malwa. Champaner fell in 1454 after the gallant raja and his followers, despairing of help from any quarter, performed the jauhar ceremony and fought to the last man. Mahmud constructed a new town called Muhammadabad near Champaner. He laid out many fine gardens there and made it his principal place of residence.

Champaner is now in ruins. But the building that still attracts attention is the Jama Masjid. It has a covered courtyard, and many Jain principles of architecture have been used in it. The stone work in the other buildings constructed during this period is so fine that it can only be compared to the work of goldsmiths.

Mahmud Begarha also had to deal with the Portuguese who were interfering with Gujarat's trade with the countries of West Asia. He joined hands with the ruler of Egypt to check the Portuguese naval power, but he was not successful.

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During the long and peaceful reign of Mahmud Begarha, trade and commerce prospered. He constructed many caravan-sarais and inns for the comfort of the travellers. The merchants were happy because roads were safe for traffic.

Though Mahmud Begarha had never received a systematic education, he had gained considerable knowledge by his constant association with the learned men. Many works were translated from Arabic into Persian during his reign. His court poet was Udayaraja who composed in Sanskrit.

Mahmud Begarha had a striking appearance. He had a flowing beard which reached up to his waist, and his moustache was so long that he tied it over his head. According to a traveller, Barbosa, Mahmud, from his childhood, had been nourished on some poison so that if a fly settled on his hand, it swelled and immediately lay dead.

Mahmud was also famous for his voracious appetite. It is said that for breakfast he ate a cup of honey, a cup of butter and one hundred to one hundred-fifty plantains. He ate 10 to 15 kilos of food a day and we are told that plates of meat patties (samosas) were placed on both the side of his pillow at night in case he felt hungry!

From the beginning, the rulers of Gujarat adopted a policy of entering into matrimonial relations with some of their subordinate Rajput rulers. Thus, in 1446, the daughter of the raja of Idar married the Gujarati ruler. The mother of Muzaffar Shah II was also a Rajput, and he himself married a number of Rajput princesses. Although many Hindus rose in the service of the Gujarati rulers, such as Rajya Rayan who was the chief Hindu noble of Mahmud Begarha, and Malik Gopi who was the chief minister, the policy of matrimonial alliances neither brought any changes in the overall policies of the sultans, nor brought the concerned families into a closer political union.

The Gujarat kingdom remained a powerful, well-administered and prosperous state of the country, and was powerful enough not to allow any serious encroachments on its territories and ports by the Portuguese. However, its efforts under Bahadur Shah to dominate Malwa and Rajasthan led to a clash with the Mughals and proved its undoing.

## **Malwa and Mewar**

The state of Malwa was situated on the high plateau between Narmada and Tapti rivers. It commanded the trunk routes between Gujarat and northern India, as also between north and south India. As long as Malwa continued to be strong, it acted as a barrier to the ambitions of Gujarat, Mewar, the Bahmanis and the Lodi sultans of Delhi. The geographical situation in northern India was such that if any of the powerful states of the region could extend its control over Malwa, it would be well on its way to make a bid for the domination of the entire northern India.

During the fifteenth century, the kingdom of Malwa remained at the height of its power. The capital was shifted from Dhar to Mandu, a place which was highly defensive and which had a great deal of natural beauty. Here the ruler of Malwa constructed a large number of buildings, the ruins of which are still impressive. Unlike the Gujarat style of architecture, the Mandu architecture was massive, and was made to look even more so by using a very lofty plinth for the buildings. The large-scale use of coloured and glazed tiles provided variety to the buildings. The best known among them are the Jama Masjid, the Hindola Mahal and the Jahaz Mahal.

From the beginning, the kingdom of Malwa was torn by internal dissensions. The struggle for succession between different contenders to the throne was accompanied by fighting between different groups of nobles for power and profit. The neighbouring states of Gujarat and Mewar were always ready to take advantage of this factionalism for their own purpose.

One of the early rulers of Malwa, Hushang Shah, adopted a broad policy of religious toleration. Many Rajputs, some of them from modern east UP, were encouraged to settle in Malwa and given rich grants.

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Rai Silhadi was one of these. Two of the elder brothers of Rana Mokal of Mewar were also granted jagirs in Malwa. From the inscription of the Lalitpur temple which was built during this period, it appears that no restrictions were placed on the construction of temples. Hushang Shah extended his patronage to the Jains who were the principal commercial merchants and bankers of the area. Thus, Nardeva Soni, a successful merchant, was the treasurer of Hushang Shah, and one of his adviser.

Unfortunately, all the rulers of Malwa were not equally tolerant. Mahmud Khalji (1436-69), who is considered the most powerful of the Malwa rulers, destroyed many temples during his struggle with Rana Kumbha of Mewar, and with the neighbouring Hindu rajas. Though his actions cannot be justified, most of them were carried out during periods of war, and cannot be considered part of any policy of general destruction of Hindu temples.

Mahmud Khalji was a restless and ambitious monarch. He fought with almost all his neighbours—the ruler of Gujarat, the rajas of Gondwana and Orissa, the Bahmani sultans, and even with the sultans of Delhi. However, his energies were principally devoted to overrunning south Rajputana and trying to subdue Mewar.

The steady rise of Mewar during the 15th century was an important factor in the political life of north India. With the conquest of Ranthambhor by Alauddin Khalji, the power of the Chauhans in Rajputana had finally come to an end. From its ruins a number of new states arose. Taking advantage of the decline of the Tughlaqs, Rao Chunda of Marwar occupied Sambhar, Nagaur and Ajmer, and made Marwar the most powerful state of Rajasthan. However, Marwar received a setback due to the rising power of Mewar, and the hostility of the Bhatias, and the ruler of Multan. Later, Rao Jodha (1438-89) who had to lead a wandering life for some time, founded the new city and capital of Jodhpur (1659), and re-established the state.

Another state of consequence in the area was the Muslim principality of Nagaur. Ajmer which had been the seat of power of the Muslim governors changed hands several times and was a bone of contention among the rising Rajput states. The mastery of eastern Rajputana was also in dispute, the rulers of Delhi being deeply interested in this area.

The early history of the state of Mewar is obscure. Though it dated back to the eighth century, the ruler who raised it to the status of a power to be reckoned with was Rana Kumbha (1433-68). After cautiously consolidating his position by defeating his internal rivals, Kumbha annexed Sambhar, Nagaur, Ajmer, Ranthambhor etc., and brought the border states of Bundi, Kotah, Dungarpur etc., under his control. Since Kotah had earlier been paying allegiance to Malwa, and Dungarpur to Gujarat, this brought Kumbha into conflict with both these kingdoms. There were other reasons for the conflict, too. The Khan of Nagaur who had been attacked by Rana Kumbha had appealed for help to the ruler of Gujarat. The Rana had also give shelter at his court to a rival of Mahmud Khalji and even attempted to install him on the Malwa throne. In retaliation, Mahmud Khalji had given shelter and active encouragement to some of the rivals of the Rana, such as his brother, Mokal.

The conflict with Gujarat and Malwa occupied Kumbha throughout his reign. During most of the time, the Rana also had to contend with the Rathors of Marwar. Although sorely pressed from all sides, the Rana was largely able to maintain his position in Mewar. Kumbhalgarh was besieged a couple of times by Gujarat forces, while Mahmud Khalji was able to raid as far inland as Ajmer and install his own governor there. The Rana was able to repulse these attacks and retain possession of most of his conquests, with the exception of some of the outlying areas such as Ranthambhor. Rana Kumbha's facing two such powerful states against all odds was no small achievement.

Kumbha was a patron of learned men, and was himself a learned man. He composed a number of books, some of which can still be read. The ruins of his palace and the Victory Tower (Kirti Stambha) which he built at Chittor show that he was an enthusiastic builder as well. He dug several lakes and reservoirs for irrigation purposes. Some of the temples built during his period show that the art of stone-cutting, sculpture, etc., was still at a high level.

Kumbha was murdered by his son, Uda, in order to gain the throne. Though Uda was soon outsted, he left a bitter trail. After some time, in 1508, Rana Sanga, a grandson of Kumbha, ascended the gaddi of Mewar, after a long and bitter struggle with his brothers. The most important development between the death of Kumbha and the rise of Sanga was the rapid internal disintegration of Malwa. The ruler, Mahmud II, had fallen out with Medini Rai, the powerful Rajput leader of eastern Malwa who had helped him to gain the throne. The Malwa ruler appealed for help to Gujarat, while Medini Rai repaired to the court of Rana Sanga. In a battle in 1519, the Rana defeated Mahmud II and carried him a prisoner to Chittor but, it is claimed, he released him after six months, keeping one of his sons as a hostage. Eastern Malwa, including Chanderi, passed under the over lordship of Rana Sanga.

The developments in Malwa alarmed the Lodi rulers of Delhi who had been trying to establish their hold on Malwa, Chanderi having tendered allegiance to the Lodi sultan earlier. This led to a series of clashes between the Lodi sultans and Sanga. In a battle in 1518 at Ghatoli, on the border of Harauti in south Rajasthan, Ibrahim Lodi suffered a serious reverse, but Sanga was wounded and lamed for life. It seems that there were a series of skirmishes between the Lodis and Sanga whose influence gradually extended to Pilia Khar, a river near Fatehpur Sikri in the region of Agra.

Meanwhile, Babur was knocking at the gates of India. It seems that a conflict for supremacy in north India was inescapable.

## **NORTH-WEST & NORTH INDIA-THE SHARQIS, LODI SULTANS & KASHMIR**

After his invasion and attack on Delhi, since the Tughlaq sultan had run away, Timur had given Delhi to Khizr Khan, who had earlier been the governor of Multan. Before his departure, Timur had also assigned Multan and Dipalpur to Khizr Khan. However, the Tughlaq sultan had returned. Hence, Khizr Khan kept away from Delhi, keeping his control over Multan and the Punjab. After the death of the Tughlaq ruler in 1412, he entered Delhi, and set up a new dynasty which he called the Saiyid dynasty. The Saiyids were not subordinates of the Timurid rulers, although their names were included in the khutba for some time. However, the Saiyids were not able to establish themselves firmly, being threatened all the time by the Khokhars of the Punjab, the Mewatis, and the Sharqi rulers of Jaunpur.

The Jaunpur kingdom had been set up by Malik Sarwar, a prominent noble of the time of Firuz Tughlaq. Malik Sarwar had been the wazir for some time, and then had been nominated to the eastern areas with the title Malik-us-Sharq (Lord of the east). His successors came to be called the Sharqis after the title. The Sharqi sultans fixed their capital at Jaunpur (in eastern Uttar Pradesh) which they beautified with magnificent palaces, mosques and mausoleums. Only a few of these mosques and mausoleum survive now. They show that the Sharqi sultan did not just copy the Delhi style of architecture. They created a magnificent style of their own, marked by lofty gates and huge arches.

The Sharqi sultans were great patrons of learning and culture. Poets and men of letters, scholars and saints assembled at Jaunpur and shed lustre on it. In course of time, Jaunpur came to be known as the "Shiraz of the East". Malik Muhammad Jaisi, the author of a well-known Hindi work, Padmavat, lived at Jaunpur. The Sharqi sultanat lasted for less than a century. At its height, it extended from Aligarh in western Uttar Pradesh to Darbhanga in north Bihar, and from the boundary of Nepal in the north to Bundelkhand in the south. The Sharqi rulers were eager to conquer Delhi but they were not successful in doing so. With the establishment of the Lodis in Delhi towards the middle of the fifteenth century, the Sharqi rulers were gradually put on the defensive. They lost most of the areas in western Uttar Pradesh, and exhausted themselves in a series of bitter but futile assaults on Delhi. At length, in 1484, Bahlul Lodi, the ruler of Delhi, occupied Jaunpur and annexed the Sharqi kingdom. The Sharqi king lived on as an exile at Chunar for some time, and died broken hearted after repeated failures in regaining his kingdom.

The Sharqi rulers maintained law and order over a large tract following the collapse of the government in Delhi. They successfully prevented the rulers of Bengal in extending their control over eastern Uttar Pradesh. Above all, they established a cultural tradition which continued long after the downfall of the Sharqis.



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We have mentioned the rise of the Saiyid dynasty after the end of the Tughlaqs. Threatened by the rulers of Jaunpur, the Saiyids had sought the help of the Afghan leader, Bahlul Lodi, who had established himself in Punjab along with a number of Afghan sardars. Bahlul Lodi checked the growing power of the Khokhars, a fierce warlike tribe which lived in the Salt Ranges. Soon, he dominated the entire Punjab. Called in to help the ruler of Delhi against an impending attack by the ruler of Malwa, Bahlul stayed on. Before long, his men took over the control of Delhi. Bahlul formally crowned himself in 1451.

The Lodis dominated the upper Ganga Valley and the Punjab from the middle of the fifteenth century. As distinct from the earlier Delhi rulers who were Turks, the Lodis were Afghans. Although the Afghans formed a large group in the army of the Delhi Sultanat, very few Afghan nobles had been accorded important positions. That is why Bakhtiyar Khalji had to seek his fortune in Bihar and Bengal. The growing importance of the Afghans in north India was shown by the rise of the Afghan rule in Malwa. In the south, they held important positions in the Bahmani kingdom.

Bahlul Lodi's energies were occupied mainly in his contest with the Sharqi rulers. Finding himself in a weak position, Bahlul invited the Afghans of Roh to come to India so that "they will get rid of the ignominy of poverty and I shall gain ascendancy." The Afghan historian, Abbas Sarwani, adds: "On receipt of these farmans, the Afghans of Roh came like locusts to join the service of Sultan Bahlul." This may be an exaggeration. But the incursion of the Afghans not only enabled Bahlul to defeat the Sharqis, it changed the complexion of the Muslim society in India, making the Afghans a very numerous and important element in it, both in south and north India.

The most important Lodi sultan was Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). A contemporary of Mahmud Begarha of Gujarat and Rana Sanga of Mewar, Sikandar Lodi geared the kingdom of Delhi for the coming struggle for power with these states. He tried to subdue the Afghan sardars who had a sturdy sense of tribal independence, and were not accustomed to look upon the sultan as more than a first among equals.

Sikandar made the nobles stand before him in order to impress them with his superior status. When a royal order (Farman) was sent, all the nobles had to come out of the town to receive it with due honour. Thus Sikandar re-affirmed the supremacy of the sultan over his nobles. All those who held jagirs had to submit accounts regularly. Drastic punishments were given to those who embezzled money or were corrupt. Sikandar Lodi had only limited success in his efforts to control the nobles. At his death, Bahlul Lodi had divided the kingdom among his sons and relations. Though Sikandar had been able to undo this after a hard struggle, the idea of a partition of the empire among sons of the ruler persisted among Afghans.

Sikandar Lodi was able to establish an efficient administration in his kingdom. He laid great emphasis on justice, and all the highways of the empire were made safe from robbers and bandits. The prices of all essential commodities were remarkably cheap. The Sultan took keen interest in agriculture. He abolished the octroi duty on grains, and established a new measurement of a yard, called the gazz-i-sikandari, which continued to prevail till the Mughal times. The rent-rolls (jama) prepared in his time formed the basis of the rent-rolls prepared in the time of Sher Shah later on.

Sikandar Lodi is regarded as an orthodox, even a bigoted king. He sternly forbade the Muslims from following practices which were against the shara (Islami law), such as women visiting the graves of saints or processions being taken out in their memory. He re-imposed the jizyah on the Hindus, and executed a brahmans for holding that the Hindu and Muslim scriptures were equally sacred. He also demolished a few well-known Hindu temples during his campaigns, such as the temples at Nagarkot.

Sikandar Lodi gave magnificent grants to scholars, philosophers and men of letters so that cultured people of all climes and countries, including Arabia and Iran, flocked to his court. Due to the Sultan's efforts, a number of Sanskrit works were translated into Persian. He was also interested in music and had a number of rare Sanskrit works on music translated into Persian. During the time, a large number of Hindus took to learning Persian and were recruited to various administrative posts.

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Thus, the process of cultural rapprochement between the Hindus and the Muslims continued apace during his reign. Sikandar Lodi also extended his dominion by conquering Dholpur and Gwaliyar. It was during these operations that after careful survey and deliberations, Sikandar Lodi selected the site for the city of Agra (1506). The town was meant to command the area of eastern Rajasthan and the route to Malwa and Gujarat. It was also meant to control the rebellious nobles and rulers of the doab. In course of time, Agra became a large town and the second capital of the Lodis.

The growing interest of Sikandar Lodi in eastern Rajasthan and Malwa was shown by his taking the Khan of Nagaur under his protection and by trying to make Ranthambhor transfer its allegiance from Malwa to Delhi. His successor, Ibrahim Lodi, even led a campaign against Mewar which, as has been noted earlier, was repulsed. The growing power of the Rana in Malwa, and the extension of his powers towards Agra and Bayana, presaged a conflict between Mewar and the Lodis. It is difficult to say what the outcome of this conflict would have been if Babur had not intervened.

## **Kashmir**

An account of north India in the fifteenth century would be incomplete without mentioning the Kingdom of Kashmir. The beautiful valley of Kashmir was for long a forbidden land to all outsiders. According to Albiruni, entry into Kashmir was not allowed even to the Hindus who were not known personally to the nobles there. During this period, Kashmir was known to be a centre of Saivism. However, the situation changed with the ending of the Hindu rule around the middle of the fourteenth century. The devastating attack on Kashmir in 1320 by the Mongol leader, Dulucha, was a prelude to it. It is said that Dulucha ordered a wholesale massacre of men, while women and children were enslaved and sold to the merchants of Central Asia. The towns and villages were ravaged and plundered and set on fire. The hapless Kashmir government could offer no opposition to these doings, thereby losing all public sympathy and support.

One hundred years after the Mongol invasion, Zainul Abidin, considered the greatest of the Muslim monarchs of Kashmir, ascended the throne. Kashmir society had profoundly changed during this period. There had been a continuous incursion of Muslim saints and refugees from Central Asia into Kashmir, the Baramula route providing an easy access. Another development was the rise of a series of remarkable sufi saints called Rishis, who combined some features of Hinduism and Islam. Partly by the preaching of the saints and partly by force, the lower class population had converted to Islam. To complete the process, a vehement persecution of the brahmans began in the reign of Sikandar Shah (1389-1413). The sultan ordered that all brahmans and learned Hindus should become Musalmans or leave the valley. Their temples were to be destroyed and the idols of gold and silver were to be melted in order to be used for currency. It is said that these orders were issued at the instance of the king's minister, Suha Bhatt, who had converted to Islam, and was bent on harassing his former co-religionists.

The situation changed with the accession of Zainul Abidin (1420-70) who had all these orders cancelled. He conciliated and brought back to Kashmir all the non-Muslims who had fled. Those who wanted to revert to Hinduism, or had pretended to be Muslims in order to save their lives, were given freedom to do as they pleased. He even restored their libraries and the grants which the Hindus had enjoyed. The temples were also restored. More than one hundred years later, Abul Fazl noted that Kashmir had one hundred and fifty majestic temples. It is likely that most of them had been restored by Zainul Abidin. Zainul Abidin continued the policy of broad toleration in other spheres as well. He abolished jizyah and cow-slaughter, and to respect the wishes of the Hindus, withdrew the ban on sati. The Hindus occupied many high ranks in his governments. Thus, Sriya Bhatt was minister of justice and court physician. His first two queens were Hindus, being the daughters of the Raja of Jammu. They were the mothers of all of his four sons. He married a third wife after their death.

The Sultan was himself a learned man, and composed poetry. He was well versed in Persian, Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Tibetan languages. He gave patronage to Persian and Sanskrit scholars and, at his instance, many Sanskrit works such as the Mahabharata and Kalhana's history of Kashmir, Rajatarangini, were translated into Persian, and brought up-to-date. He was fond of music, and hearing of this, the Raja of

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Gwaliyar sent him two rare Sanskrit works on music.

The Sultan also looked after the economic development of Kashmir. He sent two persons to Samarqand to learn the art of paper-making and book-binding. He fostered many crafts in Kashmir, such as stone-cutting and polishing, bottle-making, gold-beating etc. He also encouraged the art of shawl-making, for which Kashmir is so famous. Musket-making and the art of manufacturing fireworks had also developed in Kashmir. The Sultan developed agriculture by making large number of dams, canals and bridges. He was an enthusiastic builder, his greatest achievement being Zaina Lanka—the artificial island in the Woolur Lake on which he built his palace and a mosque.

Zainul Abidin is still called Bud Shah (the Great Sultan) by the Kashmiris. Though a great warrior, he defeated the Mongol invasion of Ladakh, conquered the Baltistan area (called Tibbat-i-khurd), and kept control over Jammu, Rajauri, etc. He, thus, unified the Kashmir kingdom.

The fame of Zainul Abidin had spread far and wide. He was in touch with the leading rulers in the other parts of India, as also the other leading rulers of Asia.

# UNIT-XII

## RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LIFE

### INTRODUCTION

The coming of the Turks into India and the establishment of the Delhi sultanate during the 13th century was a period of both turmoil and development. As we have seen, the initial phase was one of death and destruction on a large scale, with many beautiful temples being destroyed and palaces and cities ravaged. This process continued in phases as the empire expanded. But once a territory had been conquered, or had submitted, a process of peace and development started. This process began slowly in northern India where large areas remained under direct sultanate rule for 200 years.

The Turkish rulers were by no stretch of imagination rude barbarians. Coming from Central Asia during the 8th century, the Turks had, in course of time, accepted Islam. Thus, they inherited the Islamic culture of the area, which had reached a high level of development. Although the Abbasid Caliphate which had dominated the Islamic world for more than a century and a half was in a state of decline, and various competing states had risen, these states shared the cultural and administrative norms and standards set up by the Abbasids, with minor adjustments. The Turks who came into India not only considered themselves to be champions of Islam, but were proud of being inheritors of its rich tradition, whether it was in the field of architecture, literature, forms of government or science and technology. They had also adopted Persian which had emerged as the language of government and culture in Central Asia, Khurasan and Iran by the 10th century.

The Hindus, too, were the inheritors of a religious and cultural tradition which had evolved during thousands of years. The 4th and 5th centuries have often been considered the period of cultural and scientific climax in north India. In the subsequent period, though India began to lag behind in the field of science, and creative thinking had gradually dried up, the cultural traditions were still alive.

Recent studies show that the period from the 8th century to the 12th century was by no means one of cultural decline, but one in which considerable building activity; especially in the field of temple architecture took place. Thus, magnificent temples were built at Khajuraho in Bundelkhand, in Orissa, and in various other places such as Mathura, Kashi, Dilwara, etc. These temples show a high level of skill in architectural forms and sculpture. There were also important developments in the field of religion and philosophy. Thus, Sankara set a seal on the philosophy of Vedanta, and a movement based on love and devotion to a personal God began in South India.

Contact between Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam had started much before Islam came to India. The interaction quickened after Islam's coming into India. However, it is necessary to separate the political aspect from the religio-philosophical aspects, even though they over-lapped. Some of the bigoted ulemas, such as Nuruddin Mubarak Ghazanavi at the court of Iltutmish, advocated a policy of inveterate hostility to the Hindus, especially the Brahmans, whom they considered the biggest enemies of the "true" faith—a policy, which we have seen, the rulers found inexpedient or unimplementable. Among a section of the Hindus, too, there was loathing and revulsion against the Muslims, and they adopted a policy of maintaining minimum contact with them.

However, despite these handicaps, and the seemingly irreconcilable nature of Islam and Hinduism, with Islam emphasizing strict monotheism, rejecting all Gods other than Allah whose last messenger was the Prophet, while Hinduism accepted unity in diversity with multifarious Gods, and image worship which the Muslims rejected, a slow process of mutual adjustment and rapprochement began. This process can be said to be seen at work in the fields of architecture, literature, music etc. It was also at work in the field of religion with the entry of sufism into the country, and the gradual development of a popular movement



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of bhakti in north India. The process continued apace during the fifteenth century and gathered force in the 16th and 17th centuries under the Mughals. But it would be wrong to assume that the elements of conflict had disappeared. Both conflict and the process of rapprochement continued side by side, with setbacks under some rulers and in some regions, and faster development under some other rulers.

Thus, the elements of conflict and rapprochement have to be seen in perspective.

## ARCHITECTURE

One of the first requirements of the new rulers was houses to live in, and places of worship for their followers. For places of worship, they at first converted temples and other existing buildings into mosques. Examples of this are the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque near the Qutb Minar in Delhi and the building at Ajmer called Arhai Din ka Jhonpara. The former had been a Jain temple at first, which had then been converted into a temple dedicated to Vishnu. The latter had been a monastery. The only new construction at Delhi was a facade of three elaborately carved arches in front of the deity room (garbha griha) which was demolished. The arcaded courtyard in front consisted entirely of pillars from thirty-seven temples of the area which had been looted. The style of decoration used on these arches is very interesting: no human or animal figures were used since it was considered to be un-Islamic to do so. Instead, they used scrolls of flowers and verses of the Quran which were intertwined in a very artistic manner. Soon, the Turks started constructing their own buildings. For the purpose they mostly used the indigenous craftsmen, such as stone-cutters, masons, etc., who were famous for their skill. Later, some master architects came to India from West Asia. In their buildings, the Turks used the arch and the dome on a wide scale. Neither the arch nor the dome was a Turkish or Muslim invention. The Arabs borrowed them from Rome through the Byzantine Empire, developed them and made them their own.

The use of the arch and the dome had a number of advantages. The dome provided a pleasing skyline and as the architects gained more experience and confidence, the dome rose higher. Many experiments were made in putting a round dome on a square building, and in raising the dome higher and higher. In this way, many lofty and impressive buildings were constructed. The arch and the dome dispensed with the need for a large number of pillars to support the roof and enabled the construction of large halls with a clear view. Such places of assembly were useful in mosques as well as in palaces. However, the arch and the dome needed a strong cement; otherwise the stones could not be held in place. The Turks used fine quality lime mortar in their buildings. Thus, new architectural forms and mortar of a superior kind became widespread in north India with the arrival of the Turks.

The arch and the dome were known to the Indians earlier, but they were not used on a large scale. Moreover, the correct scientific method of constructing the arch was rarely employed. The architectural device generally used by the Indians consisted of putting one stone over another, narrowing the gap till it could be covered by a coping-stone or by putting a beam over a slab of stones. The Turkish rulers used both the dome and arch method as well as slab and beam method in their buildings.

In the sphere of decoration, the Turks eschewed representation of human and animal figures in the buildings. Instead, they used geometrical and floral designs, combining them with panels of inscriptions containing verses from the Quran. Thus, the Arabic script itself became a work of art. The combination of these decorative devices was called Arabesque. They also freely borrowed Hindu motifs such as the bell motif, the bell motif, swastika, lotus, etc. Like the Indians, the Turks were intensely fond of decoration. The skill of the Indian stone-cutters was fully used for the purpose. The Turks also added colour to their buildings by using red sandstone. Yellow sandstone or marble was used in these buildings for decoration and to show off the colour of the red sandstone.

The most famous and the most magnificent building built by the Turks during the 13th century was the tower or minar adjacent to the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. It was called the mazana or place from where the call for prayer (azan) was called. It was much later that this minar began to be called the Qutb Minar, possibly because it was started by Qutbuddin Aibak, or because, when completed by Iltutmish, Quibud-

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din Bakhtiyar Kaki, the famous sufi saint, was living at Delhi, and the minar began to be considered a token of his spiritual attainments. There is, however, no reason to believe that the minar was based on an earlier Rajput tower. This idea has arisen because some of the stones used at the base of the minar appear to be those belonging to some of the destroyed temples of the area. In an epigraph on the minar, the name of Fazl ibn Abul Maali is mentioned, but it is not clear from the damaged inscription whether he was the architect or merely one who supervised the work.

Although the tradition of building towers are to be found in India, West Asia and elsewhere, the Qutb Minar is unique in many ways. Its tremendous height of 71.4 metres (238 ft) becomes more effective by its tapering character. Originally, it was only four stories high, but the top of the minar was hit by lightning, and Firuz Tughlaq repaired it, and added a fifth storey. The main beauty of the minar lies in the skilful manner in which balconies have been projected, yet linked with the tower by a device called “stalectite honey-combing”. The skilful use of ribbed and angular projections in the body of the tower, the use of red and white sandstones in the panels and in the top stages add further to the effect.

The growth of the building activities of the Turks after the consolidation of the Delhi sultanate under Iltutmish is shown by the wide range of buildings belonging to this period. Thus, the mosque and group of buildings at Badaun (U.P), the lofty gate at Nagaur, and at Hansi and Palwal in Haryana are an index of the determination of the Turks to build their own buildings. Iltutmish’s own tomb, built near the end of his reign, is an indication of the mixing of the Hindu and Muslim traditions of architecture. The tomb was a square building, but by putting pendentives and squinch arches in the corners, it was made octagonal on which a dome was built. This device was used in many square buildings later on. Even more remarkable was the intricate carving on the walls, where calligraphy was combined with Indian floral motives.

The second half of the 13th century saw the flocking into India of many scholars, including mathematicians and architects from West Asia, following the devastation caused there by the Mongols. Thus, we see the first true arch in the plain and simple tomb of Balban. That is to say, it was based on radiating voussoirs and a coping stone, not putting one stone over the other to cover the gap, and then put a stone or slab on top.

The Khalji period saw a lot of building activity. Alauddin built his capital at Siri, a few kilometres away from the site around the Qutb. Unfortunately, hardly anything of this city survives now. Alauddin planned a tower twice the height of the Qutb Minar but did not live to complete it. However, he added an entrance door to the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. This door, which is called the Alai Darwaza, had a number of novel features. It was the first building in which the dome was built not on the principle of overlapping courses of masonry, gradually decreasing in size as they rose upwards, but on the basis of radiating voussoirs. The horse-shoe arch used for the first time in the building is pleasing in appearance. The decorative devices—merlons in the inside of the arch, use of lotus on the spandrel of the arch, and use of white marble in the trellis work and the marble decorative bands to set off the red sandstone give to the building an appearance of grace and strength which is considered a special feature of Indian architectural tradition. Mosque architecture was also developed during this period as shown by the Jamaat Khana mosque at the mausoleum of the sufi saint, Nizamuddin Auliya.

There was great building activity in the Tughlaq period which marked the climax of the Delhi sultanate as well as the beginning of its decline. Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad Tughlaq built the huge palace-fortress complex called Tughlaqabad. By blocking the passage of the Jamuna, a huge artificial lake was created around it. The tomb of Ghiyasuddin marks a new trend in architecture. To have a good skyline, the building was put up on a high platform. Its beauty was heightened by a marble dome.

A striking feature of the Tughlaq architecture was the sloping walls. This is called “batter”, and gives the effect of strength and solidity to the building. However, the batter is used sparingly in the buildings of Firuz Tughlaq. A second feature of the Tughlaq architecture was the deliberate attempt to combine the principles of the arch, and the lintel and beam. In the buildings of Firuz Tughlaq in the Hauz Khas, which was a pleasure resort and had a huge lake around it, alternate stories have arches and the lintel and

beam. The same is to be found in some buildings of Firuz Shah's new fort which is now called the Kotla. The Tughlaqs did not generally use the costly red sandstone in their buildings but the cheaper and more easily available greystone. In the buildings of Firuz, rubble is finished by a thick coat of lime plaster which was colour washed in white—a method used in buildings till recent times. Since it was not easy to carve this type of stone or lime plaster, the Tughlaq buildings have a minimum of decoration. But the decorative device found in all the buildings of Firuz is the lotus. A device used in the tomb of Firuz Tughlaq is a stone-railing in front which was emphatically of Hindu design.

Many mosques were also built during this period, such as the Kalan mosque, the Khirki mosque. They were of undressed stone and lime plaster, and hence not very elegant. The pillars were thick and heavy. Also, the Indian builder had not yet developed the confidence of raising the dome high enough. Hence, the buildings appear squat.

The Lodis continued the Tughlaq tradition of using rubble or undressed stone and lime plaster in their buildings. But by this time, the Indian architects and masons had gained full confidence in the new forms. Hence, their domes rose higher in the sky. A new device which appeared in India for the first time was the double dome. Tried experimentally at first, it appears in a developed form in the tomb of Sikandar Lodi. It became necessary as the dome rose higher and higher. By putting an inner cover inside the dome, the height remained proportionate to the room inside. This device was later on used in all buildings.

Another architectural device which was used for the first time in the tomb of Firuz's wazir, Khan-i-Jahan Telangani, was the octagonal tomb. Many features were added to it: a verandah was built around it with long, sloping chajja or eaves as a protection against sun and rain. As each corner of the roof, chhatris or kiosks were built. Both these features were of Gujarati or Rajasthani origin. Both the arch and the lintel and beam are used in their buildings.

Another device used by the Lodis was placing their buildings, especially tombs, on a high platform, thus giving the building a feeling of size as well as a better skyline. Some of the tombs were placed in the midst of gardens. The Lodi Garden in Delhi is a fine example of this. Many of these features were adopted by the Mughals later on, and their culmination is to be found in the Taj Mahal built by Shah Jahan.

By the time of the break-up of the Delhi Sultanat, individual styles of architecture had also developed in the various kingdoms in different parts of India. Many of these, again, were powerfully influenced by the local traditions of architecture. This, as we have seen, happened in Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, the Deccan, etc.

Thus, we not only see an outburst of architectural activity but a coming together of the Muslim and Hindu traditions and forms of architecture. In the various regional kingdoms which arose during the fifteenth century, attempts were made to combine the style of architecture which had developed at Delhi with regional architectural traditions.

## RELIGIOUS IDEAS AND BELIEFS

Religion is both a complex phenomenon, and a sensitive subject, with the votaries of each religion claiming it to be unique and uninfluenced by any other faith. However, such rigid demarcations are difficult to maintain, especially when the followers of different religions live in the same geographical space, or when people convert from one faith to another, bringing with them some of their previous ideas, beliefs and practices. Travellers, including saints who moved from one place to another, wittingly or unwittingly became agents of transmitting "alien" ideas in the countries they visited.

Islam was the last of the great organised and structured religions which rose in the modern world. In its early formative phase, which is broadly considered to be the first three centuries of its existence, i.e. to the end of the 9th century, it came into contact with the older civilisations of the area—Iranian, Greco-Byzantine, and Indian. The extent to which each of these influenced the evolution of the Arab-Islamic culture is a matter of debate among scholars. Greek thinking strongly influenced Islamic philosophy. The influ-

ence of Iran and Byzantine was strong in the fields of government, architecture etc. The influence of India in the fields of religion, philosophy and science is still a matter of controversy. However, we can hardly doubt that there was continuous interaction in these fields between India, and its neighbouring areas because of geographical, commercial and political reasons. Recent research shows that Nestorian Christianity, Manichism and Buddhism survived in the remote regions of Khurasan and Central Asia till the tenth century, and that their temples, and Sanskrit and Buddhist books and scholars were still to be found in the area by that time. In the 9th century, works on Buddhism and Indian works dealing with astronomy and medicine, ethical books such as Hitopadesh, and treatise on logic and military science etc. were translated into Arabic. The Arabs were exceedingly keen to learn about the customs, manners, sciences and religions of the peoples they came into contact with, including Indians. Thus, Al-Kindi wrote a book on Indian religions. Al-Nadim, Al-Ashari, Shahrastani and many others devoted chapters in their books to describe and discuss Indian religion and philosophical systems. Al-Biruni who came from this area in the 10th century, notes Sufi parallels in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali which he translated into Arabic. According to some modern thinkers, Indian atomic theory of Nyaya-Vaisheshika also influenced Islamic philosophy.

This shows that during the first three centuries of Islam, the Arabs were open-minded in accepting foreign ideas. However, despite this, the fundamental tenets and philosophy of Islam remained rooted in the Quran, and in the words and practice (hadis) of the Prophet.

## THE SUFI MOVEMENT: EARLY ORIGINS

The 10th century marked a new phase in the history of Islam. It saw the rise of Turks on the ruins of the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as important changes in the realm of ideas and beliefs. In the realm of ideas, it marks the end of the domination of the Mutazila or rationalist philosophy, the formation of orthodox schools based on the Quran and hadis, and the rise to prominence of the Sufi mystic orders.

The Mutazalites or Rationalists who were favoured by the Abbasid Caliphs, and used political power to persecute their opponents, tried to systematize theology by applying reasons (aql) to it. They were concerned with the nature of God, creation, relationship of man with God, nature of the soul etc. They argued that man was the author of his own actions, good or evil, and that the Quran was created, disagreeing with the orthodox view that it was the word of God and hence eternal and infallible.

The orthodox elements accused the Mutazalites of spreading scepticism and atheism. They equated their philosophy of monism which held that God and the created world were fundamentally one, as being heretical on the ground that it abolished the difference between the Creator and the Created.

Sustained persecution and orthodox opposition led to the collapse of the Mutazalites. This strengthened the hands of the “traditionalists” and led to the crystallization of the four schools of Islamic Law. Of these, the Hanafi School, which was the most liberal, was adopted by the eastern Turks who later came to India. The collapse of the Mutazalites also strengthened the hands of the Sufi mystics.

Mystics, who later came to be called Sufis, had risen in Islam at a very early stage. Most of them were persons of deep devotion who were disgusted by the vulgar display of wealth, and degeneration of morals following the establishment of the Islamic empire. Some of the early Sufis, such as Hasan Basri, and his follower, the woman mystic Rabia (d. eighth century) laid great emphasis on prayer, continual fasting and disinterested love of God. Rabia lived the life of a hermit and her reputation travelled far and wide. By this time the mystics had started wearing a patched garment of wool (suf) which, according to them, was a legacy of the prophets, and Christian apostles and ascetics. Zunnu Misri of Egypt (died ninth century), who travelled widely in Arabia and Syria, worked out the concept of mystic union with God by a process of contemplation. Zunnu was accused of heresy, but was acquitted. The Sufi concept of fana or spiritual merger of the devoted with God led to constant conflict with the orthodox ulema. Thus, Bayazid Bayat, whose grand-father was a Zoroastrian, shocked the ulema by his statements uttered in a state of ecstasy, “Glory to me! How great is My Majesty”; “I saw the Kaba walking around me”. His successor, Mansur bin Hallaj of Baghdad, was not so lucky and was imprisoned and executed on a charge of heresy (10th century).



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ry). Mansur had travelled widely and visited Sindh also where, it is now established, he met some Hindu Vedantists. But, as has now become evident, Vedantists and yogic ideas were wide-spread in Iran, and it was hardly necessary to go to Sindh to learn about them. Mystic experience in various religions often led in the same direction. Mansur's proclamation of the doctrine "Anal-Haq (I am Truth/God)" was merely an expression of the sufi belief that unification with God was the highest stage of enlightenment. However, Mansur's refusal to recant, and his willingness to sacrifice his life for his beliefs conferred on the sufis not only the mantle of martyrdom, but the reputation of being men who were pure of heart, sincere and unconcerned with worldly gains.

In this way, a quietist movement based on love, devotion and contemplation gradually became transformed into a movement based on ecstatic love in which social norms, and religious beliefs and practices could be disregarded.

Sufism had spread far and wide in the Islamic world by the 10th century. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, the philosophical ideas, beliefs, practices such as holding the breath, or doing penance and fastings, the rise of various schools or silsilahs, and the organisation of khanqahs or hospices, established by many of the sufis had been worked out. In working out of the practices and organisation of the khanqahs, the organisation of Buddhist and Christian monastic systems played a definite role. Wandering Nath Panthi Yogis, with their headquarters at Peshawar, known in the Islamic world as Jogis, familiarized the sufis with the practices of hath-yoga. In fact, Amrit Kund, the Sanskrit book on hath-yoga was translated into Arabic at this time, and later into Persian.

A series of Persian poets spread the Sufi message of mystic union and love far and wide. The four most famous of these poets were Sanai (d.c. 1131), Attar (d. 1230), Iraqi (d. 1289) and Rumi (d. 1273). Their poetry was considered the highest stage of mystical fervour and love, and made its way to all parts, including India. These poets were humane in their outlook, and were tolerant to people of all faiths. The lines from Sinai bring out this spirit:

*"Faith and Infidelity, both are galloping on the way towards Him,*

*And are exclaiming (together);*

*He is one and none shares His kingdom."*

Some of the sufis also supported musical gatherings (sama) in which a state of ecstasy was created. This again was frowned upon by the orthodox ulema. Al-Ghazali (d. 1112), who is venerated both by the orthodox elements and the Sufis, tried to reconcile mysticism with Islamic orthodoxy. This he was able to do in a large measure. He gave a further blow to the "rationalist" philosophy by arguing that positive knowledge of God and His qualities cannot be gained by reason, but by revelation. Thus, the revealed book, Quran, was as vital for a mystic as for other Muslims.

Around this time, the Sufis were organised in 12 orders or silsilahs. However, these numbers kept varying, with new orders added, and some of the old ones dying out. In the early phase, the silsilahs provided stability, and enabled the sufis to withstand the hostility of the orthodox ulema and to pass on spiritual knowledge. The silsilahs were generally led by a prominent mystic who lived in a khanqah or a hospice along with his disciples. The link between the teacher or pir and his disciples or murids was a vital part of the sufi system. Every pir nominated a successor or khalifa to carry on his work. They also appointed walis or deputies for spiritual work in particular regions.

The Sufi orders are broadly divided into two: ba-shara, that is, those which followed the Islamic Law (shara) and be-shara, that is, those which were not bound by it. Both types of orders prevailed in India, the latter being followed more by wandering saints, the qalandars. Although these saints did not establish an order, or silsilah, some of them became figures of popular veneration, sometimes for the Muslims and Hindus alike.

## **The Chishtis**

The two most famous Sufi orders, or silsilahs which flourished in India during the Sultanat period were the Chishti and the Suhrawardi. The Suhrawardis were active mainly in Punjab and Sindh, whereas the Chishtis were active at Delhi, and in the areas around it, including Rajasthan, parts of Punjab and modern U.P. These orders also spread to Bengal and Bihar, Malwa, Gujarat etc. and, later, to the Deccan. A different order, the Kubrawiya, operated in Kashmir. In general, sufis belonging to different orders were cordial to each other. Thus, Suhrawardi saints visited Delhi and were made welcome there, and Chishti saint visited Multan and were received cordially. This is because of the sufi tradition of dividing territories between different saints. Thus, when a musician who was going from Ajodhan in the Punjab to Multan and asked Baba Farid to pray for his blessing, the Baba replied that the limit of his spiritual influence was at a certain water tank and beyond it began the influence of the Suhrawardi saint, Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya, whose prayer he should obtain.

The Chishti silsilah established in India by Muinuddin Chishti was essentially Indian, the order in Chisht (Afghanistan) having more or less died out there. We know little about the early life and activities of Muinuddin Chishti because he did not leave behind any book or a collection of his sayings or preaching. The accounts we have were written a hundred and fifty years after his death, and later writers added many fanciful stories, such as his persecution by Prithviraj Chauhan, and his miracles, which have become popular. Modern research shows that Muinuddin came to India not before, but after Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghuri's victory over Prithviraj, and moved to Ajmer only around 1206 by which time Turkish rule over it had been firmly established, and a sizeable Muslim population of Turkish ghazis and forcibly converted prisoners-of-war had come into being. The Khwaja settled at Ajmer because like Chisht, it was a small town and away from the centre of political activity, Delhi. The Khwaja believed that for a spiritual life of seclusion, a small town was better than a large, bustling town. Thus, his disciple, Hamiduddin, settled down at Nagaur—another small town in Rajasthan which also had a sizeable Muslim population. Khwaja Muinuddin was married, but lived a simple, ascetic life based on piety and devotion to God. His main object was to help the Muslims to lead a life of devotion to God, not to effect conversions, since he believed faith was an individual's concern.

Muinuddin's fame as a saintly man grew gradually after his death (1235). Muhammad Tughlaq visited his grave, and a dome on his tomb and a mosque was built later by Mahmud Khalji of Malwa during the 15th century. Muinuddin's stature as a saint reached its peak under Akbar who was greatly devoted to him. Ajmer was politically important for Akbar, and Muinuddin's prestige as a saint, and as a man whose benevolence extended to all, irrespective of religious beliefs, was considered by him to be a positive element in a volatile situation.

The Chishti influence at Delhi was firmly established by Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki who moved from his birth place, Transoxiana, to Delhi in 1221. He was warmly welcomed by Sultan Iltutmish because his fame as a sufi saint had reached Delhi even before his arrival. Delhi had, by this time, acquired the reputation of being a leading centre of Islam (qubbat-ul-Islam), on account of the many eminent scholars, religious divines and fugitive princes seeking shelter there following the Mongol devastations of Central and West Asia. Bakhtiyar Kaki fulfilled the difficult task of establishing the Chishtis at Delhi as the principal Sufi order, meeting the challenge both of clerical elements and the Suhrawardis. The former wanted to oust him from Delhi, and brought a charge of heresy against him for his resort to musical gatherings (sama). However, this charge was dismissed by Iltutmish who wanted to use sufi influence to counter the ulema. By this time, Bakhtiyar Kaki had become so popular that when he planned to leave Delhi for Ajmer, droves of people accompanied him outside the city for miles, and he had to cancel his departure. The Suhrawardi's orthodox approach failed to endear themselves to the people of Delhi.

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The most famous disciple and successor of Bakhtiyar Kaki was Baba Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakhar who lived at Hansi in modern Haryana, then shifted to Ajodhan which was on the Sutlej on the main route from Multan to Lahore. Baba Farid laid great emphasis on poverty, renunciation of worldly goods and attachments, control of the senses by fasting and other austerities, and adopting an attitude of humbleness and service to others. His outlook was so broad that some of the verses, ascribed to him were included in the Guru Granth Sahib of Nanak. (On linguistic grounds, some modern scholars think that though the ideas may have been his, the verses included in the Guru Granth Sahib were the work of his successors who also adopted the name Farid).

Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) a chief successor of Baba Farid was undoubtedly the most famous Chishti saint at Delhi under whom the Chishtis reached their high water mark. He lived and worked at Delhi for fifty years during a period of great political upheaval—end of Balban's dynasty and the rise to power of Alauddin Khalji, the troubled period following the death of Alauddin, and the rise of the Tughlaqs. He survived through these repeated changes of dynasties and rulers because of the Chishti philosophy of staying away from politics, and not associating with rulers and nobles. Thus, when Khusrav, the Baradu, offered him a large sum of money, he accepted it but distributed it immediately among the needy. When subsequently asked by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq to return the money, he replied that it was the money belonging to the Muslims, and had been distributed among them. It is not clear whether the Sultan was satisfied. Rumor had it that the Sultan wanted to take action against him, after his return from the Bengal campaign, and when asked, Nizamuddin said casually, "As yet, Delhi is far away (hinoz Dehli durast)." As is well-known, the Sultan died before reaching Delhi in the pavilion built by Muhammad bin Tughlaq to welcome him. Whether the story was true or not, it made Nizamuddin a living legend.

Nasiruddin Chiragh Delhi (d. 1356) was the last of the great Chishti saints at Delhi. Nasiruddin had been with Muhammad Tughlaq's army in Sindh when he died, and he helped in the elevation of Firuz to the throne. Firuz held him in great respect, and even called on him several times while at Delhi. But the saint reverted to the policy of keeping aloof from politics. Finding no one who would come up to his expectations, Nasiruddin Chiragh did not nominate any successor {khalifa}, and ordered his relics—his patched cloak, his prayer-carpet, his wooden bowl, rosary, wooden sandals etc. to be buried with him. One result of Nasiruddin Chiragh's refusal to nominate a successor was that it led to a dispersal of the Chishti saints to different parts of the country, and led to the dissemination of the Chishti sufi ideas even more widely.

The Chishti saints laid great emphasis on a life of simplicity, poverty, humility and selfless devotion to God. They carried the concept of poverty to such an extreme that they did not live in pucca houses but mud covered and thatched houses, and wore patched clothes. They and their families sometimes remained without food for days. They considered that control of the senses was necessary for a spiritual life. For the purpose, they resorted to ascetic practices, such as fasting, holding of the breath etc. and self-mortification through penances. They advocated renunciation of the world, by which they meant renouncing wealth, government service, and association with (loose) women. This did not mean withdrawal from society. For Muinuddin Chishti, the highest form of devotion to God was nothing but to redress the misery of those in distress, to fulfil the needs of the helpless, and to feed the hungry. According to Nizamuddin Auliya, altruistic service was more important than obligatory prayers. Except Nizamuddin Auliya, all the leading Chishti saints were married, and had a family. Thus, married life for the saint was accepted, as long as it did not come in the way of his leading a spiritual life.

The Chishtis generally divided people into four categories. Of these, the mystics who preached to the others came in the highest category, their disciples next. The rulers and the scholarly elements came in the third category, and the common people who had neither learning nor desire for spiritual elevation came in the fourth. For the disciples, the Chishtis advocated earning their livelihood from a profession. Agriculture and business was also accepted, but they were advised not to accumulate money beyond their daily needs. Honesty and fair dealing in business was emphasised. Family responsibility was accepted, but again it was not to be a barrier in spiritual progress. The values of forbearance, avoiding anger, or causing hurt to others, and a policy of love and tolerance or avoiding violence was emphasised, though it cannot be called a policy of non-violence because that was concerned with the attitude of the state.

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The Chishtis made no discrimination between people on the basis of their wealth, religious beliefs, family status etc. At a time when the Turks had largely forgotten the Islamic concept of brotherhood, and looked down on the ordinary people, including the converts, the sufi attitude of non-discrimination not only made them popular, but helped to relieve social tensions. Thus, the doors of Nizamuddin Auliya's Jamaat-khana were always open to people for sympathy, support and advice. Although the main concern of the Sufi saints was the amelioration of the condition of Muslims, their care and concern did not exclude the Hindus. Muinuddin Chishti's pupil, Hamiduddin Nagauri, was so careful of Hindu sentiments that he had become a vegetarian, and constantly urged his disciples to give up meat-eating.

The Chishti saints freely associated with Hindu and Jain yogis, and discussed with them various matters, especially yogic exercises. While welcoming voluntary conversions, they considered that preaching contributed little to the change of faith, only example. However, the Chishti saints were fully conscious of the strength of the Hindu faith. As a mystic exhorted:

"Oh you, who sneer at the idolatry of the Hindus, learn also from him how worship is done." On one occasion, while strolling on his terrace with his friend, the poet Amir Khusrau, Nizamuddin Auliya saw a group of Hindus at worship. Greatly impressed at their devotion, he said to him, "Every community has its own path and faith, and its own way of worship."

It was this broad tolerance which went a long way in making the Chishtis a success in the predominantly non-Muslim Ganga Valley.

However, Sufi orders differed in their attitude towards poverty, and the extent of tolerance to non-Muslims. The Qubrawiya order in Kashmir encouraged their supporters to demolish and desecrate Hindu temples. At the same time, they kept good relations with the Hindus.

## **The Suhrawardis**

The Suhrawardis, while treading the same mystic path, differed from the Chishtis in important aspects. Thus, Bahauddin Zakariya, the founder of the order in India, did not believe in starvation or self-mortification but favoured an ordinary life in food and dress. Nor did he consider poverty to be a necessary means for a spiritual life. Unlike the Chishtis who refused to accept grant of villages as iqta, or grants for the maintenance of the saints and their khanqahs, but only accepted unsolicited gifts (futuh), or uncultivated land (ihya) where the sufis could labour themselves, the Suhrawardis accepted royal grants. Thus, Bahauddin Zakariya was rich, and even led a life of affluence. He justified his riches by arguing that money enabled him to serve better the poor who thronged around him. Regarding the orthodox ulema, Bahauddin Zakariya laid emphasis on observing all the external forms of religion, i.e. namaz, roza, etc. He advocated a combination of scholarship (ilm) with mysticism. He did not reject sama or musical gathering, but indulged in it only occasionally. Despite this, the hostility of the orthodox ulema towards Bahauddin Zakariya did not abate. The successors of Bahauddin Zakariya continued to play a leading role in Punjab and Sindh for a century and a half after his death. In course of time, the Suhrawardis extended their influence in Gujarat, Bengal and Kashmir. The Suhrawardis were opposed to some of the Hindu practices adopted by the Chishtis, such as bowing before the Shaikh, presenting water to visitors, tonsuring the head of a new entrant to the mystic order etc. They were also more keen on conversions. Thus, the Suhrawardi saint, Shaikh Jamaluddin, who had settled in Bengal, did not hesitate in making forcible conversions, and pulling down a Hindu temple at Devatalla near Pandua in order to create his khanqah there.

There was a major difference, also, in the attitude of the Chishtis and Suhrawardis towards the State. We are told that the Chishtis believed in cutting themselves off from kings, politics and government service because government service "distracted" a mystic from the single minded pursuit of the ideal of "living for the Lord alone". We are further told that medieval thinkers, such as Imam Ghazali, considered all the income of the State to come from prohibited sources so that service paid from these sources was illegal; and that the entire pattern of life at the court and the government was alien to the true spirit of Islam. Therefore, Imam Ghazali adds: "One should neither desire their continuation, nor praise them, nor enquire about their affairs, nor keep contact with their associates."



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However, Islamic tradition was not uniform on this matter. While some of the orthodox ulema also pointed out the essentially un-Islamic aspects of the state as it evolved after the rule of the first four Caliphs, they and some sufis themselves underlined that the rulers of the world were the chosen of God the Almighty, and that under no condition showing disrespect to them or disobeying their orders was proper or permitted in sharia. They also quoted the Tradition that the Prophet had said 'Whoever obeys the sultan, obeys God and whoever obeys God obtains salvation.'

The Suhrawardi sufis, therefore, did not reject government service, the founder of the silsilah, Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, had close contact with the Caliph, preached in Baghdad under court patronage, and continued in government service. Bahauddin Zakariya, the founder of the Suhrawardi silsilah in India, accepted this tradition, and argued that visits to royal courts provided the saints an opportunity to help the poor people by getting their grievances redressed by the sultan. He also felt that there was no reason why the sultan and his associates should be deprived of the spiritual ministrations of the saints.

The Suhrawardi saints also took active part in politics. Thus, Bahauddin Zakariya openly sided with Iltutmish, and invited Iltutmish when the Sultan wanted to add Sindh to his dominions by ousting Qubacha, although the Shaikh had received full backing and support from Qubacha.

The attitude of the Suhrawardi saints towards state and politics cannot be explained away by saying that the early Turkish sultans stood in need of the support of the religious classes in order to consolidate their power and build up an integrated and compact polity, because this argument would apply equally for the Chishtis. As we have shown, both the orthodox clerical elements and many sufis were ambivalent in their attitude towards the state. To most of them it was a necessary evil. Even then, they expected justice from the Sultans, and protection of the poor. A Chishti saint quoted the Prophet as saying: "If any woman goes to bed hungry in any town of a kingdom, she would hold the collar of the ruler on the Day of Judgement which is sure to come."

Thus, even the Chishtis expected the ruler to be benevolent. In such a situation, they could hardly adopt an attitude of hostility towards the state. The attempt of some modern historians to present the Chishtis as the representative of the masses, whereas the governing class by its very nature was an exploiting class, and an association with them would mean association with the exploiters, appears to be a grossly mistaken view of the situation. The Chishti saints tried to associate closely with the masses, but they can hardly be called representatives of the masses any more than the official clergy. Unlike Central Asia where many of the sufis were drawn from various professions—such as attar (dealer in perfumes or drugs), hallaj (cotton dresser), qassab (butcher), haddad (blacksmith) etc. in India most of the sufis came from the class of clergymen. Perhaps, Nasiruddin Chiragh, whose father was a dealer in pashmina shawls, was the only exception. While rejecting grant of villages, the Chishtis largely depended on futuh or unsolicited grants. The main source of this was undoubtedly the nobility supplemented by grants from merchants. The latter was an important source and most khanqahs were significantly located at or near important trade routes. But neither of these sections would have been provided futuh if the attitude of the ruler was one of hostility or opposition. Broadly, rulers welcomed the sufi because they considered that their blessings, and their goodwill with the people would not only enhance their own prestige but legitimize their position. Also, the sufis were a force of social harmony, and acted as a kind of a device for letting off steam to offset social tensions and mass discontent.

The Chishti saints, it would seem, were not as much opposed to government service and the state as has sometimes been made out. The full restrictions about government service and association with the rulers applied only to those disciples who were given patents of spiritual authority, and were asked to lead others on the mystic path. The ordinary disciples were not so strictly barred from government service. Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehli said that government service was not necessarily an obstacle to contemplation and meditation. What the Chishti saints advocated, above all, was labour in which, as we have seen, crafts and agriculture were given primacy.

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Thus, what the Chishtis advocated was maintaining a certain distance from the state and the ruling classes, while trying to create conditions in which the state could function in a more humanitarian way. There was no fundamental clash of interests between the two, though there were differences of approach. The proper functioning of the state was necessary for the sufis to tread the path of mysticism in peace, and the Sufi attempt to create harmony helped in the process of the consolidation of the state and the Muslim society.

The Chishti advocacy of toleration between peoples of different faiths, their opening the doors of their khanqahs to all irrespective of their religious beliefs, their attitude of benevolence to all, their association with Hindu and Jain Yogis, and using Hindavi in their conversation and in their musical assemblies, created an atmosphere of greater interaction between the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. It also helped, to some extent, to mitigate the harsher aspects of Turkish rule, and the manner in which Islam was interpreted by some of the Turkish warriors and some orthodox clergymen. However, it would be an exaggeration to believe that they were the means of a social and Cultural Revolution, as some modern scholars have argued. For such a revolution, a structural change in society was necessary which was hardly feasible and which, in any case, was beyond the capacity of the saints. Sufi saints in different parts of the country, including the wandering saints, followed their own courses, sometimes liberal, sometimes orthodox, sometimes a combination of the two. These need to be studied, without making broad generalisations, though we would not be too far wrong in saying that, on balance, and with some exceptions, the sufis followed a liberal rather than an illiberal course.

Some of the negative aspects of the Sufi ideology should, not be lost sight of. The tradition of exaggerated reverence to the saint brought many devotees to the door of image worship, particularly when after the death of a saint; his tomb became an object almost of worship. Implicit obedience to the wishes of the saint sometimes created an atmosphere of sycophancy. That is why some of the wandering minstrels, the qalandars, were strongly opposed to the khanqahs.

Along with excessive book learning, the sufis denounced philosophy which they equated to rationalism. The orthodox ulema and the sufis included among the philosophers natural scientists. According to the biographer of Nizamuddin Auliya, the saint told the story how a philosopher, carrying books, had approached a Caliph, and told him that the motion of the heavens was of three kinds—natural, voluntary and involuntary. If a stone was thrown into the air it must fall to the ground, so such a motion was natural. An involuntary motion was beyond the control of human beings. Based on such an argument, the motion of the heavens was involuntary, said the philosopher. Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi rushed to the Caliph to contradict this. He stressed that the involuntary nature of the heavenly motions was due to the miraculous activity of angels acting under divine command. He then proceeded to show the supernatural sight of angles moving the heavens.

Thus, under the influence of the sufis, miracle mongering and suspicion about science and scientists increased. It was in these adverse circumstances that philosophy and natural sciences grew in Central and West Asia, and in India during the subsequent centuries.

## **THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT: EARLY ORIGINS**

The bhakti movement which stressed mystic realization of God within oneself, and the ultimate union of the individual with God, based on loving devotion on the part of the devotee and God's grace (prasad), had been at work in India long before the growth of Sufism in Islam, and its arrival in India. The seed of bhakti can be traced to the Vedas in which some hymns are full of the sense of wonder before divinity which is sought to be perceived in a mystic manner. Such sentiments are also found in the Upanishads.

As the worship of personal Gods—Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh grew in the post-Vedic age, the concept of bhakti or personal devotion to them also grew. Thus, we find elements of bhakti in the Bhagawata movement aimed at Vasudeva (later associated with Krishna) in the post-Maurya period, as also the rise of the Pashupat School devoted to the worship of Siva. The worship of a gracious (avakokita) Buddha who had

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refused nirvana in order to deal with the sufferings of humanity also arose at this time. In the final shape given to the Ramayana and Mahabharata, of which the Bhagawat Gita formed a significant part, bhakti, was considered, along with jnana and karma, a path to salvation.

Two aspects of bhakti may be distinguished here. One was the path of devotion based on service to God with the devotee (bhakta) throwing himself completely at the mercy of God. This was the path of prapatti or surrender. Since the word bhakta was originally employed to denote a servant or retainer who shared the wealth of his master, in course of time the word was used for a devotee in view of his dasa bhava or attitude of service. In any case, the path of prapatti was an easy one, and could be followed even by slaves, retainers and the lowly people because it did not need any book-learning or preparation.

The second aspect of bhakti was that of a bond based on pure love. This was based on equality rather than service, with the ideal changing from emancipation to that of participation in the life divine. This was exemplified in the legend of Prahlad set out in the Vishnu Purana in which Prahlad prays that he may be blessed with unwavering devotion to God wherever he is born. But gradually this bond was sought to be explained in terms of carnal love between a lover and his beloved, and the example chosen was the relationship of Krishna with Radha and the gopis. This, apparently, was first expounded in the Bhagawata Puran which is generally dated to the 9th century.

It was the latter aspect of bhakti, of loving devotion to Siva and Vishnu, which was emphasized by a remarkable series of saints, who flourished in south India between the latter part of the 6th and the 10th centuries. Starting from the Tamil lands under the Pallava rulers, bhakti spread to different parts of south India, including the Pandya kingdom in southern Tamil lands, and to the Chera kingdom in Kerala. There were several new features in this movement. It was preached and spread by a large number of popular saints, called Adiyars or Nayanars who were Saivites, and the Alvars who were worshipers of Vishnu. Among them we find not only Brahmans but many from low castes. There was among them a woman, Andal, who said that the relation of a devotee with God was like that of a loving wife towards her husband. The broad-based character of the saints made it clear that their message of loving devotion was not meant for any one section, but could be followed by all, irrespective of caste, family or sex. To that extent, the movement had an egalitarian approach which disregarded caste.

The main attack of the Nayanars and Alvars was against Buddhism and Jainism which were dominant in south India at the time. These saints were able to wean over people to their side because Buddhism and Jainism had, in course of time, become hide-bound, and enmeshed in meaningless ritualism with an emphasis on austerities to inflict pain on the body. Thus, they no longer catered to the emotional needs of the people. The Nayanars and the Alvars preached a simple faith in the language of the people, Tamil, using or incorporating local myths and legends. Thus, they were able to make a strong emotional appeal.

The movement was pushed forward by the support of many local rulers, the Pallava rulers to begin with. The change in the attitude of the rulers is generally ascribed to the influence of some eminent saint whose aura of saintliness combined with his capacity to make miracles, to the discomfiture of their Buddhist or Jain opponents, led to the change in the attitude of the ruler. Sometimes, the leading minister or the queen is also brought into the picture. While all these must have undoubtedly played a role, the rulers may have had their own political considerations. They could hope for greater legitimacy by allying themselves to a popular movement. This was reinforced by the rise of temples which played a role in stabilizing society, expanding agriculture and even taking part in trade. The temples were strengthened by royal gifts, including grant of lands, and the rulers were strengthened by the Brahmans legitimizing their powers and position. In the immediate context, royal support was used, on occasions, to persecute the Jains and Buddhists. Thus, the Pallava king, Mahendra Varman, destroyed a Jain monastery after ousting the Jains from his court. Another ruler, Neduraman, is reputed to have impaled several thousands of Jains.

At the intellectual level, the Buddhist ideas and beliefs were given a death blow by Sankara who is placed at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th century. Sankara systematized the Vedanta system, and was the great exponent of the philosophy of advaita or non-dualism. According to him, the separation of

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God and the phenomenal world was due to ignorance, and the way to salvation was through the realization, by means of knowledge (jnana), that God and the created world was one. He used dialectics to demolish Buddhist ideas, and to establish that the Vedas were the fountain-head of knowledge.

With its triumph over Buddhism and Jainism, the bhakti movement in south India slowly began to lose its open, egalitarian character. While the saints often disregarded the caste taboos, they did not challenge the caste system as such, or the primacy of the Brahmans. In the temples which proliferated, the deity was treated as a living king, and an elaborate ritual and ceremonial was developed to emphasize his position. These ceremonials were presided over by the Brahmans who continued to use the traditional caste restrictions. This situation was sought to be modified by Ramanuja who is placed in the eleventh century. Ramanuja argued that for salvation, the grace of God was more important than knowledge about him. He further argued that the path of bhakti was open to all, irrespective of caste, and enrolled disciples from all castes. Unlike the Nayanars and Alvars who distrusted book learning, Ramanuja tried to link bhakti with the tradition of the Vedas.

Thus, Ramanuja was a bridge between the popular movement based on bhakti, and total surrender to God (prapatti), and the upper caste movement based on the Vedas. In this way, it was Ramanuja rather than Sankar who stood forth as the guiding spirit of a movement which brought important changes in popular religion, attitude to God, and His relationship with man. He, thus, prepared the ground for meeting the challenges of a new age.

It may be mentioned in passing that a more radical movement, represented by the Vir Shaiva or Lingayats, rose to prominence in the 12th century in parts of modern Karnataka. An old sect which was revised and reformed by Basava, the brahman prime minister of the Chalukyan rulers, the Lingayats were worshippers of Siva, and laid emphasis on love towards God, and bhakti as the means of attaining the goals of human life. They attached great importance to the guru, and rejected fasts, feasts or pilgrimages. They were strongly opposed to Buddhism and Jainism, as also to the Brahmans, and the values and social institutions associated with them. They upheld human equality, and denounced the caste system. All those who joined the sect were to eat together, intermarry, and to live in unity. They disapproved of child marriage. Divorce was allowed. Widows were treated with respect and they were allowed to marry again.

## THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN NORTH INDIA

Although the sentiment of bhakti had grown in the early phase in north India, its development as a mass phenomenon took place in the south, as we have seen. The popular bhakti movement which began in north India from the 14th-15th centuries onwards has often been considered an off-shoot of the southern movement. Interaction in the cultural field between north and south India was a continuous process, both among the Hindus and among the Buddhist and Jain scholars. During the 9th century, Sankara is supposed to have undertaken a journey to north India to engage in scholarly discussions because, according to tradition, such discussions in north and south were necessary to establish a system of thought. What is notable, however, is that despite this strong tradition, and the early origins of bhakti in north India, bhakti did not become a mass phenomenon in north India till the fifteenth century. This gap of five hundred years or more can only be explained in terms of the social, political and cultural conditions obtaining in the two regions. In south India, the bhakti movement began as a reaction against the rigidities of the Buddhists and the Jains. In north India, the Buddhists and the Jains had been ousted from their preeminent position much earlier, the Gupta rulers being strong champions of Hinduism. Harsh, though a votary of Siva, had not discriminated against the Buddhists, but Buddhism had continued to decline. In the period following Harsh, a number of states called Rajput states came into being. There has been controversy regarding the origin of the Rajputs, but it is generally agreed that they were drawn from different sections—some from Brahman or other castes, some from local tribes which were ruling over some tracts, some were even foreigners. The word Rajput itself originally meant a horse-trader. But as the various sections acquired control overland and political authority, and their followers emerged as warriors, the Brahmans accorded them the status of kshatriyas. In return, the Brahmans received generous grants of land, and



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money for the building and maintenance of temples. They were also accorded positions in government as raj-purohits, or advisors of government on religion and polity. On occasions, they were sent on diplomatic missions. They were also assessed land-revenue at concessional rates—a tradition which continued in some of the Rajput states till their merger in the Indian Union. It was this local Rajput-Brahman alliance which dominated society and the cultural scene till the arrival of the Turks. The proliferation of temples and their wealth was an index of the prosperity of the Brahmans, and their high status in the Rajput polity.

One result of this Rajput—Brahman alliance was that the Rajput rulers stood forth as the protectors of the four-fold Varna system, which legitimized the privileges of the Brahmans and a highly stratified, hierarchical society. Any sect or philosophical school which challenged this social order and the privileges of the Brahmans had, thus, to face not only the hostility of the powerfully entrenched Brahmans, but also invited repression at the hands of political authority. This may explain why the early stirrings of bhakti in north India did not lead to a broadening of the movement, though works on bhakti continued to be written in Sanskrit. At the grass-root level, it is possible to discern the rise of a number of dissident or heterodox movements during the period. These included the Tantrik and the Nathpanthi movements. The Tantrik siddhas were often drawn from the lower castes, and anyone, irrespective of caste or sex could, join them. They believed in the worship of female goddesses, and believed that magical powers could be gained by following a set course which included asceticism. They were strongly opposed to the existing, unequal social order, and the brahmanical code of conduct and religious rites. To demonstrate their opposition to existing social norms, some of them partook forbidden food and drink, while some even advocated free love as a stage to the attainment of higher knowledge. Due to the hostility of the brahmans, and fear of political repression, some of them used elliptical language which only the initiates could understand. Although the Nathpanthis adopted a high moral tone, the brahmans attacked all of them as being immoral and even enemies of state and society. Nevertheless, the Nathpanthis had spread all over India and, from their headquarters at Peshawar, even travelled all over West and Central Asia.

The coming of the Turks, the defeat of many Rajput rajas, the destruction of temples and trampling under-foot of images which were often represented not as symbols of God, but Gods themselves who were ministered to by the brahmans, not only dealt a heavy blow to the Rajput-Brahman alliance, but undermined the prestige of the brahmans. It was in this new situation that the movement of popular bhakti developed in many parts of north India.

A well-known sociologist, Max Weber, has argued that an apocalyptic movement such as bhakti was often the ideology of a defeated ruling class, with aspects of quietism and suffering being emphasized. It is hardly possible to agree with this view because it would hardly explain the rise of the mass movement of bhakti in the south.

It has also been argued that bhakti grew in the north as a kind of a defence mechanism, to save Hindu society from the threat of subversion posed to it by the Turkish rulers, and the challenge faced from the Islamic ideology which was simple, and emphasized the ideas of brotherhood and equality. However, this does not take into account the totality of the situation. As we have seen earlier, after an initial phase of warfare, the Hindus did not face any immediate threat of conversion, though prisoner of war, and even women and children captured in the course of operations were enslaved and converted to Islam. Both rulers and saints, such as Nizamuddin Auliya, admitted that the Hindu faith was too strong to be affected either by threats of force, or the concept of brotherhood and equality held out by Islam. In any case, social equality had long disappeared in Islam, and the Turkish rulers looked down upon Hindu converts, especially those from the artisan and low castes.

It has also been argued that the only purpose of the bhakti saints was to carry out those reforms which would enable them to meet the Islamic ideological challenge. This appears rather lop-sided. As we have seen, Hindu and Buddhist ideas had influenced sufism in its formative phase. In India, the sufi emphasis on monotheism, on the role of the pir or guru, on mystical union with the 'beloved', etc. coincided with the

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ideas of many earlier sects and elements in Hinduism. With the entry of Islam, these common elements received renewed emphasis in Hinduism.

Thus, the bhakti movement marks a phase of symbiosis where common elements were emphasized. This aspect is more important than claims of mutual borrowing which are always a matter of dispute. Perhaps the first region in north India where the early stirrings of this movement can be seen is Maharashtra. Sant Jnaneshwar (c. 12th cent) wrote a commentary on Gita in which equal stress was laid on jnan, karma and bhakti. In a significant step, he wrote not in Sanskrit but in the language of the people, Marathi. Jnaneshwar's successor was Namdeva (14th century) whose poetry breathes a spirit of intense love and devotion to God. Namadeva is said to have travelled far and wide, and engaged in discussions with the sufi saints at Delhi. Another saint, Ramanada, who was a follower of Ramanuja, was born at Prayag (Allahabad) and lived there and at Banaras. He popularised the worship of Rama as an avtar of Vishnu. What is more, he taught his doctrine of bhakti to all the four varnas, and disregarded the ban on people of different castes cooking or eating their meals together. He is said to have enrolled disciples from all castes, including the low castes. Thus, his disciples included Ravidas, who was a cobbler by caste; Kabir, who was a weaver; Sena, who was a barber; and Sadhana, who was a butcher. Namadeva was equally broad-minded in enrolling his disciples.

Among those saints who carried the message of bhakti to the people, who were strongly critical of the religion of works, and of image worship and of the caste system, and made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim unity the names of Kabir and Nanak stand pre-eminent.

There is a good deal of uncertainty about the dates and early life of Kabir. Legend has it that he was the son of a brahman widow who abandoned him, and that he was brought up in the house of a Muslim weaver. He learned the profession of his adopted father, but while living at Kashi, he came in touch with both the Hindu saints and sufis. He was also strongly influenced by the Nath-panthis. Kabir emphasised the unity of God whom he calls by several names, such as Rama, Hari, Govind, Allah, Sain, Sahib, etc. He strongly denounced idol-worship, pilgrimages, bathing in holy rivers or taking part in formal worship, such as namaz. Nor did he consider it necessary to abandon the life of a normal householder for the sake of a saintly life. Though familiar with yogic practices expounded by the Nath-panthis, he did not consider asceticism or book-learning important for true knowledge.

Kabir's sharpest barbs were directed against the religious leaders of the two communities, Hinduism and Islam, who misused the credulity of the people for their purposes, and tried to parade their book-learning without understanding the essence of religion. Kabir derived from his belief in the unity of God, his concept of human equality. This led him to attack the existing hierarchical order of society, and those who prided themselves on their wealth, control over land, family, race etc. Since the State upheld the unjust social order, Kabir advised the saint to stay away from royal courts.

Belief in the oneness of God also led Kabir to the conclusion that all religions were different roads to the same goal. Hence, he considered the differences among the Hindus and the Muslims to be meaningless.

Since Kabir was illiterate and his message was carried by word of mouth and was written down much later, there have been much additions and alterations to his message, so much so that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Kabir was not a social reformer but hoped that human conduct would shape society.

Different ideas have been expressed on the influence of Kabir on the large mass of the Hindus and the Muslims. Despite Kabir, the two religions continued in their set ways. Nor was there any breach in the caste system. In course of time, the followers of Kabir, the Kabir-panthis, shrank into a small sect. But Kabir's mission needs to be seen in a broader context. He created a climate of opinion which continued to work through the ages, so that Kabir became a symbol of human equality, Hindu-Muslim unity, and opposition to cant and hypocrisy in all forms.

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Guru Nanak, from whose teachings the Sikh religion was derived, was born in a Khatri household in the village of Talwandi (now called Nanakana) on the bank of river Ravi in 1469. Although married early, and trained in Persian to take his father's profession of accountancy, Nanak showed a mystic, contemplative bent of mind, and preferred the company of saints and sadhus. Sometimes later, he had a mystic vision and forsook the world. He composed hymns and sang them to the accompaniment of the rabab, a stringed instrument played by his faithful attendant, Mardana. It is said that Nanak undertook wide tours all over India and even beyond it, to Sri Lanka in the south, and Mecca and Madina in the west. He attracted a large number of people towards him, and his name and fame spread far and wide before his death in 1538.

Like Kabir, Nanak laid emphasis on the one God, by repeating whose name and dwelling on it with love and devotion, one could get salvation without distinction of caste, creed or sect. However, Nanak laid great emphasis on the purity of character and conduct as the first condition of approaching God, and the need of a guru for guidance. Like Kabir, he strongly denounced idol-worship, pilgrimages and other formal observances of the various faiths. He advocated a middle path in which spiritual life could be combined with the duties of the householder.

Nanak had no intention of founding a new religion. His catholic approach aimed at bridging distinctions between the Hindus and the Muslims, in order to create an atmosphere of peace, goodwill and mutual interaction. Like Kabir, Nanak also believed in human equality and brotherhood, and strongly denounced the caste system. He also considered the rulers of his time to be irreligious tyrants. However, unlike Kabir, he postulated an ideal state which would be presided over by a philosopher-king who would base his conduct on morality, justice and equality.

The liberal sufis and the nirguna bhakti saints posed a challenge to the orthodox elements in Islam and Hinduism. The response of the orthodox sections was varied—from open hostility to finding common meeting points with them, and redefining the old faith in a manner to meet their challenge. The struggle between these two trends, one liberal and non-sectarian, and the other orthodox and traditional, was at the heart of many intellectual movements and religious controversies during the sixteenth, seventeenth and subsequent centuries. In this continuing struggle, the impact of Kabir, Nanak and many others of the same way of thinking was by no means insignificant.

## THE VAISHNAVITE MOVEMENT

Apart from the non-sectarian movements led by Kabir and Nanak, the bhakti movement in north India developed around the worship of Rama and Krishna, two of the incarnations of the god Vishnu. The childhood escapades of Krishna and his dalliance with the milkmaids of Gokul, especially with Radha, became the theme of a remarkable series of saint-poets who used them in an allegoric manner to depict the relationship, in its various aspects, of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Born and educated in Nadia which was the centre of Vedantic rationalism, Chaitanya's tenor of life was changed when he visited Gaya at the age of 22 and was initiated into the Krishna cult by a recluse. He became a god-intoxicated devotee who incessantly uttered the name of Krishna.

Like the early sufis, Chaitanya popularised musical gathering or kirtan as a special form of mystic experience in which the outside world disappeared by dwelling on God's name. Chaitanya is said to have travelled all over India, including Vrindavana where he revived the Krishna cult. But most of his time was spent at Gaya. He exerted an extraordinary influence, particularly in the eastern parts of India, and attracted a large following, including some Muslims and people from the low castes. He did not reject the scriptures or idol-worship, though he cannot be classified as a traditionalist.

The writings of Narsinha Mehta in Gujarat, of Meera in Rajasthan, of Surdas in west Uttar Pradesh, and of Chaitanya in Bengal and Orissa reached extraordinary heights of lyrical fervour and of love which transcended all boundaries, including those of caste and creed. These saints were prepared to welcome into their fold everyone, irrespective of caste or creed. All the saint poets mentioned above remained within

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the broad framework of Hinduism. Their philosophic beliefs were a brand of Vedantic monism which emphasised the fundamental unity of God and the Created world. The Vedantist philosophy had been propounded by a number of thinkers, but the one who probably influenced the saint poets most was Vallabha, a Tailang Brahman, who lived in the last part of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century.

The approach of these saint-poets was broadly humanistic. They emphasised the broadest human sentiments—the sentiments of love and beauty in all their forms. Like the non-sectarian, nirguna saints, their criticism of the caste system did little to weaken it. They did, however, provide an escape route for select ones, especially those who were suffering from the inequities of the caste system by promising them not only the prospect of release (moksha), but as bhaktas, gave them a high status even in the phenomenal world. Thus Ravidas says:

*My caste is low, my deeds are low,*

*And lowly is my profession,*

*From this low position,*

*God has raised me high,*

The basic concepts of the saint-poets were reciprocated in a remarkable degree by the sufi poets and saints of the period. During the fifteenth century, the monistic ideas of the great Arab philosopher, Ibn-i-Arabi, became popular among broad sections in India. Arabi had been vehemently denounced by the orthodox elements and his followers persecuted because he held that all being is essentially one, and everything is a manifestation of the divine substance. Thus, in his opinion, the different religions were identical. Arabi's doctrine of Unity of Being is known as Tauhid (Unity of)-i-Wajaudi (Being). This doctrine kept on gaining in popularity in India, and became the main basis of the Sufi thought before the time of Akbar. Contact with yogis and Hindu saints went a long way in popularising the concept of pantheism. The Indian sufis started taking more interest in Sanskrit and Hindi, and a few of them, such as Mulla Daud, and Malik Muhammad Jaisi, composed their works in Hindi. The bhakti songs of the Vaishnavite saints, written in Hindi and other regional languages, touched the hearts of the sufis more than Persian poetry did. The use of Hindi songs became so popular that an eminent sufi, Abdul Wahid Bilgrami, wrote a treatise Haqaiq-i-Hindi in which he tried to explain such words as "Krishna", "Murli", "Gopis", "Radha", "Yamuna", etc. in sufi mystic terms.

Thus, during the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century, the bhakti and the sufi saints had worked out in a remarkable manner a common platform on which people belonging to various sects and creeds could meet and try to understand each other.

## LITERATURE AND FINE ARTS

### Sanskrit Literature

Sanskrit continued to be a vehicle for higher thought and a medium for literature during the period under review. In fact, the production of works in Sanskrit in different branches was immense and perhaps greater than in the preceding period. Following the great Sankara, works in the field of Advaita philosophy by Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, etc., continued to be written in Sanskrit. The speed with which their ideas were widely disseminated and discussed in different parts of the country showed the important role which Sanskrit continued to play during the period. There was a network of specialised schools and academies in different parts of the country, including areas under Muslim domination. These schools and academies were not interfered with and they continued to flourish. In fact, many of them took advantage of the introduction of paper to reproduce and disseminate the older texts. Thus, some of the oldest available texts of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata belong to the period from the eleventh or twelfth century onwards.



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Besides philosophy, works in the field of kavya (poetical narrative), drama, fiction, medicine, astronomy, music, etc., continued to be written. A large number of commentaries and digests on the Hindu law (Dharmashastras) were prepared between the twelfth and the sixteenth century. The great Mitakshara of Vijnaneshwar, which forms one of the two principal Hindu schools of law, cannot be placed earlier than the twelfth century. Another famous commentator on the Dharmashastras was Chandeshwar of Bihar who lived in the fourteenth century. Most of the works were produced in the south, followed by Bengal, Mithila and western India under the patronage of Hindu rulers. The Jains, too, contributed to the growth of Sanskrit. Hemchandra Suri was the most eminent among these. Oddly enough, they largely ignored the presence of the Muslims in the country. Little attempt was made to translate Islamic works or Persian literature into Sanskrit. Possibly the only exception was the translation of the love story of Yusuf and Zulaikha, written by the famous Persian poet, Jami. This might be taken to be as another example of the insularity of outlook of the Hindus which had been mentioned by Albiruni earlier. Refusal to face the existing reality may be one reason why much of the writing of the period is repetitive, and lacks fresh insight or originality.

### **Arabic and Persian Literature**

Although the greatest amount of literature produced by the Muslims was in Arabic which was the language of the Prophet, and was used as the language of literature and philosophy from Spain to Baghdad, the Turks who came to India were deeply influenced by the Persian language which had become the literary and administrative language of Central Asia and Iran from the tenth century onwards. In India, the use of Arabic remained largely confined to a narrow circle of Islamic scholars and philosophers. In course of time, digests of the Islamic law were prepared in Persian also with the help of Indian scholars. The most well-known of these Fiqh-i-Firuzshahi which was prepared in the reign of Firuz Tughlaq. But Arabic digests continued to be prepared, the most famous of these being the Fatawa-i-Alamgiri, or the Digest of Laws prepared by a group of jurists in the reign of Aurangzeb.

With the arrival of the Turks in India during the tenth century, a new language, Persian, was introduced in the country. There was a resurgence of the Persian language in Iran and Central Asia from the tenth century onwards and some of the greatest poets of the Persian language, such as Firdausi and Sadi, and the great poets of mystic love, Sinai, Iraqi, Jami, Hafiz etc. lived and composed their works between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. From the beginning, the Turks adopted Persian as the language of literature and administration in the country. Thus, Lahore emerged as the first centre for the cultivation of the Persian language. Although the works of only a few of these early writers of Persian in India have survived, we find in the writings of some of them, such as Masud Sad Salman, a sense of attachment and love for Lahore. However, the most notable Persian writer of the period was Amir Khusrau. Born in 1252 at Patiali (near Badaun in western Uttar Pradesh), Amir Khusrau took pride in being an Indian. He says, "I have praised India for two reasons. First, because India is the land of my birth and our country. Love of the country is an important obligation.... Hindustan is like heaven. Its climate is better than that of Khurasan... it is green and full of flowers all the year round. The Brahmans here are as learned as Aristotle and there are many scholars in various fields...."

Khusrau's love for India shows that the Turkish ruling class was no longer prepared to behave as a foreign ruling class, and that the ground had been prepared for a cultural rapprochement between them and the Indians.

Khusrau wrote a large number of poetical works, including historical romances. He experimented with all the poetical forms, and created a new style of Persian which came to be called the sabaq-i-hindi or the style of India.

Khusrau has praised the Indian languages, including Hindi (which he calls Hindavi). Some of his scattered Hindi verses are found in his writings though the Hindi work, Khaliq Bari, often attributed to Khusrau, was in all probability the work of a later poet of the same name. He was also an accomplished musician and took part in religious musical gatherings (sama) organised by the famous Sufi saint, Nizamuddin

Auliya. Khusrau, it is said, gave up his life the day after he learnt of the death of his pir, Nizamuddin Auliya (1325). He was buried in the same compound.

Apart from poetry, a strong school of history writing in Persian developed in India during the period. The most famous historians of this period were Minhaj Siraj, Ziauddin Barani, Afif and Isami.

Through the Persian language, India was able to develop close cultural relations with Central Asia and Iran. In course of time, Persian became not only the language of administration and diplomacy, but also the language of the upper classes and their dependents, at first in north India and later, with the expansion of the Delhi Sultanat to the south and with the establishment of Muslim kingdoms in different parts of the country, in almost the entire country.

Sanskrit and Persian, in the main, functioned as link languages in the country, in politics, religion and philosophy, and were also means of literary productions. At first, there was little interchange between the two. Zia Nakhshabi (d. 1350) was the first to translate into Persian Sanskrit stories which were related by a parrot to a woman whose husband had gone on a journey. The book *Tuti Nama* (Book of the Parrot), written in the time of Muhammad Tughlaq, proved very popular and was translated from Persian into Turkish, and later into many European languages as well. He also translated the old Indian treatise on sexology, the *Kok Shastra*, into Persian. Later, in the time of Firuz Shah, Shaskrit books on medicine and music were translated into Persian. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir had the famous historical work *Rajatarangini*, and the *Mahabharata* translated into Persian. Sanskrit works on medicine and music were also translated into Persian at his instance.

## REGIONAL LANGUAGES

During the period, literary works of high quality were produced in many of the regional languages as well. Many of these languages, such as Hindi, Bengali and Marathi trace their origin back to the eighth century or so. Some others, such as Tamil, were much older. Buddhists and Jains, and the Nath Panthi siddhas had used the “corrupt languages” (apabhramsha), as also local languages for their works in preference to Sanskrit. Writing in the beginning of the fourteenth century, Amir Khusrau had noted the existence of regional languages and remarked: “There is at this time in every province a language peculiar to itself, and not borrowed from any other—Sindhi, Lahori, Kashmiri, Kubari (Dogri of the Jammu region), Dhur Samundari (Kannada of Karnataka), Tilangi (Telugu), Gujar (Gujarati), Mabari (Tamil), Gauri (North Bengal), Bengali, Awadh, and Delhi and its environs (Hindavi)”. He adds, “These languages have from ancient times applied in every way to the common purposes of life.”

Some modern regional languages, such as Assamese, Oriya, Malayalam have not been noted. However, Khusrau rightly points to a significant development, viz the emergence of the modern regional languages of India. The rise to maturity of many of these languages and their use as means for literary works may be considered a striking feature of the medieval period. There were many reasons for this. Perhaps, with the loss of prestige by the Brahmans, Sanskrit also lost some of its prestige. The use of the common languages by the bhakti saints was, undoubtedly, an important factor in the rise of these languages. In fact, in many parts of the country, it was the saints who fashioned these languages for literary purposes. It seems that in many regional kingdoms of the pre-Turkish period, regional languages, such as Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, etc., were used for administrative purposes, in addition to Sanskrit. This must have been continued under the Turkish rule, for we hear of Hindi-knowing revenue accountants appointed in the Delhi Sultanat. Later, when the Delhi Sultanat broke up, local languages, in addition to Persian, continued to be used for administrative purpose in many of the regional kingdoms. Thus, literature in Telugu developed in south India under the patronage of the Vijayanagara rulers. Marathi was one of the administrative languages in the Bahmani kingdom, and later, at the court of Bijapur. In course of time, when these languages had reached a certain stage of development, some of the Muslim kings gave them patronage for literary purposes also. For example, Nusrat Shah of Bengal had the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* translated into Bengali. Maladhar Basu also translated the *Bhagavata* into Bengali under his patronage. His patronage of Bengali poets has been mentioned earlier.

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The use of bhakti poems in Hindi by the Sufi saints in their musical gatherings has been mentioned before. In east U.P. Sufi saints, such as Mulla Daud, the author of Chandayan, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, etc. wrote in Hindi and put forward sufi concepts in a form which could be easily understood by the common man. They popularised many Persian forms, such as the masnavi.

## MUSIC

Trends towards mutual understanding and integration are to be found not only in the fields of religious beliefs and rituals, architecture and literature, but also in the fields of fine arts, particularly music. When the Turks came to India, they inherited the rich Arab tradition of music which had been further developed in Iran and Central Asia. They brought with them a number of new musical instruments, such as the rabab and sarangi, and new musical modes and regulations. Indian music and Indian musicians at the court of the Caliphs at Baghdad had possibly influenced the development of music there. However, systematic contact between the two began in India under the Sultanat. We have already referred to Amir Khusrau. Khusrau, who was given the title of nayak or master of both the theory and practice of music, introduced many Perso-Arabic airs (ragas), such as aiman, gora, sanam, etc. The qawwali is supposed to originate with him. He is credited with having invented the sitar, though we have no evidence of it. The tabla which is also attributed to him seems, however, to have developed during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

The process of integration in the field of music continued under Firuz. The Indian classical work Ragadarpan was translated into Persian during his reign. Musical gatherings spread from the abodes of the sufis to the palaces of the nobles. Sultan Husain Sharqi, the ruler of Jaunpur, was a great patron of music. The Sufi saint, Pir Bodhan, is supposed to have been the second great musician of the age. Another regional kingdom where music was highly cultivated was the kingdom of Gwalior. Raja Man Singh of Gwalior was a great music lover. The work Man Kautuhal in which all the new musical modes introduced by the Muslims were included was prepared under his aegis. We do not know at what time the musical modes in north India began to differ from those in the south. But there is little doubt that the differentiation was largely due to the incorporation of Perso-Arabic modes, airs and scales.

A distinctive style of music, influenced in considerable measure by Persian music, developed in the kingdom of Kashmir.

After the conquest of Jaunpur, Sikandar Lodi followed its tradition of patronising music on a lavish scale—a tradition which was further developed by the Afghan rulers. Thus, Adali, a successor of Sher Shah, was a great master of music. But music came into its own under the Mughals.

# UNIT-XIII

## THE STATE UNDER THE SULTANATE

### INTRODUCTION

Any state has to be seen in the context of the traditions, ideas and beliefs of the people concerned; social structure, including the character of the ruling class and its relations with other power elites as well as the masses; system of production and relations of production, to mention the main. Such a comprehensive study can hardly be carried out in a brief compass. However, some main points may be delineated.

Debate regarding the nature of the state, its origin, the nature of monarchy, outlook towards the people, relationship with religion and religious orders, the right of rebellion etc. were very old in India, as is clear from the Arthashastra of Kautilya which mentions many older schools of political thought which are lost to us. Debate about the nature of the state continued, and figures in the Mahabharata and in the writings of Jain thinkers, as well in the Dharmashastras. In general, raj niti or political conduct, and dharma-niti or moral conduct were considered separate, but interdependent entities.

Muslim thinking on the state had a complex evolution. Abu Yusuf Yaqubi (d. 798), al-Farabi (d. 950), al-Mawardi (d. 1031), al-Ghazali (d. 1111) etc. gave a definite shape to the Muslim thinking on the subject, specially in the context of the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of de facto independent states. While the earlier theory of the unity of spiritual authority and secular power in the person of the Imam or Khalifa was retained, the sultans were accorded an independent position, as long as they accepted the theoretical superiority of the Caliph or Khalifa. Thus, the fiction of Islamic unity was retained but, in practice, the sultans were left free in their political conduct, as long as they did not openly violate the shara.

The Turks who came to India were deeply influenced by the Islamic thinking or practices regarding the state, though they could not completely shake off their tribal/clan traditions. They also showed themselves to be intensely practical in their political dealings, simultaneously trying to remain within the framework of Islamic law (sharia).

### LEGAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THE STATE

From a legal point of view, the Delhi sultanate can be considered an independent entity with the rise to power in 1206 of Qutbuddin Aibak, a slave of Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam, and the end of its subordination to Ghazni. However, it was not till the consolidation of Iltutmish's power that the rulers of Ghazni ceased to claim suzerainty over the territories comprising the sultanate of Delhi. In fact, this was a consequence of the conquest of Ghazni by the Mongol leader, Chingiz Khan. It led to the flight of Yalduz, the successor of Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam, to Delhi, and his defeat and imprisonment by Iltutmish.

Although asserting their independence, the rulers at Delhi were keen to maintain their links with the rest of the Islamic world. One method of doing this was to get a formal letter of investiture (manshur) from the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad. In 1229, Iltutmish received such a letter of investiture, along with splendid robes, from the Caliph of Baghdad. Henceforth, the sultans of Delhi inscribed the name of the Caliph in their coinage, and his name was included in the khutba at the time of the Friday prayers. The sultans also styled themselves Nasir-amirul-mominin, i.e. the lieutenant of the leader of the faithful, the Khalifa or Caliph. It has been argued that legally the sultans of Delhi became subordinate to the Caliphs. However, the legal aspect was the least important in the eyes of contemporaries. The legal independence of the sultans of Delhi had not been questioned by any one before the receipt of the letter of investiture. Nor was the legal status of the sultan questioned by anyone even when Mubarak Shah, the successor of Alauddin Khalji, repudiated allegiance to the Caliph, and declared himself Imam or Khalifa. The question of getting the Caliph's letter of investiture was really a moral question. It also catered to, and helped to maintain the fic-



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tion of the unity of the Islamic world under the leadership of the Caliph. But this unity had broken down much earlier, partly on account of the rise of various religious sects, and partly on account of the rise of independent kingdoms under Turkish and other adventurers. The rise of the Mongols fractured this unity still further.

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq was facing a series of internal revolts, he sought and obtained an investiture from a descendent of the Abbasid Caliph who was living at Cairo after the murder in 1259 of the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad by the Mongol leader, Halaku. This was in 1343. Earlier, he had removed his own name from the coins, and put in its place that of the Caliph. But these steps had little impact on the leaders of the rebellions. Firuz Tughlaq twice obtained investiture and robes of honour from the Caliph, even before he stood forth as a champion of orthodoxy. But the prestige of the Abbasid Caliph had gradually declined. Following the example of Timur, later the Mughal rulers themselves assumed the title of Imam or Khalifa.

Thus, the institution of Khalifat had little relevance in the context of India during the sultanate and the Mughal periods.

With the advent of the Turks, a new type of a state was introduced in north India. During the early phase, maximum freedom was given to the military leaders to carry out conquests in different parts of the country while a strong corp of troops was stationed with, and operated under the direct control of the Sultan. This type of loose or decentralized despotism was replaced by a highly centralised state by Balban. With some interruptions, as for example, under Jalaluddin Khalji, the Delhi sultanate maintained its highly centralized character till the end of the 14th century when, following the downfall of the Tughlaqs and the rise of the Lodis to power, a brief experiment was made at reasserting the principle of decentralised despotism, with Afghan tribal leaders claiming a larger share in power. This led to renewed clashes between the sultan and the nobles leading to the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi at the field of Panipat in 1526.

While a tussle for power between the sultan and the nobles was a constant feature of the Sultanat, the precise extent and degree of centralisation varying from ruler to ruler, the basic struggle for power between the nobles and the sultan was settled in favour of the sultan with the accession of Balban to the throne. The Turkish nobles had failed to act as a corp, or to rally around a wazir of their choice, or to set up any institutions to control the power of the sultan.

Despite its outer appearance, the character of the state varied considerably during the 13th and 14th centuries. During the 13th century, the state was very much the institutionalized form of a foreign conquest. The nobles, mostly of Turkish extraction, had little knowledge or links with the country, and exercised control over the countryside from their military cantonments in the towns and the forts sprinkled over the country. It was during this period that the Sufi saints, particularly the Chishtis, played an important role in establishing links between the new ruling class and the populace, as we have already seen.

The 13th century was practically a period of Turkish domination over the state. Most of the nobles, both free and slave, who had accompanied Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam to India were Islamized Turks. The Khaljis who were not considered Turks were another important group. But they did not find favour with the successors of Qutbuddin Aibak at Delhi, and preferred to carve out a semi-independent domain of their own in North Bengal.

A second group which held important positions under Iltutmish were the Tajiks. There was a sprinkling of Arabs, Yamanis etc. who were generally appointed in the department of the sadr. Unlike the Turks who were rude warriors, the Tajiks whose mother-tongue was Persian, were cultured and refined. Hence, they were generally preferred for administrative posts in the central government. Iltutmish's wazir, Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, was a Tajik. The Turks, both free and slave resented the Tajiks and their attempt to grab the higher administrative posts. This came to the surface after the death of Iltutmish when most of the Tajiks were massacred by the Turks. The wazir, Nizamul Mulk, escaped, but was not heard of again. This ended the Tajik challenge to the Turks.

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The Turkish zealotry of not allowing non-Turks to acquire high office was displayed in their hostility towards the Abyssinian, Malik Yakut, who had been appointed amir akhur (superintendent of the Royal stables) by Razia. However, the Turkish nobles did not hesitate to use an Indian Muslim, Imaduddin Raihan, to displace the chihalgani slave officers, and to try and establish their own domination over the sultan.

Balban's reign has many contradictions. Balban destroyed the power of the chihalgani Turks. Simultaneously, he set his face against the "low born", i.e. the Indian Muslims, even for appointment in the lower rungs of the administration. Thus, he stood forth as the champion of the Turkish domination of the state. Simultaneously, he declared himself to be a descendant of the Iranian hero. Afrasiyab and adhered to pre-Islamic Iranian forms and symbols of sovereignty. Thus, he tried to fuse together Iranian forms and Turkish domination.

Although the institution of slavery played an important role in fusing together different ethnic groups among the Muslims, particularly the Turks who were divided into tribes and regional groupings, the state in India can hardly be called a 'slave state', a term used by early British historians, but now discarded. Many of the nobles started their careers as slaves in the service of a sultan or a leading noble. But they were freed (manumitted) at a stage during their rise to high positions. Thus, Iltutmish presented his letter of manumission to the ulema when they called on him after his accession to the throne. According to Islamic theory, only a free person could ascend the throne. Thus, it is also wrong to talk of a 'slave dynasty'.

Despite Balban's efforts, the Turkish domination of the State had begun to erode during his life time. Thus, he was compelled to admit a section of the Mongols to the nobility during the last years of his reign. Earlier, following the death of his son, Prince Muhammad, he had to recruit Khaljis under Jalaluddin Khalji to fight the Mongols. Also, during the Bengal campaign, towards the end of his life, he found a section of the Turkish nobles and the army to be inefficient and undependable. He punished the Turkish nobles and soldiers, but he had to fall back upon the support of some of the rais of East U.P., and to resort to a *leve'e en masse* to raise local soldiers to suppress the Bengal rebellion.

The Khaljis ended the Turkish domination or policy of Turkish exclusivism. They did not discriminate against the Turks, but threw the doors open to the talents among various sections of the Muslims. Thus, Alauddin's wazir was Nusrat Khan Jalesar, and Zafar Khan his Mir Arz. Both were famous warriors but were non-Turks, possibly Indian Muslims. Another non-Turk who rose to power was Malik Kafur. It seems that there was an influx of a large number of non-Turks including Indian Muslims into the nobility during the latter years of Alauddin Khalji. This alone can explain the rise to power, even though very brief, of the Baradus, an uneducated but fighting group of Rajputs under Khusrau Khan, following the murder of Mubarak Khalji (1320).

It has been suggested that with the rise of the Khaljis, and the end of Turkish monopoly of high offices, an "integrated Indo-Muslim state" emerged in India, i.e., one in which different sections of the Muslims, including Indian Muslims, were admitted to the nobility, and high offices filled on the basis of efficiency and the predilections of individual rulers, rather than on the basis of their ethnic origins. Sufficient research work has not been done to prove or effectively disprove the point. We do, however, know that the ruling classes and the rulers in India strongly believed in the principle of superiority of blood so that only those who could establish their links with 'respected' families, whether in the secular or the religious fields, were entitled to high offices in government. The earliest Muslim political thinker in India, Fakr-i-Mudabbir, who wrote during the reign of Iltutmish, says:

"Posts of diwan, shagird and muharrir (revenue posts) should be given only to ahl-i-qalam (the educated sections) and whose ancestors had served rulers and amirs."

Ziauddin Barani who wrote his political tract, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, while in prison during the early years of Firuz Tughlaq, echoes the same views. He says that at the time of creation, some minds were inspired with the art of letters and of writing, others with horsemanship, and yet others in the weaving, stitch-

craft, carpentry, hair-cutting and tanning. Thus, men should practice only those crafts and professions “for which men have been inspired (and) are practised by them”. He goes on to say, “Even if a man of base or low birth is adorned with a hundred merits, he will not be able to organise and administer the country according to expectations, or be worthy of leadership or political trust.”

Barani was, apparently, voicing the prejudices of the ruling sections. But these views had a definite bearing on the character of the state. The state remained the exclusive preserve of the so-called “respectable” classes. The only ruler who tried to breach this policy was Muhammad bin Tughlaq who appointed a number of persons, both Hindus and Muslims, from the so-called low classes on the basis of their efficiency. But there was a strong reaction against this from the established ruling classes. Under Firuz Tughlaq, we find no reference to the appointment of such people, either Hindus or Muslims.

Thus, in a highly fragmented society it is hardly possible to speak of an “integrated” Indo-Muslim state. The position of converted India Muslims from the lower classes hardly changed. The rise of a converted Tailang Brahman, Khan-i-Jahan Maqbul, to the position of wazir under Firuz Tughlaq, or of an Ain-ul-Mulk, a Hindustani, who was governor of Awadh under Muhammad Tughlaq and later was Firuz’s mushrif-i-mamlik (auditor-general), should not be interpreted to mean that Indian converts from the upper castes had now become a dominant element in the nobility. Muhammad Tughlaq’s induction of a large number of foreigners in the nobility, calling them ‘aizza’ is an index to the continued preference of foreigners over Indians. It was one of these nobles who later set up the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan, and another in Gujarat.

The highly mobile central elite, paid by non-hereditary iqtas, backed by armed cavalry, un-encumbered by any local vested interests, was the main instrument of Turkish centralization. The state was hierarchical in the sense that there was a definite graded order in society and the state. The nobles, graded into three classes, Khans, Maliks and Amirs, formed the top rung, although great deference was paid to the ulema and the mashaikh (saints).

## RELATIONS WITH THE ULEMA

The powers and position of the ulema in the state, and its relationship with the secular rulers has been a matter of continuous debate in the Islamic world. After the end of the rule of the first four Caliphs at Mecca, there was a division between the spiritual and secular authority, most of the leading clergymen remaining at Mecca, and the centre of political authority being shifted by the Umayyad Khalifas to Damascus. With the shifting of the political control to Baghdad by the Abbasids, who claimed descent from the Prophet, an attempt was made to reintegrate spiritual and political authority under their aegis. However, in effect, the political elements often dominated the spiritual. Even this unity, however limited, ended with the breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate towards the end of the 9th century, and the rise of independent kingdoms, mostly under Turkish sultans. The Turks who were newly converted to Islam, paid great deference to the clergy, the ulema, who were supposed to interpret Islam to the community. But they kept effective political control in their hands. The attitude of contempt towards the clergymen and lower officials (nawisandan, or writers) for advising about higher political affairs is explained by the remarks of Alauddin Khalji to Alaul Mulk, the kotwal of Delhi, when he advised Alauddin to persuade the Mongols to depart by using diplomatic and other, i.e. financial, means. Alauddin rejected the advise as “unbecoming”, and clinched the argument by saying “you speak thus because you are a nawisanda (clerk or scribe) and the son of a nawisanda.” Elsewhere, Barani says that these sections would not distinguish the head of a horse from its tail!

It has been argued that the state set up by the Turks was a theocracy because it was based on the Muslim holy law, the shara, which could be interpreted only by the ulema. In this connection, it may be pointed out that the word “theocracy” was originally applied to the Jewish commonwealth from the time of Moses to the rise of monarchy, and is understood as “government or State governed by God directly or through a sacerdotal class.” It was also implied that for such a sacerdotal class to govern, it should be organised formally, as in the case of Jewish or Christian Churches. It has been said that in the absence of an organised Church, the Muslim ulema could not govern, and hence there could be no theocratic state.

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The entire discussion is somewhat artificial because a purely theocratic state never existed anywhere for any length of time, as also because the term or concept of a theocratic state as set out above was never discussed in India during medieval times. What was discussed and is relevant is whether a truly Islamic state could be set up in India. And at the back of it was the controversy regarding the extent to which shara as interpreted by the orthodox ulema, could be implemented in India.

This matter was anxiously debated during the Sultanat period, was revived under the Mughals, and continued under British rule. It still arises under various forms.

In general, the sultans in India, while paying deference to the ulema, did not feel bound to consult them or accede to their views where matters of state were concerned. Thus, Iltutmish did not consult the theologians before he declared Razia as his successor. Balban introduced pre-Islamic ceremonials in his court, including sijda and pabos which were considered un-Islamic by the ulema. In Alauddin Khalji's time, Qazi Mughis declared that the treasures looted by him from Deogir were bait-ul-mal, or part of the public treasury, and that as sultan, he was entitled to take from the treasury only as much as was allowed to a common trooper. Alauddin rejected the advice of the Qazi, and declared:

"Although I have not studied the Book (the Quran), nor am I learned (in religious sciences), I am a Muslim of a Muslim stock. To prevent rebellions in which thousands perish, I issue such orders as I conceive to be for the good of the state, and the benefit of the people. Men are heedless, disrespectful, and disobey my commands. I am then compelled to be severe and bring them to obedience. I do not know whether this is according to the shara, or against the shara; whatever I think for the good of the state or suitable for the emergency, that I decree."

Since Barani wrote more than fifty years after Alauddin Khalji, these may not have been the words of Alauddin, but views attributed to him by Barani. Also, they refer to a particular situation, a situation in which Alauddin had to give harsh punishments to prevent rebellions, and to ensure compliance of his orders. They do not imply that Alauddin Khalji regularly or wilfully disregarded the shara. Barani makes the position clear by saying that "when he (Alauddin) attained to kingship, he was quite convinced that government and administration were quite independent of the rules and orders of the shariat; and that while the former appertained to kings, the latter had been assigned to qazis and muftis."

This divergence in the perceived values of the ruler and the ulema was not peculiar to Alauddin. Muhammad bin Tughlaq issued many secular decrees (zawabits) to supplement the shariat. Even an orthodox ruler, Firuz, forbade cutting the hands, feet, noses etc. of criminals even though it had been sanctioned by the sharia.

Taking all these factors into account, Barani came to the conclusion that a truly Islamic state based on faith (din-dari) was not feasible in India. All that was feasible was an Islamic State based on worldly considerations (dunya-dari). In such a state, the head of the state, the sultan, had to be a God fearing Muslim; Saiyyids, religious scholars, shaikhs etc. were to be honoured and given employment; holy wars (jihad) and holy campaigns were to be waged against the neighbouring rajas and chiefs; and Muslims not allowed to flout the holy law in their public behaviour so that sins and impurity, wickedness and wrong doing sink low. Barani makes it clear, however, that 'what the sultan did in private, or a citizen in his house was not the concern of the state'.

Thus, the state was not a theocracy. Nor can it be called "ethnocentric" because shara as defined by the clergy was hardly the core concern of the sultans. It was formally Islamic in character, but was based not on social equality, but on hierarchy. In practice, there was little distinction between the lives of the ordinary people, Hindu or Muslim. The clergy were to be honoured but the state was run not on their advice, but on political considerations and the interests of the ruling elite. As we shall see, this was not always an easy enterprise, and sometimes, there was a sharp difference of opinion between the orthodox clergy and the sultans, especially regarding the extent of religious freedom to be accorded to the Hindus, and their role in the working of the state.



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## POSITION OF THE HINDUS

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The state as we have described above, postulated considerable but defined religious freedom to those Hindus who had accepted the overlordship of the Muslim ruler, and agreed to abide by the rules and regulations enforced by him. Such people were called zimmi or protected persons. The zimmi had the right to worship according to their rites, and to maintain and repair temples "since buildings cannot stand for ever". They were, however, not allowed to build new temples "in opposition to Islam". This clause was vague; it implied that Hindus could build new temples in their houses, or in villages where there were no Muslims. It could also mean that in case of opposition by the Hindus, even old temples could be destroyed. As we have seen, in times of war even temples of long standing were sacked and destroyed. In the early phase, some of them were converted into mosques, or the plundered material from their ruins used for building mosques. But this stopped once the Turks were in a position to erect their own buildings. However, in case of wars with local chiefs or neighbouring rulers, the destruction of their temples became acts of religious merit. Even this came to a stop when Turkish rule had been spread all over the country.

In addition to loyalty and service to the ruler, the Hindus are also required to pay jizyah. The origins of jizyah are not clear; some trace it to poll-tax on individuals levied in Greece, and pre-Islamic Iran from which it was taken over, others consider it to be a tax in lieu of military service, and still others equate it to land-tax or kharaj. This confusion was sought to be resolved by the various schools of shariat, which arose towards the end of the 9th century and at the beginning of the 10th century. While some of them, tracing the example of the Prophet towards idol-worshippers in Arabia, argued that idol-worshippers had only the option of Islam or death, a few others gave jizyah as the third option. The Hanafi school of sharia which was generally followed in India used the formula "Islam or death, or payment of jizyah". We do not know how precisely jizyah was assessed or collected during the Sultanat period. In some passages of Barani, the peasants are to pay kharaj or jizyah, that is, they were considered one and the same and assessed as a lump sum in the villages. Thus, among the cesses collected by Alauddin Khalji, or even Firuz, there is no reference to jizyah. How it was collected in the towns we do not know. According to the sharia, women, children, people who were lunatics and the indigent were exempt from jizyah. This left the artisans and the merchants. Till the time of Firuz Tughlaq, Brahmans too, were exempt.

Thus, during the sultanate period, jizyah as a separate tax affected only a small section in the towns. As such, it could hardly be considered a device for forcing conversion to Islam. For a section of the orthodox ulema, however, jizyah was a means of harassing and humiliating and insulting the Hindus. Thus, Qazi Mughis went so far as to say that if the collector of the jizyah should want to spit on the face of the Hindu, he should open his mouth. This was on lines of Manu's injunction that if a shudra heard the Vedas, molten lead should be poured in his ears. Both were impractical, but showed a state of the mind.

Some theologians argued that as idolaters, and not having a revealed book like the Quran, the Hindus were ineligible for jizyah, and should be given the option of only Islam or death. If Barani is to be believed, such an argument was put forward before Iltutmish by a group of theologians. On behalf of the Sultan, his wazir, Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, replied that such a policy was contrary to tradition, not having been enforced by Mahmud, the hero of Islam, and impractical because the Muslims were too few in numbers, "like salt in a dish (of food)."

Barani perhaps did not know that the Turkish sultans were only following the example of the Arab rulers of Sindh who had granted the Hindus there the option of paying jizyah, and employed many of them in civil administration.

It is also necessary to remember that in the Delhi Sultanat, the Hindus formed a predominant section of the population, even in the heart of the empire, Delhi. They continued to dominate the country-side as khuts, muqaddams, chaudhuri, rana, thakur, etc., as also trade and finance in the towns, as well as the transport trade (as banjaras). As Alauddin told Qazi Mughis, even within 100 kos of the capital, "the khuts and muqaddams ride upon fine horses, wear fine clothes, shoot with Persian bows, make war upon each other, and go out hunting...give parties and drink wine." In his Fatawa-i-Jahandari, Barani referring to them sadly notes:

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“...out of consideration for the fact that the infidels and polytheists are payers of tributes and protected persons (zimmis), these infidels are honoured, distinguished, favoured and made eminent; the kings bestow drums, banners, ornaments, cloaks of brocade and caprisoned horses upon them, and appoint them to governorships, high posts and offices.”

There is, no doubt, an element of exaggeration in this statement because hardly any Hindus were appointed to high offices, except during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. But there is little doubt about the financial affluence of a section of the Hindus because we are told by Barani that the sahs (bankers), mehtas (administrators) and pandits “build houses like palaces...live in delights and comfort. They take Musalmans in their service and make them run before their horses, even in the capital of Islam.”

Of course, the affluence affected only a small section of the Hindus. The mass of the people, both Hindus and Muslim, continued to be poor, and exploited by the ruling classes.

To what extent the Sultanat affected the daily life of an average Hindu is a matter of debate. According to one view, he was hardly affected because the state did not interfere with his life as long as he paid his taxes which, in the villages, continued to be collected by the khuts and muqaddams, or mis and thakurs. He got into trouble only when there was a local war, or famine, or when the village officials or the local chief delayed or withheld land revenue. In matters of personal and civil laws, the Hindus continued to be governed by caste panchayats, and by the village zamindar or chief. The qazis dealt with Muslim law, or only when a Hindu and a Muslim were involved.

However, in a centralized state, the influence of the state tended to grow, as was shown by the agrarian policies of Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. In matters of religion, considerable freedom was accorded. Jalaluddin Khalji's observation that the Hindu passed in procession, beating gongs and symbols, outside his palace, to immerse the images in the Jamuna exemplifies it. Muhammad bin Tughlaq even participated in Hindu festivals, such as, Holi, and held discussions with Jogis, and Jain saints. However, in a despotic state such freedom was often regarded as a matter of grace rather than a matter of right. Thus, local despots could always act in an arbitrary manner, particularly when a section of the ulema constantly advocated and justified a policy of sternly repressing the Hindus. Thus, they justified Firuz Tughlaq's publicly burning a brahman on charge of converting a Muslim, or his destroying a number of temples around Delhi on the charge that they were new, and that in the festivals held around them, Muslims also used to participate. Perhaps, the only occasion when the ulema intervened to prevent a ruler from acting in an arbitrary manner against the Hindus was when they dissuaded Sikandar Lodi from attacking the pilgrims and destroying and desecrating the old temple and tank at Kurukshetra on the ground that the temple was an ancient one, and previous Muslim sultans had allowed the Hindu to bathe there. It would seem that the traditions of broad religious toleration had become well established by then.

Despite some limitations, it must be conceded that during the sultanate period, the state allowed more religious freedom than was allowed to non-Christians, or even to rival sects of Christians in Europe till the 16th century. The state was, of course, formally an Islamic one in the sense explained by Barani. This implied that the Muslims were a privileged group, and that it was a special obligation on the state to look after their moral and material welfare. This was by no means new in India because earlier it were the Rajputs who had formed a privileged group, and their privileges, and the privileges of the Brahman were accepted as a matter of course.

## **DESPOTISM, BENEVOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

In their thinking about the state, Muslim political thinkers raised questions about the nature and legitimate objectives of state power, and the basis of the moral authority of the state and the sultan. Political thinkers considered monarchy to be the only safeguard against social anarchy in which property and the honour of women could not be protected. In general, the political thinkers preferred the rule of one individual, the sultan, who had the necessary social and moral qualities, and who, in a sense, enjoyed the mandate of heaven over an oligarchy, or 'noblocracy'. The question of despotism or autocracy bothered

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many medieval Muslim thinkers. Ziauddin Barani considered despotism to be basically un-Islamic, and considered that religion was the only check against despotism or abuse of personal power by a monarch. However, they did not give the right of rebellion against an unjust ruler, except in some special circumstances, such as open and blatant violation of the shara. Barani compromised with despotism because giving of harsh punishments was inescapable in a situation such as India. Specifically, Barani believed that the mean and ignoble, whom he compares to “animals and beasts of prey” were “plentiful and abundant.” Their punishment and stern repression by a despotic ruler was not only inescapable but desirable. Thus, Barani finds a social justification for despotism.

The question was: how to maintain the moral authority of the state in this situation? It was in this context that medieval political thinkers emphasized the concept of adl or justice. Justice implied making no distinction between rich and poor, relation and stranger, noble and ignoble. Nizamuddin, the author of Siya-sat Nama, lays great emphasis on the concept of justice. Many thinkers, including Barani, give dispensing of justice even a higher position than discharging religious obligations. For a ruler, an act of justice was greater than seventy years of namaz, according to Barani. However, justice also implies the preservation of the existing social order which was organized on a rigid hierarchical order in which the mean and the ignoble which included the artisans and peasants were to be kept out of power, and in a position of dependence.

Despite these, justice did provide a certain restraint on the exercise of arbitrary power, especially by the nobles and the lower officials. It should also be seen within the framework of the concept of benevolence, or serving the people. The saints, both Muslim and Hindu, constantly emphasised this point, both for themselves as for the rulers. Within limitations, they also criticized the hierarchical system of society, and upheld the concept of human equality. To that extent, they became a vehicle for postulating popular aspirations, and by their open-ended approach provide them a relief and a means of escape from a rigidly unequal order. However, as we have seen, at the political level, the concept of benevolence was, at best, given only lip service by the rulers. After Jalaluddin Khalji, Firuz Tughlaq was the first Turkish monarch who tried to espouse it, particularly in the context of the Muslims, though non-Muslims could not be completely excluded.

Could such a state, highly centralized and militaristic, with a ruling class which had a narrow social base, promote the economic and cultural development of the country? In the preceding pages we have seen how, despite all these limitations, there was growth of architecture, literature and music in the country in which both Muslims and Hindus contributed. The growth of Sufism and the bhakti movements also tended to mitigate mutual hostility, and provide a platform for common interaction. In the economic fields, while only a few monarchs, such as Muhammad and Firuz Tughlaq were actively concerned with the expansion and improvement of cultivation, the centralized system of revenue administration made it possible for the state to intervene more effectively in village life. The centralization of a high proportion of the revenue surplus in the hands of the ruling class gave a fillip to artisanal production of a superior type, and promoted urbanization. The opening up of the frontiers of the country to trade, and wider cultural links with the Islamic world, the improvement of road communications, the provision of a stable currency, the silver tanka, and the active promotion of overseas trade with countries of south-east Asia and China led to the situation that, as modern research reveals, when the Portuguese entered the Indian Ocean towards the end of the 15th century, it was found that trade and prosperity in the region in which India played a key role was at an unprecedentedly high level. But which were the groups and elements which benefited from and participated in this prosperity and which were the ones left out is a question which needs to be tackled separately because, then as now, prosperity and stark poverty continued side by side.

Thus, the Sultanat, far from being a ‘dark age’ as postulated by some, saw the breaking of the rigid, narrow economic and social mould which had dominated the country between the 8th and 12th centuries, and created conditions for development, even though in a limited form.

# UNIT-XIV

## CENTRAL ASIAN POLITICS AND THE ADVANCE OF BABUR TOWARDS INDIA

### THE TIMURIDS

Throughout Indian history, events and developments in Central Asia had a deep and abiding impact on India. As we have seen, during the 10th and the 12th centuries, developments in Central Asia led to the advent of the Ghaznavids, and then of the Ghurids into India. Similarly, developments in Central Asia during the 15th and early 16th centuries, led to a new Turkish incursion into India, this time in the shape of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur.

The rapid rise and decline of the Mongols, and their mutual squabbles created the climate for the emergence of a new Central Asian empire during the 14th century. The founder of this empire, Timur, belonged to the Barlas clan of Turks who had been owners of land in Transoxiana, and had freely intermarried with the Mongols. Even Timur claimed descent from Chingiz by virtue of his marrying a daughter of the Mongol Khan, Qazan Khan, who was a descendant of Chingiz's son, Chaghtai. However, as a modern writer, Gavin Hambly, observes: "In Asia, Chingiz Khan's career gave birth to a new concept of imperium which certainly captured men's imagination, although at first the predominant sentiment was one of terror ... after the fall of the Mongol empire every princeling in Central Asia sought, if he could, to legitimize his rule by claiming descent from Chingiz Khan."

Timur launched upon a career of conquest which lasted almost a quarter of a century till his death in 1404-05. He over-ran Khurasan (eastern Iran), Iran, Georgia, Iraq and the Ottoman empire in Syria and Anatolia (Turkey). He also led a series of campaigns against the Mongol ulus called the Golden Horde, which controlled Southern Russia and parts of modern Sinkiang and Siberia. However, he made no attempt to incorporate them in his empire. He sacked Delhi, and laid a vague claim over the Punjab. He was planning an invasion of China at the time of his death.

Timur has been called "one of the boldest and most destructive conquerors in human history." Like Chingiz earlier, he used terror as an instrument of war. He ruthlessly sacked cities which offered resistance to him, slaughtering and enslaving large numbers and carrying off artisans, craftsmen and scholars to his capital, Samarqand. He followed this policy in Khurasan and Iran, and in India when he sacked Delhi.

Timur did not leave any lasting institutions, and his empire disintegrated rapidly after his death. However, the state he created, and the new cultural values and norms it generated, influenced not only the Mughals in India, but also the other states which arose in the area—the Uzbeks, the Safavids, and the Ottomans. Although the Mongols had embraced Islam like the Turks earlier, they had continued many Mongol practices and rituals, including the regulations or yassa laid down by Chingiz. Timur claimed to be a pious Muslim. However, according to a contemporary observer, Ibn Arab Shah, the yassa of Chingiz and the traditions of the Mongols were fundamental to Timur's character and policy. He argues that the Quran and the sharia did not matter to Timur except as external forms. While many of the successors of Timur tried to pose as orthodox Muslims, and gave patronage to the Muslim religious classes, made provision for religious endowment, and built shrines, mosques and madrasas, they never repudiated the yassa. This willingness to treat the yassa as a supplement to the sharia, and to issue royal edicts (yarligh) to modify the sharia whenever it suited them, gave a broader, more liberal character to the Timurid state than the states which had preceded. The Timurid rulers also gave support to the new liberal stream of thought, based on Ibn Arabi's philosophy of wahdat-al-wajud, or unity of God and the created world, which was given popular expression by a new breed of poets. Thus, Jami, one of the most popular poets, was patronized by Timur's successor, Shah Rukh, at Herat.



The Timurids presided over what has been called “the last great age of Persian literature.” They also encouraged the development of Chaghtai Turkish as a literary language. Another successor of Timur, Sultan Husain Baiqara, set up a new school of painting at Herat under the master painter, Bihzad. Thus, the times and the efforts of Timur, and his successors led to the rise of a liberal Muslim state which did not exclude anyone on the basis of their faiths. Thus, Christians and other non-Muslims were included in Timur’s armies. The state was also to be a champion and promoter of a broad liberal school of culture.

As Gavin Hambly says: “No other dynasty in Central Asia left behind it such a legacy.”

Another Mongol tradition which the Timurids inherited was of giving total loyalty and support to the chief, called Qa-an, or the great chief by the Mongols. Chingiz, and following him, the Timurids claimed the divine right to rule. No ordinary noble or military leader could, therefore, dream of displacing them. In fact they were content to be called their sevitores or servants (nokar). It were these traditions which gave greater stability and longevity to the great empires which arose in the region during the post-Mongol period—the Mughal, the Safavid, the Uzbek, the Ottoman etc., as compared to the pre-Mongol states. It also helped to shape the Mughal state and culture in India.

## **THE TIMURID-UZBEK AND UZBEK-IRAN CONFLICT AND BABUR**

As we have noted, following the disintegration of the Timurid Empire during the second half of the fifteenth century, three powerful empires arose in Central and West Asia. The Uzbek Empire dominated Transoxiana, the Safavid empire comprised Iran, and the Ottoman Empire was based on Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Syria which extended to Eastern Europe and dominated the Mediterranean Sea.

The Ottomans were the only Asian power which had a large navy. It clashed with the Safavids for the control of Baghdad, South-Western Iran and Azerbaijan. The Safavids, who claimed descent from an old order of saints, established themselves towards the beginning of the sixteenth century. They were fiercely Shi-ite, and persecuted the Sunnis, including the theologians, in Iran. They also tried to propagate Shiism in Syria and Anatolia. The Ottomans were staunch Sunnis and retaliated by persecuting Shiites in Syria and Anatolia. Thus, sectarian conflict made the political rivalry between the two more bitter and intense. The Uzbeks who were the main rivals of the Timurids, consisted of nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribes speaking Turkish, living in what is modern Kazakhstan. They had established an Uzbek khanate in the area during the middle of the fifteenth century. However, this khanate had been destroyed, and the Uzbek Empire was virtually rebuilt by Muhammad Shaibani Khan.

Starting life as a free-booter and a mercenary, Shaibani Khan served for some time under the Mongol Khan of Mughalistan, but soon struck out on his own, basing himself on Uzbek and Mongol soldiers of fortune.

The great prize before all the contenders was Transoxiana which was then fragmented among a series of Timurid princelings. In the hot-house atmosphere of the times, each Timurid prince not only tried to hold on to what he had, but was always on the look out to seize the territory of a neighbour—brother, cousin, uncle or nephew. Nor did any of them hesitate in employing Uzbek or Mongol mercenaries, or calling in outside powers to intervene in their internal struggles. In such a situation, only a bold and unscrupulous person could hope to succeed. While none of the begs (nobles, leaders of soldiers) could be relied upon, the worst were the Mongol mercenaries. Years later, Babur, while forced to employ Mongol mercenaries, wrote: “If they win, they grab at booty; if they lose, they unhorse and pilfer their own side!”

Apart from the Uzbeks, the Mongol Khans whose kingdoms were in the modern Sinkiang area or Mughalistan but had a toehold in Transoxiana were also on the look-out to expand their dominions there. The two Khans, Muhammad Khan and Ahmad Khan, were maternal uncles of Babur. They helped Babur on occasions, but could not hold back their own ambitions.

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The third party to this conflict was the Timurid Sultan, Husain Baiqara who controlled Khurasan (eastern Iran). He was always prepared to nibble at Transoxiana without, however, committing a major part of his forces for the purpose.

The centre point of the struggle for Transoxiana was the control over Samarqand. Samarqand had immense prestige value because it had been the capital of the Timurids for almost 140 years. It was also the centre of a rich and prosperous tract. Years later Babur was to say that "Few towns in the whole habitable world are so pleasant as Samarqand." He dwells on its magnificent buildings and gardens, its trade and manufactures, the excellent meadows around it, and its fruits and wine.

This is the background against which Babur was born, and in which he spent his early years. As is well known, Babur ascended the small principality of Farghana in 1494 at the age of twelve, following the death of his father, Umar Shaikh, when the house from which he was flying pigeons collapsed and fell upon him. At the time Farghana was being attacked from all quarters, but mainly, by his paternal uncle, Sultan Ahmad Mirza, aided by his maternal uncle, Sultan Mahmud Khan. With luck, firmness, and the loyalty of his subjects, Babur was able to stand up to these attacks, and forced his attackers to make peace with him.

During the next ten years, Babur twice conquered Samarqand to lose it again after a short spell. The first time, in 1497, when Babur was barely fifteen, he conquered Samarqand after a siege of seven months. He was aided in the enterprise by a split in the camp of the Timurid ruler of Samarqand, Baisanghar Mirza, whose brother was with Babur. Baisanghar sent repeated appeals to Shaibani Khan for help. Shaibani advanced but found Babur's defence to be too strong, and retreated. Babur was warmly welcomed by the citizens of Samarqand. However, he had to vacate it soon because the city lacked both supplies and money which Babur could not provide. There was little to plunder, and soon the Mongol mercenaries of Babur deserted. Many of Babur's own begs left him, and returned to the comforts of Farghana. Babur's serious illness and a conspiracy against him in his own dominions worsened Babur's position and forced him to leave Samarqand. Meanwhile, some of his begs had installed his younger half-brother, Jahangir Mirza, at Farghana, while some portions of the kingdom were seized by his maternal uncle, Mahmud Khan. Thus, Babur lost both Samarqand and his own kingdom. In great distress, Babur repaired for help to his maternal uncles who fobbed him off with promises.

While Babur was grappling with his internal problems, Shaibani Khan was invited by the Uzbek mother of the Timurid Sultan to occupy Samarqand in return for marrying her, and giving her son an appendage somewhere. This was a golden opportunity which Shaibani Khan seized. He soon made himself the virtual master of Mawara-un-Nahar, and also captured Bukhara. In an effort not to allow Shaibani Khan to consolidate his position any further, Babur advanced on Samarqand with a small force, and captured it with the help of the Samarqandis (1501). Babur says that the Uzbeks were so unpopular that the Samarqandis killed them with sticks and stones like dogs. But the support of the citizens alone was of little avail for Babur. His plea to the other Timurids to rally against the Uzbeks fell on deaf ears: Sultan Baiqara of Herat did not even reply to Babur's plea for help, but sent an envoy to Shaibani Khan who still controlled Bukhara. The help sent by Babur's maternal uncles, the Mongol Khans, was too small. It is clear that without resources of his own backed by a kingdom, which would have attracted other adventurers to his side, Babur had little chance of success against the Uzbeks who had an able and experienced leader in the person of Shaibani Khan. It does not seem that Babur fully understood the real weakness of his position.

Shaibani Khan counter-attacked from Bukhara. In a bold effort, Babur came out from the city in the open to face him. However, at Sar-i-Pul, Shaibani Khan inflicted a sharp defeat on Babur (1502). It was in this battle that Shaibani Khan used the wheeling tactics or *tulghuma*, a well known Uzbek devise which Babur was to use against Ibrahim Lodi twenty-five years later. Babur retreated into Samarqand, but seeing no help from any quarter, and with starvation beginning in the town, and his own begs slipping away in ones and twos, Babur had no option but to make, what he says, "a sort of peace" with Shaibani Khan. Although

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Babur does not say so, one of the terms of the peace was the marriage of Babur's elder sister, Khanazad Begum, to Shaibani Khan. But this marriage hardly healed the breach between Shaibani Khan and Babur, or with the Timurids. In fact, Shaibani Khan applied continuous pressure against the remaining Timurid states in the region.

Babur was again without a kingdom. In the process, he had to suffer, as he says, "great poverty and humiliation". It was now that the Mongol Khans finally awoke to the danger posed to them by the growing Uzbek power. Hence, with a large army they marched from Tashkent towards Farghana to counter Shaibani Khan. Like Babur earlier, the Mongol Khans had hoped that the Timurid princes would help them to deal with the rising Uzbek danger. Moving quickly to forestall any such combination of forces, Shaibani Khan met the Khans with 30,000 horses near Archian. In one of the greatest battles ever fought between the Mongols and the Turks, the Mongol forces were utterly routed (1503), and both the Mongol Khans taken captive. Shaibani Khan now played a master stroke. He spared the lives of the Khans, and legitimized his position by entering into matrimonial relations with them. Simultaneously, he admitted about 30,000 Mongols into the Uzbek army.

The victories of Sar-i-Pul and Archian established the Uzbek supremacy in Transoxiana against both the Timurids and the Mongols. Babur also realized that his position in the region was now impossible.

Hence, in a bold move, crossing the Hindukush mountains in winter, Babur attacked and conquered Kabul (1504) and Ghazni. The importance of Kabul was fully understood by Babur and his kinsmen and begs who now rallied to him in large numbers. Kabul not only provided Babur with a breathing space from Uzbek attacks, but as a modern writer, Rushbrooke Williams says, "master of that country (he) could turn his eyes west to Samarqand, or east to Hindustan." In his Memoirs Babur says,

Kabul is the intermediate point between Hindustan and Khurasan". In 1506, he journeyed to Herat at the invitation of his uncle, Sultan Husain Baiqara, who wanted him to join in a joint expedition against the Uzbeks, the latter having occupied Khawarazm, a possession of Sultan Husain Baiqara. But the Sultan died just then, and Babur returned to Kabul, realizing that the sons of Sultan Hussain were both incompetent and not serious in fighting the Uzbeks.

As it was, Shaibani Khan also realized this. He soon over-ran Herat, thus extinguishing the last Timurid kingdom in the area. Babur was now afraid of an Uzbek attack on Kabul itself. To raise the morale of his followers, in 1506 he decided that all his followers call him 'Padshah'. This was also to demonstrate that the Timurid dynasty was not dead, thereby claiming the allegiance of all those Chaghtai and Mughal tribesmen, princes and begs who felt a sense of loyalty to the Timurids. However, this was not such an innovative step as it has been made out to be. The use of the word "Padshah" was common currency in Central Asia at the time. In his Memoirs, Babur himself shows that in the period following his conquest of Samarqand, on many occasions his followers called him "Padshah." It was at this time that the Uzbeks suffered their first serious reverse. Conscious that the Uzbek conquest of Khurasan would pose a danger to the position of the Safavids in Iran, Shah Ismail Safavi marched against Shaibani Khan. In the battle near Merv (1508), the Uzbek forces were routed, and Shaibani Khan himself was found dead in a heap of corpses. The Persian Sultan, whom Shaibani Khan had earlier insulted by calling him a begging mendicant (dervish) — an allusion to his ancestry from Sufi saints, revenged himself by ordering Shaibani Khan's skull to be set in gold and made into a drinking cup!

It was this debacle of the Uzbeks which tempted Babur once again to try his luck at Samarqand. Arriving at the Amu-Darya (Oxus), Babur defeated the Uzbeks in a sharp encounter, but felt that he was still not strong enough to expel them from Transoxiana. He, therefore, sent an embassy to Shah Ismail. The Shah had already shown his good-will by escorting back with honour Babur's sister, Khanazad Begum who, after the death of Shaibani Khan and her second husband, had fallen into the hands of the Persians.

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Although the Shah had earlier entered into an agreement with the Uzbeks by which the river Oxus was fixed as the boundary between them, he had no qualms in assisting the Timurids in expelling the Uzbeks from Transoxiana. Apparently, he hoped that in this way any potential threat from the side of the Uzbeks would be effectively removed. As a price of his assistance, he demanded that Babur substitute the Shah's name in the khutba, stamp coins in the Shah's name in his dominions. These, however, were to be applied only in the territories conquered with the help of the Persian, for Babur was permitted to issue coins (sik-ka) in his own name in Afghanistan, and in his hereditary dominion, Farghana.

Babur accepted these conditions. With the help of a Persian army, he conquered Bukhara and then Samarqand where he was welcomed by the begs and the people. In order to assert his independence, after the fall of Bukhara Babur sent back the Persian army. However, the Persian ruler was determined to treat Babur as a subordinate ruler. Babur chafed at the intervention of the Persian agent at Samarqand in day to day affairs. Both the Persian rulers and the local population were convinced that at the first suitable opportunity, Babur would repudiate the khutba and sikka demanded by the Shah, and declare himself independent.' Conscious of the Uzbek danger, Babur tried to maintain friendship with the Shah for the time being by wearing the Persian dress of the Kizilbash, much to the annoyance of the local population. However, he refused to permit the persecution of the Sunni theologians for their beliefs.

Muhammad Jan Ishaq, the Shah's chamberlain, who was the Iranian agent at Samarqand, secretly informed the Shah that Babur was contemplating rebellion. In anger, the Shah sent a Persian army to punish him. But before the Persian army could reach Samarqand, the Uzbeks rallied, captured Bukhara, and defeated Babur in a sharp battle fought near it. Faced with a sullen population, Babur had to abandon Samarqand, and fall back on Hisar on the Amu Darya. The exulting Uzbeks now encountered and defeated the advancing Persian army under Najm-i-Sani which had been sent to punish Babur, but had been forced to succour him. Babur was with the Persian forces, but seems to have stood aloof. Thus, the Amu Darya once again became the boundary between Persia and the Uzbeks.

Mirza Haider Dughlat, a prominent noble, and the author of *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, reflects this, by saying, "Although in the hour of necessity, the Emperor had put on the garments of the Kizilbash (i.e. Shias) which was pure heresy, nay almost unbelief, the people sincerely hoped that when he mounted the throne of Samarqand, and place on his head the diadem of the Sunna of Muhammad, he would remove from it the insignia of the Shah."

Babur had no option but to withdraw from Transoxiana, and he returned to Kabul after a gap of almost three years. The third and last foray of Babur into Samarqand hardly gives him any credit. Babur grossly overestimated his own strength and ability to retain Samarqand, much less conquer the rest of Transoxiana without the active aid and support of the Persian armies. In the process, he compromised his principles, and saddled himself with a treaty which he could neither implement nor repudiate.

Similarly, the Persians grossly underestimated the strength of the Uzbeks, and their capacity to recoup. It was this which made Shah Ismail treat Babur as a cat's paw against the Uzbeks who could be easily removed once he had served the purpose of dislodging the Uzbeks from Transoxiana. It were these wrong perceptions and contradictions on both the sides, rather than the Shia-Sunni strife (which was real, but was a subordinate factor), which foredoomed Babur's last Samarqand enterprise. The only positive outcome of the expedition was that Babur was finally forced to turn his attention to India. Second, that it laid the foundation of Timurid-Safavids cooperation against the Uzbeks, disregarding sectarian differences.



The dream of conquering India had never been far from Babur's mind. While he was wandering in Transoxiana without a kingdom, his imagination had been fired by hearing tales about Timur's exploits in India, and he had decided to recover the areas in the Punjab ceded to Timur and held by his descendants for long. Babur says that from the time he conquered Kabul (1504), to his victory at Panipat, "I had never ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan." He says that almost immediately after his conquest of Kabul, in 1505, he made a move on Hindustan, reaching the district of Ningnahr (where modern Jalalabad is located), and made another expedition the following year. These, however, were more in the nature of forays to extract revenue from the outlying Afghan tribes, and to assert Babur's control over them, rather than preparations for the invasion of India. As we have seen, till the failure of his third and last expedition to Samarqand (1514), Babur was more concerned with Central Asia than India. His statement that he could not undertake the conquest of India earlier, "hindered as I was sometimes by the apprehensions of my begs, sometimes by the disagreements between my brothers and myself," is only a partial explanation. Babur's moves against Punjab and India after his Samarqand misadventure were also prompted by changes in the political situation in India, the revival of the power of the Uzbeks, and Babur's growing financial difficulties. The income from Kabul had never been sufficient to meet the requirements of Babur's begs and kinsmen.

The main income from Kabul was the tamgha or cess on imports and exports. Most of the countryside was ruined, and the only way to get anything from the war-like tribes was to carry out plundering expeditions against them to which Babur had to resort to. The situation was worsened by the fact that after Babur's expulsion from Transoxiana, many Turkish and Mongol tribes (aimaq) had crossed over and sought service under Babur. Babur could not afford to turn them away, because in 1514, at the battle at Chaldiran, Shah Ismail Safavi had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Ottoman ruler. This had emboldened the Uzbeks to renew their incursions into Khurasan. Afraid of a renewed Uzbek threat to Kabul, Babur besieged and after repeated failures, finally conquered Qandahar (1522). He also established his control over Badakhshan. But all these required the maintenance of a large army. His financial plight is brought out by the historian, Abul Fazl, who says: "He (Babur) ruled over Badakhshan, Qandahar and Kabul which did not yield sufficient income for the requirements of the army; in fact in some of the border territories the expense of controlling the armies and administration was greater than the income."

In 1518, Babur had invested and conquered the fortress of Bajaur, and then gone on to capture Bhira which was on the river Jhelum, a little beyond the Salt Ranges. After the river Indus, these formed traditionally the defensive frontier of India. Babur claimed these areas as his own because they had been a part of Timur's empire. Hence, "picturing as our own the countries once occupied by the Turks", he ordered that "there was to be no over-running or plundering (of the countryside)". It may be noted that this applied only to areas which did not offer resistance, because earlier, at Bajaur, where the Afghan tribesmen had resisted, he had ordered a general massacre, with their women and children being made captive.

The Bajaur expedition marks the beginning of Babur's efforts to conquer Punjab, or India if the opportunity offered. Babur himself says, "From this time to 925H. (1526), I was always actively concerned in the affairs of Hindustan. I went there in person at the head of an army, five times in the course of seven or eight years," The fifth was the expedition against Ibrahim Lodi.

Although Babur asserts that from the beginning his desire was to conquer India, it is apparent that his ambitions expanded gradually. At first, his objective was merely to conquer those parts of the Punjab to which he laid a hereditary claim. Thus, after the Bhira expedition, he sent an envoy to Ibrahim Lodi asking him to cede to him the areas which had belonged to Timur. There was little chance of Ibrahim Lodi accepting such a proposal. As it was, the governor of Lahore, Daulat Khan Lodi, whose jurisdiction included Bajaur and Bhira, did not allow Babur's envoy to proceed to Delhi but detained him at Lahore.

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As soon as Babur returned to Kabul, Daulat Khan Lodi proceeded to expel Hindu Beg and the other officers whom Babur had appointed over the areas he claimed.

In the following years, Babur made several incursions into the tribal areas of the North-West, and the Punjab. In 1520, he recaptured Bhira and advanced upto Sialkot, but had to return to Kabul following an attack from the rulers of Qandahar who were allied with Iran. As we have seen, he captured Qandahar and Badakhshan in the following years. By 1524, he had consolidated his position in Afghanistan quite firmly. He was now ready to engage in the struggle for the mastery of Punjab, even if it meant a struggle with Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler at Delhi. Thus, the stakes had risen higher, and it seemed that the stage had been set for a struggle not only for the Punjab, but for the mastery of north India.

Babur justifies this massacre by saying “the Bajauris were rebels and at enmity with the people of Islam, and as, by heathenish and hostile customs prevailing in their midst, the very name of Islam was rooted out...” But as Rushbrooke Williams says, the purpose of Babur’s use of terror was that the Afghan tribes which lay across his path “should be taught a lesson of the only kind they could appreciate.”

There is a confusion among historians regarding these five expeditions. Abul Fazl included the expeditions of 1505 and 1508 among these, while Firishta considers the Bajaur-Bhira expedition to be the first.

## UNIT-XV

# STRUGGLE FOR EMPIRE-AFGHANS, RAJPUTS AND THE MUGHALS

### AFGHANS, RAJPUTS AND MUGHALS

In the period between 1517 and 1519, two apparently unconnected events took place which profoundly affected the history of India. The first of these was the death of the Afghan ruler, Sikandar Lodi, at Agra towards the end of 1517 and the succession of Ibrahim Lodi. The second was the conquest of Bajaur and Bhira, by Babur in the frontier tract of north-west Punjab in the beginning of 1519. The death of Sikandar Lodi gave an opportunity to the Afghan nobles, many of whom still had strong tribal affiliations, to try to regain some of the power and influence they had lost under his strict rule. The nobles first proposed the partition of the empire between Ibrahim Lodi, the eldest son of Sikandar Lodi, and his younger brother, Jalal, with the latter being assigned the eastern part of the empire consisting of the territories comprising the former Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. Ibrahim Lodi reluctantly agreed to the partition, but took steps to undo it as soon as he assumed the crown. Jalal was captured, and killed soon after. However, these events created a wall of suspicion between the young Sultan and the older nobility. Harsh punishments meted out to them by the Sultan only led to further distrust and disaffection. There were a series of rebellions in east U.P. and Bihar in which not only a rival Lodi claimant to the throne was put up, but a noble, Darya Khan Nuhani who was the governor of Bihar, proclaimed himself as king. Another Lodi scion repaired to the camp of Rana Sanga. Rana Sanga had established his control over eastern Malwa, and was in competition with the Lodis for control over eastern Rajasthan and the rest of Malwa. At the battle of Ghatoli between the Lodis and Rana Sanga, a number of leading Afghan sardars had crossed over to the side of the Rana. Another claimant to the throne, Alam Khan, the son of Bahlol Lodi, was being supported by the ruler of Gujarat. Some Afghan nobles had proclaimed him king, under the title of Alauddin.

Ibrahim Lodi was young and energetic. Although lacking in tact in dealing with old, well-established nobles, he would, in all probability, have been able to establish his control over the Afghan nobles, and overcome the Afghan tendency of each powerful leader considering himself a junior partner in the kingdom rather than the servant of the ruler. A drastic change came about with the appearance of Babur on the scene. As we have seen, in 1519 Babur captured the forts of Bajaur and Bhira, the latter being situated on the river Jhelum. He put forward a vague claim that the areas which had once belonged to Timur be surrendered to him, and despatched an envoy to Ibrahim Lodi for the purpose.

The governor of Lahore at that time was Daulat Khan Lodi, an old noble whose father had supported Bahlol Lodi, and whose family had dominated Punjab for 25 years. Daulat Khan treated Babur's envoy with contempt, neither giving him an interview nor allowing him to proceed to Ibrahim Lodi's court. He dismissed Babur's envoy when Babur returned to Kabul. He also expelled Babur's officials from Bhira. In 1519-20, Babur recovered Bhira, and advanced to Sialkot which was considered one of the gates of India. However, before he could advance further, he received news of an invasion of his territories by the ruler of Qandahar, and returned to Kabul. But his appearance at Sialkot was rightly regarded as a declaration of Babur's intention of expanding his empire over the entire Punjab. This led to a flurry of diplomatic activity. Daulat Khan Lodi, who was in arrears in settling the accounts of his charge with Ibrahim Lodi, and was apprehensive of action against him by the young Sultan, sent his son, Dilawar Khan, to Babur at Kabul in 1521-22. He invited Babur to invade India since, he said, the ruler, Ibrahim Lodi, was a tyrant, and had maltreated Sikandar's nobles and killed twenty-five of them without cause.

He asserted that he had been sent to Babur by many nobles who were ready to obey, and for whose coming they were on the watch anxiously. Alam Khan Lodi, despairing of success against Ibrahim Lodi, also visited Kabul. It seems that it was at this time that Babur also received an envoy from Rana Sanga who, according to Babur, proposed that while Babur attacked Delhi, he (Sanga) would attack Agra.

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While Babur needed no invitation to attack India, the arrival of these envoys convinced him that the situation was ripe for undertaking the conquest of India. The motives of the various elements which invited Babur to invade India can only be guessed at. They apparently expected Babur to withdraw, like Timur, after setting up a titular ruler at Delhi who would be weak and would depend on him. They hoped this would enable them to continue to rule as before, and extend their control over the areas they coveted. Daulat Khan Lodi's predominant motive was to maintain his hold over the Punjab, ceding to Babur some of the areas which Babur considered his own.

However, events showed Daulat Khan Lodi to be totally lacking in realism. Babur expanded his claims and ambitions as his position became stronger. He was no longer content with a part of the Punjab but wanted the whole of it. This inevitably entailed a struggle to the death with Ibrahim Lodi who was not prepared to surrender Punjab to Babur. Thus, the struggle for Punjab expanded to a struggle for the mastery of north India.

Daulat Khan Lodi, who had invited Babur, could not see the logic of the situation. Nor could he see that in this struggle, he could only be the sacrificial goat. His sons realised this and chose their sides: Dilawar Khan joined Babur, and Ghazi Khan opposed him. Daulat Khan kept oscillating between support and opposition to Babur, and came to a bad end.

## **STRUGGLE BETWEEN IBRAHIM LODI AND BABUR**

The battle of Panipat (20 April, 1526) between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur was not a sudden development, but was the culmination of the struggle between the two which had started earlier. Learning of the intrigues of some of the Afghan nobles at Kabul, Ibrahim Lodi sent a large army towards the Punjab under Bahar Khan to reduce Daulat Khan and his sons to obedience, and to repel any foreign invasion. The imperial forces drove away Daulat Khan Lodi from Lahore, and occupied it. However, before they could consolidate their position, Babur entered India again and, early in 1524, he appeared before Lahore. The Lodi forces came out of the city and gave a good fight, but were routed. In retaliation, Babur burnt the city for two days, and then marched to Dipalpur where he received Alam Khan and Daulat Khan Lodi. Babur ignored the claims of Daulat Khan for Lahore, and posted his own men at Sialkot, Lahore and Kalanaur before returning to Kabul. He assigned Dipalpur to Alam Khan. However, Ibrahim Lodi ousted Alam Khan from Dipalpur. Alam Khan now fled to Kabul, and asked for further help which was promised to him. It was agreed that while he should take Ibrahim's place on the throne of Delhi, Babur in full suzerainty would hold Lahore and all the areas to the west of it.

Thus, Babur threw a spanner among the Afghans. Alam Khan was furnished with a body of troops, and was given a royal order to the Mughal begs at Lahore to assist him. Babur promised to follow swiftly. However, on reaching Lahore, Alam Khan found that the begs were reluctant to support him. He was also approached by Daulat Khan Lodi. Hence, he withdrew from the alliance with Babur. Alam Khan and Daulat Lodi collect a force of 30,000 to 40,000 men and besieged Delhi. But Ibrahim Lodi defeated and dispersed their forces. He also sent an army towards Lahore, but it was not effective.

It is clear that an open fight between Ibrahim Lodi and Babur was now inescapable. Ibrahim Lodi was clearly not willing to leave Punjab to Babur, conscious that would enable Babur to prepare a base for future advance to the Gangetic valley, as in the case of the Ghurids earlier. Babur had also thrown a challenge to Ibrahim Lodi by espousing the cause of a rival claimant, Alam Khan. However, Babur's success was by no means assured. If Daulat Khan Lodi had thrown in his lot with Ibrahim Lodi even at this late stage, Babur's position would have become very difficult. In preparation of this conflict, Babur had consolidated his position in Afghanistan by capturing Balkh from the Uzbeks. He had also captured Qandahar. Thus, having secured his rear and flank, in November 1525, Babur marched from Kabul for the conquest of Hindustan. After a delay caused by Humayun's tardiness in coming from Badakhshan, the Indus was crossed by the middle of December. According to Babur, the strength of his forces at the time "great and small, good and bad, retainer and non-retainer" was 12,000. Marching by way of Sialkot which yielded to him without opposition, Babur reached Lahore which was being besieged by Daulat



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Khan Lodi and his son, Ghazi Khan. Daulat Khan had girt two swords to his waist, to fight both Babur and Ibrahim Lodi. He had collected 30,000 to 40,000 men for the purpose. However, at Babur's approach, his army melted away. Ghazi Khan fled to the hills while Daulat Khan surrendered to Babur who imprisoned him and sent him to Bhira. But he died on the way. Thus, all that Daulat Khan achieved was to facilitate Babur's entry into Punjab.

Having conquered Punjab in a span of three weeks after crossing the Indus, Babur moved slowly towards Delhi, sending out reconnoitring parties in every direction to learn the movements of Ibrahim Lodi. Ibrahim Lodi made no move to contest Babur's position in Punjab, waiting upon him to make the next move. The first skirmish took place between Humayun and Hamid Khan, the shiqdar of Hisar-Firuz, who had moved towards Babur with a small army. Humayun worsted him and brought with him as many as 100 prisoners, and 7 to 5 elephants. Babur says that the matchlockmen were ordered to shoot all the prisoners "by way of example." A little later, Babur learnt that Ibrahim was advancing leisurely, marching two or four miles, and stopping at each camp for two to three days.

The two sides came together near Panipat. Considering that Ibrahim Lodi's army was much larger than his own, and in order to avoid being surrounded by it, Babur chose the ground carefully. He protected his right by resting it on the city of Panipat, and on the left, dug a ditch with branches of felled trees so that the cavalry could not cross it. In front, he put together 700 carts, some from his baggage train, and some procured locally. These carts were joined together by ropes of raw hide, and between every two carts short breastworks were put up behind which matchlockmen could stand and fire. Babur calls this method of stringing carts the Ottomaa (Rumi) devise because, along with cannons it had been used by the Ottoman Sultan in the famous battle with Shah Ismail of Iran at Chaldiran in 1514. But Babur added a new feature. At a bow shot apart, gaps were left, wide enough for fifty or hundred horses to charge abreast.

This was a very strong defensive as well as offensive arrangement. One of Babur's begs observed "With such precautions taken, how is it possible for him (Ibrahim) to come?" Babur replied that it was wrong to liken Ibrahim to the Uzbek Khans and Sultans, for he had no experience of movement under arms, or of planned operations. In fact, Babur had a very poor opinion of Ibrahim Lodi as a strategist. He says, "he was an unproved (i.e. inexperienced) brave; he provided nothing for his military operations, he perfected nothing, nor (knew how to) stand, nor move, nor fight."

The battle which was followed proved to be a triumph of generalship over numbers. Babur's army of 12,000 may have been swelled by a number of Afghans and Hindustanis joining his army. Babur placed Ibrahim's army at 100,000 and 1000 elephants. This must have included the large number of servants and other non-combatants who accompanied Indian armies. According to Afghan sources, the effective strength of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat was only 50,000. Even then it was much larger than Babur's. Apparently, Ibrahim Lodi had not carefully studied Babur's defensive formation even though the two armies stood face to face for almost a week, and daily skirmishes went on. When Ibrahim Lodi came out to fight on the fateful day, he found that Babur's front was too narrow. He hesitated, and while he was trying to adjust his armies to the narrow front, Babur seized the opportunity. He sent his two flanking parties (tulghuma) to wheel around in the Uzbek fashion, and attack Ibrahim's army from the side and rear. From the front, Babur's cavalymen shot off arrows, and his matchlockmen poured a deadly fire on the huddled mass of Afghans. Babur had earlier hired two Ottoman gunners, Ustad Ali and Mustafa, and appointed Ustad Ali as master of ordnance. Babur says that Ustad Ali and Mustafa made good discharge of field cannons from the centre. However, in those days, the rate of firing of field cannons was painfully slow. Babur was primarily a cavalryman, and he makes his victory at Panipat primarily a victory of cavalry and bowmen. Surrounded from all sides, Ibrahim Lodi fought on bravely, along with a group of 5000-6000 people around him. All of them died fighting along with him. Babur paid a tribute to his bravery by burying him on the spot with honour. It is estimated that beside these, more than 15,000 men were killed in the battle. Vikramajit, the ruler of Gwaliyar, was among those who died fighting in the battle.

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The battle of Panipat was undoubtedly one of the decisive battles of Indian history. Its political significance, however, needs to be assessed carefully. It smashed the power of the Lodis, and opened up the entire territory upto Jaunpur to Babur's control. The rich treasures stored by the Lodi Sultans at Agra relieved Babur of his financial difficulties. However, Babur had to wage two hard-fought battles, one against Rana Sanga of Mewar, and the other against the eastern Afghans before he could consolidate his position. Thus, politically the battle of Panipat was not as decisive as it was militarily. However, it marks a new phase in the struggle for the establishment of a hegemonic political power in north India.

## **BABUR'S PROBLEMS AFTER THE BATTLE OF PANIPAT**

Babur had many serious problems to face after his victory at Panipat. His first concern was to seize the rich treasures hoarded by the Lodis at Delhi and Agra. He sent parties to ride fast and light to occupy Delhi and Agra, and mount guard over the treasures located there. Humayun headed the party sent to Agra. After having the khutba read in his name at Delhi, Babur also reached Agra. His first act after seizing the treasures hoarded there was to make lavish gifts to Humayun and his brothers. Some of his begs were given 10 lakh tankas, others 8 or 7 or 6 lakhs. Suitable money-gifts were bestowed on the whole army, the various tribesmen — Afghan, Hazara, Arab and Biluch, and even to the traders, students and others who had come with the army. His relations in Samarqand and Khurasan, and holy men as far afield as Mecca and Medina received valuable gifts. A silver coin (shahrukhi) was given to, every soul—men, women, children, bond or freemen in Kabul and the Badakhshan valley. This generosity was a part of Babur's character, and also a part of his philosophy. He believed that Ibrahim Lodi could not keep his nobles on his side because he was miserly, and more concerned with collecting a treasure.

However, the immediate result of these lavish gifts was contrary to what Babur might have expected. Many of his begs and army men thought that their struggles had been amply rewarded, and it was time to return home! As it was, they found little in India to attract them. Babur says, there was "remarkable dislike and hostility" between the people near Agra and his men. Apparently, the memories of Timur's sacking and plundering were still fresh in their minds. Worse, every fortified town strengthened its defences, and would neither obey nor submit. Thus, the areas from Etawah and Sambhal to Bayana, Me-wat, Dholpur, Gwalior etc. came under the control of their local commanders. Nor were the Afghans cowed down. The entire area from Kannauj to the east was held by Afghans who had proclaimed Muhammad Khan as their king.

At Agra, neither grains for human beings, nor corn for the horses was available since the inhabitant's had run away. The villagers had taken to thieving and highway robbery so that there was no moving on the roads. Worse, the hot season was on, to which neither his men nor his begs were accustomed. Hence, "masses began to die off."

Finally, his begs found India to be a foreign land in every respect. Neither (baked) bread, nor the hamams (public baths), or social intercourse of the type they were accustomed to were available in India. As Babur says, "once the water of Sind is crossed, everything is in the Hindustan way: land, water, tree, rock, people and horde, opinion and custom." In this situation, the greater part of Babur's begs wanted to have nothing to do with India.

Babur took firm steps to quell this discontent. He called a Council, and roundly declared that they had not endured the hardships for years, deadly slaughter in battle to abandon without cause the countries taken. He refused to return to Kabul, "the spot of harsh poverty," and sternly forbade his well-wishers to raise the matter again. However, he permitted those who were determined to leave to do so. Ultimately, only one of his leading begs, Khwaja Kalan, a favourite of Babur, left for Kabul. To save appearances, he was asked to look after Kabul and Ghazni, and a pargana in the Punjab was also assigned to him for his expenses.

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This cleared the air. Babur now took steps to bring the country upto Jaunpur under his control. Unconquered areas were assigned to individual begs who were asked to exert themselves to bring them under imperial control. This was the only way in which they could find money for the expenses of their forces, the hoarded treasure having been emptied out.

However, the two biggest dangers Babur faced was, first, from the side of Rana Sanga and second, from the eastern Afghans. Babur was a little uncertain which of these to tackle first. In a Council, it was felt that the Afghans represented the bigger danger. They had taken Kannauj with 40,000 to 50,000 men, and were two to three miles this side of the river Ganga. Although Rana Sanga has captured the powerful fort of Qandahar near Ranthambhor, he was still far away. Hence, Humayun was sent with an army to the east against the Afghans, while Babur remained at Agra. Babur soon had to drastically revise his plans. We have traced in an earlier volume the gradual rise of Rana Sanga, and his conflict with Ibrahim Lodi for the control of Malwa and eastern Rajasthan. It was this conflict which was the cause of the negotiations between Sanga and Babur for collusion against Ibrahim Lodi. As we have noted, perhaps the negotiations were started soon after Babur's advent into Bajaur and Bhira in 1519. The lead in these negotiations seems to have been taken by Sanga who had greater reason than Babur to fear the gradual consolidation of Ibrahim's power, once he had overcome the opposition of his nobles. Babur accuses the Rana of breach of agreement for he had invited him to attack Ibrahim Lodi, and proposed "If the honoured Padshah will come to near Delhi from that side, I from this side will move on Agra." While Babur beat Ibrahim, and took Delhi and Agra, Rana Sanga made no move.

It is not clear that what Sanga had proposed was only a joint military expedition, or a partitioning of the Lodi empire between the two. If the latter, and Sanga's desire was to seize Agra, why did he not move? In the absence of any concrete information, we can only speculate. Perhaps, Sanga had visualized a long drawn out tussle between Babur and Ibrahim Lodi, during which he (Sanga) would be able to seize the areas he coveted. Or, Sanga may have imagined that like Timur, Babur would withdraw once he had seized the treasures of Delhi and Agra. But the entire context charted once he realized that Babur intended to stay in India and establish a new empire. Such an empire, from Sanga's point of view, was an even bigger danger for him than the Lodis. Hence, after the battle of Panipat, Sanga began to make efforts to gather together a grand coalition which would either compel Babur to leave India, or confine him to Punjab.

By early 1527, Sanga's preparations had been more or less completed, and Babur began to hear reports of his advance towards Agra. Hence, Babur hastily recalled Humayun from the east, and sent detachments for the conquest of Dholpur, Gwaliyar and Bayana. These powerful forts, which formed the outer bastion of Agra, and also guarded the routes to Malwa and Eastern Rajasthan, were under the control of independent Muslim commanders. Hearing of Sanga's advance, the commanders of Dholpur and Gwaliyar accepted the generous terms offered by Babur, and surrendered the forts to him. However, Nizam Khan, the commander of Bayana, opened negotiations with both sides. In an effort to forestall the Rana, Babur sent a detachment to Bayana which was defeated and scattered by the Rana's forces. Babur's forces was already demoralized, hearing news of the valour of the Rajputs, and the formidable force he had collected.

This set back further disheartened them. According to Babur, the Rana had a force of over 2 lakhs. Although these figures may be exaggerated, the forces under the command of Rana were certainly far larger than those commanded by Babur.

It is hardly necessary to describe in detail the battle between Babur and Rana Sanga at Khanua, near Fatehpur-Sikri, on 16 March, 1527. However, there are some aspects of the battle which need to be clarified. The Rana was joined by almost all the leading Rajput Rajas from Rajasthan — such as Harauti, Jalor, Sirohi and Dungarpur from South and West Rajasthan, and Dhundhar and Amber from the east. Rao Ganga of Mewar did not join himself, but sent a contingent under Raimal and Ratan Singh of Merta. Rao Medini Rao of Chanderi in Malwa also joined, including Mahmud Lodi, the younger son of Sikandar

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Lodi, whom the Afghans had proclaimed their Sultan. Although he had no fief, a force of 10,000 Afghans had collected under him. Hasan Khan Mewati, who was the virtual ruler of Mewat, had also joined with a force of 12,000. Babur denounces the Afghans who opposed him as kafirs and mulhids (i.e those who had apostasized from Islam). This shows that these words were often used in a political as well as a religious sense.

Thus, Sanga represented a Rajput-Afghan alliance, the proclaimed objective of which was to expel Babur, and to restore the Lodi empire. Hence, the battle at Khanua can hardly be seen as a religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims, or even as a Rajput bid to establish a Rajput hegemony over North India.

However, it was Babur who tried to give a religious colour to the conflict in order to raise the flagging spirit of his soldiers. Addressing the officers and men on the eve of the battle, he tried to fire their military ardour, and also tried to use their religious susceptibilities by declaring the war against the Rana to be a jihad or holy war. The begs and the men were made to swear on the Quran that they would not turn away from the battle but fight to the last. To emphasize that he was a good Muslim, Babur also renounced wine, breaking flasks of choice Ghazni wine. He also promised to remit the tamgha (toll) on all Muslims if he gained a victory over the Rana. Finally, he declared that after the war, whoever wanted to return to Kabul would be permitted to do so. Thus, Babur was able to infuse a new spirit into his men. It was only logical that after the battle Babur assumed the title of ghazi.

Before the battle, Babur had carefully inspected the site. As at Panipat, he strengthened his front by getting constructed carts which were fastened by iron chains (not leather straps as at Panipat) in the Ottoman fashion. These were meant to provide shelter to the artillery and the horses. Gaps were kept between carts for the horses to charge at an opportune moment. To lengthen the line, ropes of raw hide were stretched on wheeled tripods of wood. Behind these tripods, matchlockmen could fire and advance. The sides were protected by ditches. Along with the usual array of forces, contingents were set apart on the left and front for the flanking (tulghuma) tactics. Thus, he prepared a strong defensive-offensive formation.

It does not seem that Sanga had learnt anything from the tactics adopted at Panipat by Babur. He was proud of his elephants and swordsmen and, in the usual fashion, delivered a furious attack on Babur's right. He would have broken through but for timely reinforcements despatched by Babur. Once the advance of the Rajputs and their Afghan allies had been contained, Babur's wheeling parties came into play. The carts and matchlockmen were also ordered to advance. The Rana and his allies were hemmed in. Despite gallant resistance, the Rana suffered a disastrous defeat.

It was demonstrated once again that mere bravery was not sufficient to counter superior generalship and organization. As Babur observed: "Swordsmen though some Hindustanis may be, most of them are ignorant and unskilled in military move and stand, in soldierly counsel and procedure." This statement, though made in the context of Afghans, is equally applicable to the Rajputs. Sanga escaped to Chittor but the grand alliance he had built collapsed as quickly as it had been built. As Rushbrooke Williams says, "The powerful confederacy which depended so largely for its unity upon the strength and reputation of Me war, was shattered by a single defeat and ceased henceforth to be a dominant factor in the politics of Hindustan."

After his victory, Babur thought of marching to Chittor, but gave it up on account of heat and lack of water on the way. He then marched on Mewat whose ruler, Hasan Khan, had sided with Rana Sanga. Although earlier, Babur had been prepared not to disturb Hasan Khan whose family had ruled over Mewat for a hundred years, as a punishment most of the country, including its two capitals, Tijara and Alwar, were annexed, but parganas worth several lakhs were bestowed on Nahar Khan, the son of Hasan Khan. Babur then returned to Agra.

Khanua completed to battle of Panipat, and Babur's position in the Gangetic doab was made largely secure. However, as a successor of the Lodis, Babur soon began to cast his eyes on Malwa. Babur also



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wanted to isolate Rana Sanga who was reputed to have begun war-like preparations in order to renew the conflict with Babur, and had advanced on Irij. Leaving Agra early in December 1527, and marching by unfrequented ways, Babur reached Chanderi whose chief, Medini Rao, had been a close ally of Sanga. Babur offered to Medini Rao Shamsabad in exchange of Chanderi. But Medini Rao spurned the offer, and preferred to die fighting, after performing the fearful jauhar ceremonial. However, we are told that two of Medini Rao's daughters fell in Babur's hands, and he gave them to Humayun and Kamran. Interestingly, Babur declared the siege of Chanderi also to be a jihad. In both places, Khanua and Chanderi, he ordered towers of pagan skulls to be erected. This was a practice adopted by Timur against his opponents, irrespective of religious beliefs.

After Chanderi, Babur had plans of campaigning against Raisin, Bhilsa and Sarangpur. He also wanted to march against Rana Sanga in Chittor, not knowing that the Rana had died earlier (30 January 1528), apparently poisoned by his own sardars who considered his plans to renew conflict with Babur to be suicidal. Meanwhile, Babur was receiving alarming news about the activities of the Afghans in east U.P. Hence, he gave up plans for further campaigns in Malwa and -Rajasthah, and, in February, 1528, started his return journey.

## **PROBLEMS OF THE EASTERN AREAS AND THE AFGHANS**

Although the Afghans had been defeated, they had neither reconciled themselves to Mughal rule, nor were they prepared to give up the idea of Afghan suzerainty. The Afghans formed a large segment among the Muslims of India, and were spread over not only in the towns but the countryside in different regions. They were particularly strong and numerous in the eastern parts of modern U.P., and Bihar. They were a martial people, and could quickly organize themselves into a military force under a good leader. Their close contact with the people of the country at various levels, including the local Hindu rajas, had given them a wide base of support. However, their mutual differences, often on a tribal basis, as also their allergy to obeying a single commander were sources of weakness.

After Panipat, Babur was face to face with the problem of dealing with the powerful body of Afghans in the country. In order to understand Babur's policy towards the Afghans, four aspects need to be kept in mind. First, there were the Afghan iqtadars or commanders of forts, towns and the countryside. They assumed full control of the forts and the surrounding areas after the fall of Ibrahim Lodi. Babur adopted a policy of force and conciliation towards them. Military forces were despatched to oust them from the forts, especially those located in the doab, or the neighbourhood of Agra. These included areas such as Etawah, Rapri, Kalpi etc. as also forts such as Dholpur, Bayana, Gwaliyar etc. Simultaneously, terms were offered to many of them to vacate the places they held by offering them other parganas in grant. An effort was made to win over some of the leading Afghan nobles of Ibrahim Lodi. These included Shaikh Bayazid, younger brother of Mustafa Farmuli, of Awadh, and a number of others who had fought the rebel Afghans of East U.P. during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi. Even Biban who later led the rebel Afghans of east U.P., submitted to Babur at first. There were others, such as Fath Khan Sarwani, son of Azam Humayun, who was given the title of Khan-i-Jahan. He was bestowed a turban, a full (saropa) dress of Babur's own wearing, and allowed to go to his own pargana. To demonstrate that he had no rancour against Ibrahim Lodi's family, Babur even gave parganas worth seven lakhs, and a place to live to Ibrahim Lodi's mother. However, she tried to poison him. This increased Babur's dis-trust of the Afghan nobles. A little before the battle of Khanua, the Hindustani (i.e. Afghan) armies were sent to this side or that "as little confidence was placed in Hindustani people". As it was, Shaikh Bayazid, who had been awarded parganas worth almost a crore had a half tankas in Awadh, defected to the Afghan rebels of the area. A few other Afghans behaved likewise, although it would be wrong to think that this was the case with all of them. Some of the Afghans such as Ahmad Khan Nizai stuck to Babur, even though the general opinion was decidedly hostile towards the Mughals. It has been noted that in fact, tracts comprising one-fourth of the total jama of the Empire in India were assigned by Babur to Afghan nobles.

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Second were the Afghans of eastern U.P., around Jaunpur. These elements had been in rebellion during Ibrahim Lodi's reign, and Ibrahim Lodi had sent forces against these elements under Bahar Khan Lodi, Mustafa Farmuli and others. Therefore, they had little sense of loyalty towards his descendants. In fact, after the battle of Panipat, these elements had invited Prince Bahadur Shah of Gujarat to assume the crown at Jaunpur. As we have noted, at the time these elements were in possession of the country upto Kannauj, and the areas beyond it two to three marches away from Agra. Since Babur considered that he had inherited the entire Lodi kingdom upto Bihar by virtue of his victory over Ibrahim Lodi, he was not prepared to give any quarter to these rebels. Right at the beginning, Babur had sent Humayun against the eastern Afghans. They were not able to withstand Humayun who quickly occupied the area upto Jaunpur. However, before the Afghan rebels could be decisively defeated, Babur recalled Humayun in order to deal with Rana Sanga's threat. In Humayun's absence, the Afghan rebels quickly reoccupied the area upto Kannauj.

The third aspect was Bihar and the fourth Bengal. Bihar had for long been a kind of a no-man's land between the kingdoms of Bengal and the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur. The position had become even more uncertain after the fall of the kingdom of Jaunpur. The Lodis had not been able to stabilize their position in Bihar. The governor of Bihar, Darya Khan Nuhani, had at first fought against the Afghans of east U.P., but later he turned a rebel. After his death, his son Bahadur Khan had declared himself independent under the title Sultan Muhammad, and had the khutba read in his own name and issued coins. Some time after the battle of Khanua, Mahmud Lodi, the younger son of Sikandar Lodi, found his way into Bihar, and was accepted as king by all the Afghans including Biban and Bayazid of eastern U.P. Nusrat Shah, of Bengal, who was an ambitious ruler, was also keen to extend his rule over Bihar. Taking advantage of Babur's preoccupation with Sanga, he had extended his dominion from Tirhut to Ballia and placed it under his brothers-in-law, Alauddin, and Makhdum-i-Alam. The latter established himself at Hajipur across the Ganga near the then non-existing Patna. He expanded his rule on both sides of the river Ghagra upto Azamgarh.

There was little in common between Nusrat Shah and the Afghans of Bihar, and those of east U.P. However, Nusrat Shah maintained good relations with Biban, Bayazid and Maruf Farmuli, the leaders of the Afghans of east U.P., since they were a shield between him and the Mughals. These Afghan rebels, though based mainly on Jaunpur, looked upon Bihar as a sanctuary into which they could retreat in case of Mughal pressure.

This was the situation Babur was faced with while he was in Malwa. He quickly returned, and marched straight on Kannauj. Despite the opposition of the Afghans, he built a bridge on the Ganges, using his cannons, mortars and matchlocks to meet the Afghan opposition. Forging the river, he occupied the area upto Jaunpur. But the Afghan rebels slipped across the Ghagra. Babur was not inclined to stay in the area any longer, and putting it under the charge of Askari, returned to Agra. He had been further reassured by the arrival of envoys from the Bengal king, Nusrat Shah, assuring his neutrality. This was in 1528.

Next year, Babur decided to quell the rebellion in the eastern areas once for all. Marching by way of Prayag and Banaras, he reached Chunar and Buxar which were the gateways to Patna. In the meantime, he had received envoys from Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal. Babur offered him terms, details to which we do not have because, unfortunately, in a storm, some of the pages of his Memoirs covering this period were scattered and lost. Babur wanted to detach Bengal from the side of the eastern Afghans, and wanted free passage across the river Ghagra. However, no agreement could be reached, the point at issue being Bihar. Perhaps, the Bengal ruler wanted recognition of his existing position in Bihar which Babur was reluctant to concede. On reaching the elbow formed by the junction of the Ghagra with the Ganges, Babur was surprised to find a joint force of the Bengal king and the Afghan rebels on the other side of the rivers. The Bengal ruler had put up as many as twenty-four points of defence to prevent Babur from crossing the river. He also had a flotilla of boats to prevent Babur crossing the Ganges. Despite this, Babur effected the crossing, while a force of 20,000 under Askari crossed upstream, thus

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taking the Bengali and Afghan forces on two sides. The battle of Ghagra, fought on 5 May, 1529, gave a complete victory to the Mughals. Large numbers of Afghans surrendered to Babur, including seven to eight thousand Nuhani. Maruf Farmuli also surrendered, but Biban and Bayazid escaped across the Ghagra along with Mahmud Lodi, and besieged Lucknow.

Meanwhile, Babur made a settlement of Bihar. Unwilling to involve himself in the day to day affairs of Bihar, he restored it to the Nuhani chiefs, withdrawing Khan-i-Zaman who had earlier been appointed Governor of Bihar. The chief among the Nuhani was Jalal Khan, son of Sultan Muhammad who had died. Jalal had approached Babur earlier and despite Bengali opposition, came and submitted to Babur. Babur asked him to pay a lump sum of one crore tankas as tribute, and reserved one crore annually as khalisa. Another Nuhani chief, Mahmud Khan Nuhani, who had been iqtadar of Ghazipur, was granted territory worth fifty lakhs in Bihar.

Babur then made an agreement with Nusrat Shah of Bengal. Although we have no details, it seems that his position in Bihar was left intact. This led to a good deal of conflict between Bihar and Bengal later on. After these agreements, Babur retracted his steps. He ousted Biban and Bayazid from Lucknow, and they fled to Mahoba in Kalinjar. Babur knew that he had not solved the Afghan problem. Bearing in mind the nature of the Afghan social set up, and their military potential, the solution of the Afghan problem needed considerable time and effort. Also, to dislodge the Afghans from Bihar extended campaigning including possible conflict with Bengal would have been necessary. Babur was not inclined to embroil himself in Bihar at the moment. It seems that he felt that the problems of Bihar and Bengal needed to be tackled together because, as he notices, Bengal was the only country with treasure. Also, Babur wanted to free himself for possible intervention in Central Asia, the position there having become favourable after the defeat of the Uzbek ruler, Ubaidullah, by Shah Tahmasp at Jam. Finally Babur was keen to consolidate his empire in the doab.

Thus, by all accounts, the agreements made by Babur in Bihar and Bengal were the best under the circumstances.

## **BABUR'S CONTRIBUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS ADVENT INTO INDIA**

Babur died at Agra on 30 December 1530 after a short illness. Although a romantic web has been woven around his death, linking it to his offer to sacrifice his life for the sake of Humayun's recovery, Babur's health had been failing for the past several years. He himself mentions that during the years 1528-29, he fell ill no less than six times and each time his illness lasted not less than two weeks. His health had deteriorated due to hard campaigning, and the hot climate of India to which he was not accustomed.

Although Babur greatly missed Afghanistan, and found many aspects of India to be distasteful, he was clear that henceforth India was not only the base of his empire, but his home. All those of his begs who thought otherwise, were given leave to depart after the battle of Khanua, without, however, any rancour in Babur's heart.

The inclusion of Afghanistan in an empire based on India was a development of capital importance. Although Afghanistan was considered an integral part of India in antiquity, and was often called "Little India" even in medieval times, politically it had not been a part of India after the downfall of the Kushan empire, followed by the defeat of the Hindu Shahis by Mahmud Ghazni. Since ancient times, Afghanistan had been the staging place for an onslaught on India. By keeping control of Afghanistan, and its two doors to India, Kabul and Qandahar, Babur and his successors safeguarded India from foreign invasion for 200 years.

The control of Babur and his successors over Afghanistan made India a player in Central Asian politics. Powerful rulers of the area — Turan, Iran, Ottoman Turkey, and others kept close diplomatic contact with India, and also sought its support on occasions. On their part, Babur and the succeeding Mughal rulers kept a close watch on political developments in Central and West Asia by means of a constant

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exchange of envoys. Thus, with the arrival of Babur, a new phase begins in India's foreign policy and strategic perception. Babur not only tried hard to maintain Mughal influence on Badakhshan beyond the Hindukush mountains, but even upto river Oxus. Following the defeat of the Uzbek ruler, Ubaidullah, by Shah Tehmasp at Jam in 1528, Babur even instructed Humayun to recover Samarqand with Iranian help, but had to give up when such help was not forth-coming.

Economically, control over Kabul and Qandahar strengthened India's foreign trade. As Babur says in his Memoirs, "There are two trade-marts on the land-route between Hindustan and Khurasan; one is Kabul, the other, Qandahar." To Kabul came caravans from Kashgar which was the trade mart to China, Transoxiana, Turkistan etc., and to Qandahar from Khurasan, i.e. Iran and West Asia. He goes on to say, "In Kabul can be had the products of Khurasan, Rum (Turkey), Iraq and Chin (China), while it is Hindustan's own market." Thus, the inclusion of Kabul and Qandahar in the empire created a favourable opportunity for the increase of India's share in the great trans-Asian trade.

By his victories over Ibrahim Lodi and Rana Sanga, Babur paved the way for the emergence of a new Indian empire, sweeping away the balance of power which had gradually emerged in the country during the 15th century. However, many steps were necessary for the emergence of such an empire. Humayun carried forward the task bequeathed to him by Babur, but a long step in this direction was taken by Sher Shah Suri, followed by Akbar.

The introduction of cannon and muskets in India has generally been ascribed to Babur. Although gunpowder which is of Chinese origin was introduced into India from China, and was used for mining under the walls of the forts from the middle of the 13th century, its use for cannons and muskets was of European origin. Their use in Iran and Central Asia is generally dated back to the Ottomans at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 against Shah Ismail. Babur quickly took it up by employing two Ottoman mastergunners in 1516, and mentions their first use at Bajaur in 1519. Its use in the battles of Panipat and Khanua, and other battles fought by Babur in India has already been noted. The use of artillery further strengthened the position of large states or empires against local petty rulers and zamindars who did not have the financial resources and means to employ them in a meaningful manner. It strengthened the process of centralization to that extent. But it made battle between states more destructive.

Babur also introduced new military tactics in India, borrowing them from the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. These were the carts lashed together by iron-chains and protected by ditches, and the flanking parties (tulghuma). However, Babur's victories cannot be ascribed only to the new weapons and tactics he employed, but equally to his skillful generalship, organization, care in choosing the battle ground, and deploying his men in the best manner.

The arrival of the Mughals helped to re-establish the prestige of the Crown in India. Although Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi had tried to strengthen the position of the Crown, they had only limited success because of the strong Afghan tribal traditions of independence and equality. As a descendant of the two greatest warriors of Asia, Chingiz and Timur, Babur not only had high personal prestige, but he was a beneficiary of the Mongol-Persian tradition that the begs were merely the servants of the Great Khan who had a divine mandate to rule. Thus, none of his begs could challenge his position or aspire to rule. Babur was surprised when he learnt that in Bengal hereditary succession was rare, and that if any person kills the padshah and seats himself on the throne, armies, wazirs, soldiers submit to him at once and recognize him as the rightful ruler.

The difference between the Timurids and their begs was emphasized by the rigid etiquette followed in their courts. Thus, all the begs, irrespective of status or age, had to stand. Babur was shocked when Biban, one of the former nobles of Ibrahim Lodi, submitted to him, and wanted permission to sit, "although the sons of Alam Khan (Lodi), who are of royal birth, did not sit." Although the differences in status and position between the ruler and his begs were clearly defined, Babur treated his begs well. Babur consulted his leading begs whenever any important decision was taken, and advised Humayun to do likewise. He was liberal in his grant of stipends and gifts to his begs.



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His personal relations with them were also cordial. They were invited to share Babur's wine parties where music and dance, witticism and recital of poetry were common. Even when Babur had given up wine, which he sorely missed sometimes, so much so that tears came in his eyes, the begs were invited to parties where opium was eaten. He even indulged in horse-play with his begs. On one occasion, all the begs were asked to leap over a stream, and Babur clapped when some of the clumsy or older ones fell in. At the same time, Babur was prepared to share hardships with his begs and soldiers. Thus, as ruler of Kabul, when Babur visited the Mirzas in Herat, and decided to return to Kabul in winter, his party lost its way in the mountains. The snow was so deep that people had to trample the snow to make a path, sinking to the waist or the breast. Without hesitation, Babur joined. Following his example, many begs also joined. However, Babur was also a stern disciplinarian. Begs who did not show their mettle in battle could lose their ranks and positions, their parganas taken away, and disgraced publicly by having their beards shaved.

As a pious Muslim, Babur was regular in his prayers, and observed the fast of Ramzan without fail. He was also a devotee of Shaikh Ubaidullah Ahrar, the Naqshbandi saint, who was considered the patron saint of the Timurids, and placed considerable emphasis on the strict observance of the sharia. Babur even saw the saint a number of times in his dreams. However, Babur was not concerned with narrow sectarian differences. The atmosphere in Transoxiana was not one of narrow orthodoxy but of considerable freedom to individuals in religious matters. Thus, Babur mentions some, such as Sultan Ahmad Mirza who was a true believer, pure in faith, and who recited his prayers five times daily "not omitting them even on drinking days". Wine-bibbling was common, even women indulging in it on occasions. Babur mentions Baba Quli who was made Babur's guardian but "he prayed not; he kept no fasts; he was like a heathen..". It was this atmosphere which Babur imbibed. This explains why he did not hesitate to wear the dress of the Kizilbash (Persians, who were Shiis) at Tashkend, although it was considered almost heresy, since it suited him politically at the time to do so.

Regarding the Hindus, it is true that Babur declared the war against Sanga a "jihad", and assumed the title of "ghazi" after the victory, forbade wine, and broke the wine-jars. These, obviously, were politically motivated actions. The campaign against Medini Rao of Chanderi, a close associate of the Rana, was also declared a "jihad" again for political reasons. Regarding the erecting of pagan skulls at Khanua, Babur adopted this Mongol and Timurid practice on occasions. It was meant not only to record a great victory, but to strike terror among the opponents. Babur used it for the same purpose against the Afghans of Bajaur.

There are no references to Babur having destroyed temples. Although Mathura was near Agra, and Babur passed it a number of times, no temples were broken there. Babur visited the royal buildings and the temples in the fort of Gwalior, and notes the images there, but no effort was made to damage or destroy them. It was only the Jain deities in the Urwa valley which were ordered to be destroyed because they were completely naked. As it was, his officials only damaged the idols, so that the Jains restored them later.

It has been said that both at Sambhal and at Ayodhya, which were provincial head-quarters, mosques were built by destroying Hindu temples at the instance of Babur. The inscriptions at both these places give the credit of building the mosques to the local governors, Mir Hindu Beg at Sambhal and Mir Baqi at Ayodhya, mentioning almost casually that this was done at the instructions' of Babur who is mentioned as the ruler. No mention is made of the destruction of any Hindu temple or temples there. The completion of these grand mosques in such a short time suggests that the mosques may have existed earlier, but may have only been repaired and modified by Babur's governors there. This leaves open the question when and by whom the earlier Hind - or Buddhist temples were destroyed.

That Babur was a moderate in religious affairs, and had no prejudice against the Hindus, is also borne out by his attitude towards the autonomous Hindu rajas. Thus, in the Punjab, Hati Gakkhar, the chief of the Gakkhars, was allowed to rule over his ancestral lands after he accepted Babur's suzerainty. Adam

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Gakkhar accompanied Babur to Agra with a large number of Gakkhar troops, and fought for him at Khanua. Sangur Gakkhar died fighting for Babur in this battle. Babur was even prepared to strike a political deal with the successors of Rana Sanga. Thus, Rani Padmavati, the widow of Rana Sanga, sought Babur's support for her son, Vikramajit, who was being harassed by his brother. She offered to surrender Ranthambhor and the crown and belt of Mahmud Khalji to Babur in return for parganas worth 70 lakhs. Although no agreement was forthcoming, Babur received the Rani's envoy with honour, and offered Shamsabad in place of Bayana which the Rani had asked for.

Babur's liberalism in matters of religion is also attested to by his fondness of painting, music and dance, and poetry which were all frowned upon by the orthodox elements. Babur praises Bihazad, the master painter at the court of Baisanqar Mirza at Herat. In addition to the verses interspersed in his Memoirs, he wrote a Diwan in Turkish. He also prepared a versified version of the famous work *Waladiyah Risala* of Shaikh Ubaidullah Ahrar. He was also in touch with famous poets of the time, such as Ali Sher Navai. Babur's *Tuzuk* or Memoirs is rightly classified as a classic of world literature. Written in Chaghtai Turkish, his chaste style made him, along with Ali Sher Navai, the founder of modern Uzbeki Turkish. Not only do the Memoirs throw a flood of light on contemporary affairs, but they show Babur as one who was keenly interested in nature. Thus, he depicts in detail the fruits, flowers, animals and products of India, and comments on its social life and customs. He provides similar information about the other countries he spent time in — Farghana, Samarqand, Kabul etc. He draws skilful, thumbnail sketches of contemporaries, including their good and bad points. He does not spare himself in the process. Thus, he depicts his father, Umar Shaikh Mirza, as "short and stout rounded bearded and fleshy-faced" with a tunic so tight it was ready to burst. Another was Shaikh Mirza Beg, Babur's first guardian. There was no greedier Shaikh than him in Umar Mirza's presence, but "he was a vicious person and kept catamites." He says that this vicious practice was very common in his times. Babur was free from it, but he admits that when he was in Samarqand in 1499, he was maddened and afflicted for a boy in the camp bazar. Babur also freely recounts how on occasions he returned to camp dead drunk. But Babur always took the task of rulership very seriously. As he wrote to Humayun towards the end of his life, "No bondage equals that of sovereignty; retirement matches not with rule."

Thus, Babur introduced a new concept of the state which, resting on the Turko-Mongol theory of suzerainty, based itself on the strength and prestige of the Crown, absence of religious and sectarian bigotry, and the fostering of fine arts and the promotion of culture in a broad perspective. This included the hamams (public and private baths), and gardens with running water of which he was very fond. Thus, he set an example, and provided a direction of growth for his successors.

# UNIT-XVI

## STRUGGLE FOR EMPIRE IN NORTH INDIA

### HUMAYUN AND THE AFGHANS

Humayun who succeeded Babur at the young age of 23, had to grapple with a number of serious problems, some of them having been left behind by Babur, and some which had arisen following his death in December, 1530. A major problem was the unsettled state of the administration, and the ambitions of the begs who wanted to assert themselves. The Afghans had been weakened, but continued to nurse the ambition of setting up independent Afghan kingdoms which could help in expelling the Mughals from India. Humayun's younger brothers, and many Timurid princes who had found shelter under Babur, were looking for an opportunity to strike out on their own. Finally, there was Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, who had brought Malwa under his control, and wanted to dominate Rajasthan thereby posing a challenge to the nascent Mughal empire.

Babur had little inclination, at any rate no time to plan and set up a new system of administration in India. Both in Afghanistan and India he tried to continue the established system of administration. This implied leaving the task of day to day administration largely in the hands of his begs who were given large tracts in assignment (*wajh*). In these tracts, the task of administration and collection of land revenue, and maintenance of troops for the service of the state was left largely in the hands of the begs. Although certain tracts or share of the revenue was reserved for the crown, Babur, having exhausted the treasures accumulated by the Lodis, was faced with financial difficulties at the end of his reign. Hence, he ordered that everyone should pay thirty per cent of the income of their *wajh* into the imperial treasury. We do not know to what extent Babur's orders were carried out. But it does suggest that at the time of his accession, Humayun's finances were stretched.

The desire of the begs to re-assert themselves is hinted at by a strange type of a conspiracy or intrigue which is said to have taken place towards the end of Babur's reign. Two of the leading historians of Akbar's reign, Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin, assert that Babur's wakil, Khalifa Nizamuddin, who was a great favourite of Babur, wanted to set aside Humayun and his brothers, and put on the throne Mehdi Khwaja who came from a distinguished family and was married to Babur's elder sister, Khanazadah Begum. It is implied that in this way Khalifa Nizamuddin wanted to keep all power in his hands. The scheme could hardly hope to succeed because Mehdi Khwaja was not a Timurid, and there was little chance of the begs accepting a non-Timurid. Even less plausible appears to be the suggestion of some modern historians that it was Babur himself who had suggested such a step because he was dissatisfied with Humayun for his failure in the last Samarqand campaign, and leaving Badakhshan for Agra without notice. Even if Babur was dissatisfied with Humayun, he would hardly have agreed to the super-session of all of his other sons. Even these historians argue that soon after his return, Humayun was reconciled with Babur who posted him to Sambhal, and then nominated him as his successor. Thus, the plot just faded away. It would appear that it was never a plot and never had Babur's backing, but was in the nature of a wild idea which has received more currency than was its due, and that, at best, it reflects the suppressed ambitions of some of Babur's begs. Anyhow, Khalifa Nizamuddin remained high in favour with Humayun after his accession.

More serious than this was the desire of some of Babur's brothers and Timurid princes to re-assert in India the Central Asian Timurid tradition of the partitioning of the empire. Babur himself had to face this problem when after his conquest of Samarqand, his begs had assigned Farghana to his half-brother, Jahangir Mirza, so that when Babur lost Samarqand, he was without a kingdom. At the time of Babur's

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death, Humayun's younger brother, Kamran, was in-charge of Kabul and Qandahar, while Badakhshan was under Sulaiman Mirza. It was only natural that Kamran should remain in-charge of these areas when Humayun succeeded at Agra. However, not satisfied with Kabul and Qandahar, Kamran advanced on Lahore, occupied the fort by a ruse and established his control over Punjab upto the river Sutlej. He then sent an embassy to Humayun, praying to be confirmed in the territories he had seized. Humayun was in a difficult position.

The Afghans of eastern U.P. had already become active, and Bahadur Shah of Gujarat was displaying far reaching ambitions which could pose a problem. Hence, he graciously confirmed Kamran's possession of the Punjab, and also granted him Hissar-Firuzabad in jagir. On his part, Kamran observed outer forms and allowed the khutba and sikka to remain in Humayun's name. Abul Fazl ascribes Humayun's action to his spirit of benevolence, and keenness to observe Babur's advice to be kind to his brothers. In a letter to Humayun, Babur had told him, "As thou knowest, the rule has always been that when thou hadst six parts, Kamran had five." This did not mean that Babur had postulated partition of the empire among his sons. Babur's letter was written in the context of allotment of jagirs among the various princes. In the same letter, he advises Humayun to summon his younger brothers and the begs twice daily to his presence. Thus, no special favours were to be shown to the brothers, and they were expected to be as loyal to the sovereign as the begs.

It has been argued that by leaving the recruiting grounds of Afghanistan and Punjab in Kamran's hands, Humayun cut himself off from the hardy and loyal soldiers of the area. However, this does not appear to be well founded because in those days no state put any restriction on the movement of soldiers and people. Till his defeat by Sher Shah at Chausa in 1539, Humayun did not have any shortage of trained soldiers. On the other hand, as a result of Kamran's control over Afghanistan and Punjab, Humayun was saved from addressing himself to the problems of West and Central Asia, specifically those of Qandahar and Badakhshan. Thus, Qandahar was threatened twice by the Iranian Shah, and on both occasions Kamran took effective action and saved the situation.

Despite all these considerations, the fact remains that Kamran's action amounted to a de facto partition of the empire, and Humayun's response towards it was seen to be based on weakness rather than generosity, and lack of boldness and self-confidence on his part. This encouraged the expectation that Humayun's other two brothers, Askari and Hindal, who had been allotted Sambhal and Mewat in Jagir could also justifiably stake claims for suzerainty whenever an occasion arose. It also encouraged some of the other Timurids who had joined Babur after their expulsion by the Uzbeks to defy Humayun, and press their own claims for dominion. The most formidable among these were Muhammad Zaman Mirza and his cousin, Muhammad Sultan Mirza, grandsons ~ of Sultan Husain Baiqara. They served Babur in various fields and had held important military commands, including governorship of Bihar. Babur had married a daughter to each of the two. The efforts of these Timurids to carve out a separate empire for themselves provided an opportunity to the nobles to assert themselves against Humayun. The situation was compounded by the fact that till then the Mughals had struck no roots in the soil, and adventurous people of all types could easily collect various elements in opposition to them.

Along with these internal difficulties, the most serious external problem Humayun faced was that of the Afghans of the east U.P. and Bihar, and that of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat. If Humayun could tackle these two effectively, he would be in a strong position to deal with the various internal problems mentioned above.



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## INTERPRETING HUMAYUN'S REIGN

There has been a sharp difference of opinion among historians regarding the manner in which Humayun tried to tackle the difficulties we have mentioned above. Part of the difficulty arises from the fact that there is no reliable chronology about the events that took place, and Humayun's own movements. In consequence, there are long periods when Humayun appears to be inactive, and unresponsive to the demands of administration. This led some historians, particularly the early British historians, to paint Humayun as being an opium addict so that he remained in an opium induced stupor for long periods. Support to this was lent by Mirza Haider Dughlat, a noble from a respected family in Mughalistan who had been appointed governor of Lahore by Kamran when he had gone to Qandahar following an Iranian investment. In his work, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, he says that due to the influence of some evil and profligate persons, Humayun had contracted some bad habits, one of them being eating opium, and that this was the cause of his downfall. One may disagree with this assessment. Opium eating and wine drinking was widespread in Central Asia at the time, and Babur freely mentions that both he and many of his begs ate opium or drank wine. That did not prevent Babur or his begs, or later Humayun from sustained campaigning. However, Humayun had not been schooled in adversity like Babur, and was prone to spells of merry-making in between campaigns.

A critical study of the chronology of events show that the so called periods of inactivity were much briefer than have been visualized. While it is scarcely possible to discuss here in detail why a certain sequence of events has been accepted by some historians, and a different one by some others, it would suffice to say that this largely depended on whether the chronology was the one adopted by Abul Fazl, or the one put forward by his contemporary, Nizamuddin Ahmad who has been copied by Ferishta. Others fall in between. Nizamuddin Ahmad, whose father held important positions at court from the time of Babur, completed his work, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, after Abul Fazl had completed his work *Akbar Nama* and, in fact, was able to draw upon Abul Fazl's book for his work. His account should, therefore, have been more reliable than Abul Fazl's. But Nizamuddin Ahmad's account is not only much briefer than Abul Fazl's, but is deficient in chronology. As is well known, in his 32nd year, Akbar had ordered everyone who had lived through the times of Babur and Humayun and the early years of his reign to write down their memoirs. These were carefully utilized by Abul Fazl, but were perhaps not available to Nizamuddin Ahmad.

Hence, in the present work, the chronology adopted by Abul Fazl has generally been preferred, unless there were specific reasons for departing from it.

## EARLY ACTIVITIES OF HUMAYUN & THE TUSLE WITH BAHADUR SHAH

Six months after his accession, Humayun besieged the powerful fort of Kalinjar in Bundelkhand. This fort, along with Bayana, Gwaliyar and Dholpur, formed the chain of forts protecting Agra from the south. As such, it had been invested a number of times by the earlier rulers of Delhi, and been occupied by them on occasions. The Chandela ruler had a reputation for bravery, but he surrendered Kalinjar to Humayun after a siege of a month. He was allowed to keep the fort in return for accepting Humayun's suzerainty and giving 12 mans' of gold. This enhanced Humayun's reputation. The conquest of Kalinjar, may also have been meant to counter the growing influence of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat who had captured Mandu at this time (1531).

The main problem facing Humayun at that time was that posed by the Afghans of east U.P. and Bihar. Humayun learnt that an Afghan sardar, Sher Khan, who had once been in the service of Babur, but had defected, had recently been able to lay his hands on the powerful fort of Chunar. This fort which was considered the gateway to Bihar, had earlier been in the possession of the Lodis. To reassert his claim on the legacy of the Lodis, Humayun marched from Kalinjar to Chunar and invested it. However, Sher Khan had slipped away and left the fort under his son, Jalal Khan (later known as Islam Khan). After some

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time, negotiations began. Sher Khan offered to serve the Emperor with a contingent of 500 troops under his son, Qutb Khan. He also offered to pay three mans of gold as peshkash and promised to be loyal to the Emperor. Humayun accepted the offer, largely because at the moment he did not contemplate an attack on Bihar, and did not consider Sher Khan to be a danger to him. Events proved him wrong, but the future rise of Sher Khan could hardly have been foreseen at the time. Another advantage for Humayun in this agreement was that Sher Khan did not side with Biban and Bayazid who were steadily regaining their position in east U.P. Whatever may have been the circumstances, Humayun's willingness to compromise both when Kamran conquered Lahore, and in the east, with Sher Khan at Chunar, gave an impression of lack of grit and determination on his part. This encouraged Bahadur Shah in his ambitions and in his forthcoming contest with the Mughals.

After Chunar, Humayun spent almost a year at Agra, watching the situation. During the period, he also tried to organize government and court society on a somewhat fanciful model. He divided court society broadly into administrative, ecclesiastical and cultural sections. Arrows of different quality and numbers were awarded to different sections in order to form grades. Various rewards and titles were given to the nobles and others to attach them more closely to the new regime. The Emperor also found time for planning some buildings, and approving new inventions. His instituting a drum of justice (*tabl-i-adl*) to enable grievances to be brought to the notice of the king may be considered a first step to earn a measure of public support for the new Mughal state. We are told vaguely that he tried to relieve the burden on the village folk and the cultivators, and artisans and merchants, and tried to help foreign traders by remitting *tamgha* and some other cesses. Thus, in the words of Abul Fazl, he "unfurled the banner of protection for the people." This was indicative of an attitude but a long time was needed for the effects of these measures to be felt.

Meanwhile, under Biban and Bayazid, the Afghans had been able to re-establish themselves in Jaunpur, expelling the Mughal governor, Junaid Barlas. At the head of a large army, Humayun crossed the Ganges. He met the Afghans at Dadrah on the river Gomti, and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Shaikh Bayazid was killed, and the back of Afghan opposition broken. The Afghan king, Sultan Mahmud, returned to Bhatta (Rewa). Sher Khan did not join the Afghans of east U.P., and has been accused of "betrayal". Seeing little hope of success against the Mughals, some of the Afghan sardars fled to the court of Bahadur Shah, and found refuge there. This was towards the end of the last quarter of the year 1532.

Thus, Humayun spent the first two years of his reign consolidating his position. He was now free to give his full attention to the problem of Malwa, eastern Rajasthan and Gujarat where Bahadur Shah was emerging as a challenge.

Bahadur Shah, son of Muzaffar Shah II of Gujarat, who was of almost the same age as Humayun, had ascended the throne of Malwa in 1526 after wandering about for a couple of years during which he had, in turn, approached Ibrahim Lodi and Babur. After the battle of Panipat, he had even been approached by some Afghans to become the king of Jaunpur. The death of his father in Ahmadabad, followed by the assassination of his successor, Sikandar, by his wazir, Imadul Mulk, threw the affairs of Gujarat into confusion, and a leading group of nobles invited Bahadur Shah to ascend the throne. Bahadur Shah soon showed himself to be a ruthless but capable and ambitious ruler. He killed, one by one, all his six surviving brothers, except one who had taken shelter with the ruler of Malwa. This gave him the excuse to attack and conquer Malwa. Earlier, he had conquered Ahmadnagar, and forced the Nizam Shahi ruler to accept his suzerainty, and read *khutba* in his name.

Having witnessed Babur's resounding victories at Panipat and Khanua, Bahadur Shah was, at first, of the opinion that a conflict with the Mughals should be avoided at all costs. But his views on the subject gradually changed, partly because of his successes, and partly because of the Afghan sardars and Timurid princes who had taken shelter at his court, and who tried to convince him that the Mughals

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were not the same formidable force as they had been earlier, having become soft and ease-loving. To these we may add the fact that he had taken into his service two Ottoman master gunners, Amir Mustafa or Rumi Khan, and Khwaja Safar. With their help, he had been able to gather together a powerful park of artillery. They had also taught him Ottoman method of defence viz; stringing together carts behind which cannons and match-locks could be fired. Bahadur Shah was, apparently, convinced that with the help of these devices, and with the help of his Afghan and Timurid allies, he would be able to prevail over Humayun whom he considered to be inexperienced and ineffective. In one of his letters to Humayun later on, he said that Humayun had no achievements as compared to his, and had only faced a few Afghan sardars!

Even if Bahadur Shah had not convinced himself that he was in a position to challenge the Mughals, a conflict between the Mughals and a power based in western India was in the logic of things. The entire experience of the Sultana t showed that a power which had been able to consolidate its position in the Indo-Gangetic plains was bound to try to bring under its control the rich and fertile tracts of Malwa, and the flourishing sea-ports and hoarded treasures of Gujarat. Rajasthan was the essential link between Malwa and Gujarat, and the rich, alluvial plains of north India. As we have seen, a conflict for the control of Malwa and eastern Rajasthan had started even under the Lodis once they had been able to defeat Jaunpur, and consolidate their position in the Ganga valley.

However, it seems that Humayun was not keen for a conflict with Bahadur Shah at this stage, and that it was the latter who virtually goaded Humayun into doing so. The first provocative act was Bahadur Shah's siege of Chittor in 1532, to "punish" the Rana who had been his ally, but had annoyed him by helping Salhadi, one of the powerful sardars in eastern Malwa. Humayun was aware that control of eastern Rajasthan by Bahadur Shah would pose an immediate danger to the Mughal position at Agra and Delhi. Therefore, as a warning to Bahadur Shah, he moved to Gwaliyar (Feb. 1533). According to a mid-seventeenth century Rajasthani account, Rani Karnavati, the Rana's mother, sent a bracelet as rakhi to Humayun who gallantly responded and helped. Since none of the contemporary sources mention this, little credit can be given to this story. However, Humayun's presence at Gwaliyar made Bahadur Shah nervous, and he hastily patched up a treaty with the Rana. The Rana was compelled to cede the portions of Malwa which he had received from Bahadur Shah earlier as a price of Mewar's support to him in his campaign against the ruler of Malwa. The Rana had also to pay a heavy indemnity, including the jewelled crown and belt captured from the Khalji ruler by Rana Sanga, and which had high prestige value.

Although this treaty increased Bahadur Shah's power and prestige, Humayun was apparently satisfied by Bahadur Shah's failure to capture Chittor. He, therefore, repaired to Delhi, and spent a year there, constructing a new capital called Din Panah on the banks of the Jamuna. There has been a lot of speculation regarding Humayun's motive of building this new city. Considering that Agra was virtually the capital of an Afghan dynasty, and that Delhi had been the seat of Imperial power for centuries, and any one who ruled from Delhi enjoyed immense prestige as well as acquiring the aura of legitimacy, Humayun's decision to build a capital there can hardly be termed the result of a "fevered imagination." Nor was it meant to be a second line of defence in case Agra fell to Bahadur Shah since Humayun had little fear of Bahadur Shah at that time. In fact, Bahadur Shah congratulated him a year later for the completion of Din Panah. Humayun reciprocated Bahadur Shah's friendly gesture, and in a return embassy, only requested that no shelter should be given to refugees from Delhi in view of the friendly relations between the two kingdoms. This was a reference to the Afghan refugees, including Alam Khan, a brother of Sikandar Lodi, whom Babur had patronized, but who had taken shelter with Bahadur Shah some time back. From the correspondence, and the exchange of embassies which followed, it seems that Humayun was prepared to approve all that Bahadur Shah had conquered in Malwa, provided he expelled the elements hostile to the Mughals. It seems that Humayun's willingness for a compromise was interpreted by Bahadur Shah as a sign of weakness.

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Bahadur Shah now took a number of measures which made conflict with the Mughals inevitable. Towards the end of 1534, he marched on Chittor a second time. Worse, he honoured and assigned important jagirs to the Timurid prince Muhammed Zaman Mirza who has been high in Babur's favour but had intrigued against Humayun from the beginning. Fearing a rebellion from him, Humayun had moved swiftly, defeated him, and sent him to prison in Bayana. He had been ordered to be blinded but, in collusion with his jailor, he had been saved from this fate and escaped from the prison. Bahadur Shah welcomed him at Chittor, looking upon him as a weapon to divide and confuse the Mughals.

Bahadur Shah also tried to prop up Sher Khan against the Mughals by sending him large sums of money. Finally, at the instance of some hot-heads, Bahadur Shah launched a three pronged attack on the Mughals. The leader of this enterprise was Tatar Khan, son of Alam Khan, who was famous for his bravery. Bahadur Shah gave him twenty crores to recruit a mercenary army. He was to attack Agra, while another force was to attack Kalinjar in Bundelkhand, and a third one was to move against Delhi and create disturbances in the Punjab. Tatar Khan collected a force of 40,000 and captured Bayana. But with the advance of a Mughal force under Mirza Askari and Hindal, the Afghan forces melted away. Tatar Khan fought on with a small body of troops and was killed. The other two prongs also proved ineffective. Tatar Khan had been asked not to engage with the Mughals, but to await Bahadur Shah's arrival.

It was hardly possible for Bahadur Shah to repudiate all these hostile steps. Humayun now decided to undertake a campaign against Bahadur Shah and to conquer Gujarat.

## THE GUJARAT CAMPAIGN

After making due military preparations, Humayun marched out of Agra in early 1535. However, instead of marching on Chittor which was being besieged by Bahadur Shah, Humayun marched via Raisen and Sarangpur to Ujjain. He thus brought eastern Malwa under his control, and also placed himself in a Strategically advantageous position for intercepting Bahadur Shah if he tried to retreat to Mandu in Malwa or to his capital, Ahmadabad. Humayun's movement created nervousness in Bahadur Shah's camp but his master-gunner, Rumi Khan, was confident that with his powerful guns he would be able to force the commanders of Chittor to surrender soon. Some of Bahadur Shah's advisers also argued that since he was engaged in a holy war against a kafir, it would be contrary to rules for a Muslim king to attack him.

But if he did, Bahadur Shah would be justified in engaging in a jihad against him. Some of the contemporary Mughal historians, not perceiving the strategic significance of the position Humayun had adopted, ascribe his stay at Ujjain to his reluctance to engage Bahadur Shah while he was waging a jihad against a kafir.

The stout resistance of the Rajputs who were now unified against an aggressor prolonged Rumi Khan's operations much more than he had expected. When the fort fell after two months, (March, 1534), Bahadur Shah advanced, and came face to face the Humayun at Mandsor, 80 miles north of Ujjain. Some of his nobles advised him that since his soldiers were flushed with success, he should immediately attack Humayun. But Rumi Khan, who was very proud of his artillery, argued that it was no use resorting to swords and spears when he was in possession of a superior weapon, cannons. At his advice, Bahadur Shah adopted the Ottoman devise of guarding his front and side with the help of carts and ditches so that the artillery could work from behind its protection. There was a large lake on the other side. Thus, the defence was remarkably similar to that adopted by Babur at Panipat. However, Rumi Khan forgot that Humayun was not an Afghan military leader. Unlike Ibri.uim Lodi, he did not oblige Bahadur Shah by launching a frontal attack on his strongly defended camp. After a preliminary attack in which Humayun's forces suffered severely, Humayun ordered his forces not to venture near, but to cut off all food supplies to Bahadur Shah's camp. This was enforced so strictly that within two weeks the horses in Bahadur Shah's camp began to die, and his soldiers faced a severe food shortage. Thus, Rumi Khan's defensiveofensive strategy was turned against itself.



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In distress, Bahadur Shah now decided to spike his most powerful guns, and with a few followers, left secretly for Mandu by a circuitous route. Bahadur Shah's rich camp fell in to Humayun's hands, and most of his soldiers were dispersed (April 1535).

However, a body of 30,000 lightly equipped troops entered Mandu by a direct route, hotly pursued by Humayun. Humayun took into his service some of the prominent nobles of Bahadur Shah, such as Khudawand Khan who, in course of time, became one of his principal courtier and adviser in the Gujarat campaign. Rumi Khan also joined Humayun. Although Rumi Khan was a mercenary, and was prepared to join anyone who offered him better terms, and had been disappointed with Bahadur Shah for not appointing him to the command of Chittor after its capture, the charge that Bahadur Shah's failure against Humayun was due to Rumi Khan's treachery seems to be one of the usual ploys to explain away failure.

Reaching Mandu after some time, Bahadur Shah opened negotiations with Humayun, offering to surrender Malwa if he was allowed to keep Gujarat and Chittor. According to Dr. Iswari Prasad, the proposals were "tentatively accepted, but no regular engagement was entered into." However, the garrison rashly relaxed its vigilance, and taking advantage of it, a body of Mughal troops scaled the walls of the city and opened the gate to the troops outside. In the hubub, Bahadur Shah escaped with a few attendants. Humayun allowed his troops to sack Mandu for three days before he started for Champanir where Bahadur Shah had taken refuge.

Champanir was reputed to be a strong fort, surrounded by a jungle. It was one place where Bahadur Shah could have withstood Humayun for a long time. But Bahadur Shah had no heart left for fighting Humayun. Hence, he sent members of his family and some of the treasures stored in the fort to Diu, and left the fort under the command of some trusted men. However, by-passing Champanir, Humayun pursued Bahadur Shah so vigorously that when Bahadur Shah left Cambay (Khambayat) from one gate, Humayun entered it from the other. Bahadur Shah now left for Diu which was dominated by the Portuguese navy. Thus, Humayun completed the task of expelling Bahadur Shah from Gujarat. From Cambay, Humayun returned to Champanir and began a strict investment of the fort. After some time, the Mughals found a secret path from which food supplies were reaching the fort. The walls were scaled and, as is well known, Humayun joined the party, and was the 41st man to enter (August 1535). The capture of the fort yielded immense riches, so much so that each soldier was awarded a tray of gold and jewels. As earlier, Humayun treated the defending Gujarati nobles well, and some of them joined the Mughal service.

The conquest of Champanir completed the Mughal conquest of southern Gujarat. North Gujarat, including Ahmadabad and Patan remained under the control of Bahadur Shah's men. After resting at Champanir for a couple of months during the monsoon season, which was also used for many festivities, Humayun turned his attention towards the conquest of north Gujarat. In the meantime, the Mughals had not even bothered to collect land-revenue. Bahadur Shah deputed Imad-ul-Mulk, one of his slaves, the task of collecting land-revenue from Gujarat, especially from north Gujarat. With the help of the money he collected, and the prevailing general anti-Mughal sentiment, Imad-ul-Mulk gathered a band of 10,000 men which soon swelled to 30,000. Imad-ul-Mulk's forces clashed with the Mughal forces which were led by Humayun at Mahmudabad near Ahmadabad. In a fiercely contested battle, the Mughals triumphed. Ahmadabad was now open to them, and was occupied soon (October 1535).

Thus, within a space of ten months of leaving Agra, Humayun had over run both Malwa and Gujarat. In the process, Humayun displayed great drive, determination and personal courage, and he must be given full credit for this achievement.

However, Humayun had yet to decide what to do with Gujarat. On this point the nobles were not united. Many of them had shifted from Afghanistan to the Agra-Delhi region when Babur had decided to

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make Hindustan his permanent home. They had their families there, and did not want to be uprooted a second time if they were asked to stay on in Gujarat. Also, with the flight of Bahadur Shah, and the conquest and distribution of his hoarded treasures, they felt that the basic objectives of the expedition had been attained. It was in this context that Hindu Beg and some of the other leading nobles suggested that after paying the soldiers one or two years advance salary, and keeping some treasures, the kingdom should be returned to Bahadur Shah who had no capacity to fight Humayun anymore. According to Jauhar Humayun's ewer-bearer, Humayun became angry at this suggestion. Like Babur earlier after the victory at Panipat, Humayun argued that "the empire which was been conquered with the strength of the sword is not to be thrown away like this. The kingdom must be properly organized and arrangements made for its direct administration under the control of Delhi". Hence, Humayun made Askari over-all incharge of Gujarat. Hindu Beg was to assist him with a body of 5000 men. The rest of Gujarat was divided into five divisions, each under a prominent noble. This arrangement was on the model of Babur's administration of the Doab where large areas or iqtas were placed in charge of a beg who was to establish law and order and collect land-revenue. A part of the money collected by them was to be sent to the Imperial treasury. May be this was the reason why Humayun did not reserve any territory as khali-sa in Gujarat.

After making these arrangements, Humayun slowly travelled to Mandu. He fixed Mandu as his headquarters because of its salubrious climate, and because it was centrally located so that he could keep a watch both on Gujarat and north India. He planned a long stay there because he asked the inmates of his haram to join him. However, within months of his leaving Gujarat, the arrangements he had made for its administration collapsed. Askari was apparently not equal to the responsibility placed on his shoulders, and was not able to establish a coordination between himself and the nobles in charge of the various divisions. But a basic cause was the unwillingness of the nobles to stay on in Gujarat which they perceived as a foreign land, and where they were perceived as foreigners. Simultaneously, there was a reassertion of the spirit of regional independence in Gujarat and a revival of Bahadur Shah's power. In desperation, Hindu Beg suggested that Kamran should declare himself independent so that he could rally the nobles and the soldiers, and get local support. To Askari's credit, he rejected this suggestion, but the rumours of such a move on his part gained currency. While in his cups he had declared that he was the king. This led to further disarray in the ranks of the Mughal nobility.

Only vigorous intervention from Humayun's part could have saved the situation. However, he showed no initiative and issued no orders, either because of self confidence in his arrangements, or a sense of fatigue. Meanwhile, from his base of operations at Surat, Bahadur Shah recovered Cambay and Broach and advanced on Ahmadabad. It should have been possible for Askari and Hindu Beg to meet this challenge because Bahadur Shah had only a small force at his disposal. However, divided counsel and lack of nerve made Askari to retreat to Champanir. If the Mughals had remained united, Champanir could also have been used as a base to launch a counterattack.

However, the commandant of Champanir, Tardi Beg, afraid that Askari contemplated independence, refused him permission to enter the fort, or to give him any financial assistance unless he received direct orders from Humayun. There has been a lot of debate whether Tardi Beg was right or wrong in the stand he adopted. But this debate is hardly relevant because in a situation of mutual suspicion, neither party could be expected to act in a cool, collected or rational manner. Hence, Askari moved off in a huff towards Agra. Most of the Mughals withdrew from Gujarat, and followed him. Humayun, afraid that Askari planned to declare himself independent at Agra, hastened after him. The two met at Chittor, and were reconciled. Meanwhile Malwa also was lost. (Feb. 1537).

Despite this setback, which adversely effected Humayun's prestige, the Gujarat expedition cannot be written off as being a total waste. This campaign not only showed Humayun as a vigorous leader and intrepid commander, but destroyed the threat to the Mughals from the side of Bahadur Shah. Whatever danger remained was removed when, shortly afterwards, Bahadur Shah was killed in a fracas with the

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Portuguese. It also left Humayun free to give his full attention to the problem posed by Sher Khan, the Afghan leader of Bihar.

In retrospect, we may say that once Humayun had rejected a proffered compromise with Bahadur Shah, and decided upon the direct Mughal administration of Gujarat, it would have been more politic for him to stay on at Ahmadabad for a sufficient time to settle the administration, and to win over the local elements. He could have done so because neither the situation in Malwa, nor in the east where Sher Khan was active, was so serious as to need Humayun's immediate attention. That the danger from the side of Sher Khan was not as acute as it has been made out to be is borne out by the fact that after his return from Mandu, Humayun remained at Agra for almost a year before he ventured out to the east against Sher Khan.

Humayun failed to understand the tactical situation and ground reality in Gujarat after its conquest. He also failed to understand the motivation of his leading nobles, and was, in turn, over confident of the capacity of Askari, and too suspicious of him later on. We should not, however, confuse a sense of regional pride and separatism with popular reaction. There was hardly any popular reaction to the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. The uprising of the Kolis and the villagers (gawaran) against Humayun at Cambay was more a lure for plunder than anything else. Of course, Humayun's sacking of Cambay in reprisal was uncalled for.

Thus, once again the clash between the forces of imperial unity and regional independence which were abiding features of Indian history came to the fore.

## **THE BENGAL CAMPAIGN, AND THE STRUGGLE WITH SHER SHAH**

Humayun was uncertain about his future course of action after his return from the Gujarat campaign. According to Abul Fazl, he had resolved to undertake another campaign against Gujarat, entrust its management to men who could be relied upon for steadiness in administration and were not characterised by changefulness of temperament and confused judgement. He would return "after his mind was at ease with regard to the settlement of the province." However, while arrangements for the Gujarat campaign were under way, he heard of the growing assertiveness of Sher Khan, and his activities in the east, and he resolved to capture Bengal. This was a project which he had started before the Gujarat campaign, and had advanced upto Kalpi, but he had to return to Agra on account of the danger from the side of Bahadur Shah and had to be given up. Hence, "It was decided that Sher Khan should be put down and the territories of Bengal subdued", asserts Abul Fazl.

It would appear that the primary motive of Humayun's eastern campaign was not the punishment of Sher Khan but the conquest of Bengal. If we accept this, it would explain many of the subsequent actions of Humayun which have been a subject of controversy. Thus, leaving Agra in July 1537 in the height of the rainy season, Humayun marched leisurely till he arrived at the outskirts of the powerful fort of Chunar. After staying for some time at Banaras, Humayun decided to invest Chunar because it was too powerful a fort to be left in hostile hands, and would have threatened his communications in his movement to Bengal. However, the capture of the fort took much longer than expected, despite the best efforts of Humayun's master-gunner, Rumi Khan. By the time the fort fell (June 1538), Sher Khan had captured Gaur, the capital of Bengal. After the conquest of Chunar, Humayun offered to grant Sher Khan any jagir he desired, in Chunar, Jaunpur or elsewhere if he submitted to him, gave up his resolve to capture Bengal, and surrendered the royal umbrella and other royal symbols he had captured from the ruler of Bengal. In other words, even after Sher Khan's conquest of Bengal, he was, for Humayun, merely a leading Afghan sardar who could be appeased by the grant of an appropriate jagir. This shows how little Humayun understood the nature of the Afghan challenge facing him. If later Afghan historians can be trusted, Sher Khan had already resolved to expel the Mughals from India, and was seeking means to unify the Afghans under his banner in order to do so.

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From the evidence at our disposal, it seems that it was not Chunar or even Bihar, but Bengal which was the main bone of contention between Sher Khan and Humayun. Sher Khan's resolve of conquering Bengal was understandable. There had been a constant clash between Bihar and the rulers of Bengal. As has been seen earlier, Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal had at one time dominated Bihar and even some parts of eastern U.P. before Babur intervened. After establishing his virtual domination over Bihar, Sher Khan had to fight off a number of Bengali invasions of Bihar. Following the death of Nusrat Shah, and the virtual usurpation of the throne by Sultan Ahmad Shah, Sher Khan carried the fight into Bengal. He thus planned to augment his power and wealth without incurring direct Mughal hostility. Humayun's demand for Bengal surprised Sher Khan, and he replied that he had not spent all his sweat and blood for the conquest of Bengal to give it up now. Hence, he offered to leave Bihar to Humayun, and to pay him an annual peshkash of ten lakh of rupees out of Bengal if his possession of Bengal was confirmed.

From the tone of these negotiations, it is clear that Sher Khan did not consider himself to be a subordinate of Humayun any longer, but an independent ruler. Interestingly, following his victory at Surajgarh (1534) against Nusrat Shah who had sent an army to oust Sher Khan from Bihar, Sher Khan had begun to be called "Hazrat-i-Ala". Nor was Sher Khan in a subordinate relationship with Humayun because his son, Qutb Khan, who had been deputed to serve Humayun with 500 horsemen had left when Humayun undertook the Gujarat campaign. Evidently, Sher Khan considered that the agreement he had made with Humayun at Chunar earlier had lapsed.

We are told that Humayun had accepted Sher Khan's offer of Bihar but resiled from it because the defeated king of Bengal, Mahmud Shah, appeared before Humayun, and appealed to him to continue his Bengal campaign because although Gaur had fallen, resistance to Sher Khan was still continuing. Abul Fazl says that this was "an additional reason" for the conquest of Bengal. The Bengal King is also said to have told Humayun that Bengal had such immense hoarded treasures that if it fell into his hands, the *kharaj* of the entire world could be paid from it!

The treasures it may be added, were an added reason for displacing the Bengal king, not a reason for reinstating him, as a number of modern historians consider to be the motive of Humayun's Bengal campaign. In any case, the Bengal king died before Humayun entered Bengal. It should also be remembered that Mahmud Shah had assumed the crown after killing his nephew, the son of Nusrat Shah, and was therefore considered a usurper by many. This may account for the absence of any local resistance to Humayun at his conquest of Bengal.

The question is why was Humayun so keen to conquer Bengal, specially when Bengal had an independent king and had been a separate kingdom for a long time? Apart from the lure of treasure, the only speculative answer which can be vouchsafed is that consciously or unconsciously, Humayun was trying to re-create the Sultanat of Delhi which at its height extended from Bengal to the north-west, and westward upto the Arabian Sea. There is little doubt that if Humayun had succeeded in his Bengal expedition, he would have had little difficulty in reconquering Gujarat and Malwa, and achieving this objective.

Thus, the clash between Humayun and Sher Khan was the clash between two highly ambitious individuals who had the vision of an India north of the Vindhyas being united under one political aegis. The question was under whom — the Mughals or the Afghans?

Sher Khan detained Humayun at Sikrigalli at the entrance of Bengal only till he had been able to take the bulk of the Bengal treasures to his new place of refuge, fort Rohtas. Thereafter Humayun had an easy passage to Gaur. But that was only the beginning of his difficulties. Like Gujarat earlier, he was at a loss how to manage its governance. Unlike Gujarat, he decided that the only way a measure of stability could be provided to the Bengal administration would be if he stayed in Bengal for some time. Historians differ as to the time Humayun spent in Bengal, and how he used his time — some say three months, some say



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nine months or even a year. The likelihood is that he reached Gaur after the rainy season, in September 1538, and left early next year.

Nor was he totally inactive as has been alleged. Thus, he had time to receive foreign envoys, and sent Shaikh Bahlol to Hindal to intercede with him when Humayun heard of his rebellion at Agra. Part of the time was spent in festivities of various kinds. Unlike Gujarat, there was no local regional reaction to Mughal rule. But Humayun's stay in Bengal could not, resolve the basic problem he had faced in Gujarat: viz., that the Mughal nobles were not prepared to stay so far away from what they now considered their home. They looked upon Bengal as a foreign land, and had little interest in its administration. According to Abul Fazl, the great officers who had obtained large territories in fief, gathered the materials of enjoyment and pleasure, and "opened the doors of negligence in the front of their lives. The pillars of sovereignty paid less attention to administration...." Either because of his easy character or his desire not to displease, Humayun did not pull them up. Matters reached such a pass that when Humayun, hearing of the extension of Hindal's rebellion at Agra, decided to leave Bengal, he asked Zahid Beg, an old servant, to accept the governorship of Bengal. The latter replied sarcastically, "Was there no better way for my assassination than to be given Bengal?" Humayun was angry and ordered his execution, whereupon Zahid Beg fled to Agra, along with Haji Muhammad and Dindar Beg who had been ordered to assist him in Bengal.

After patching up a government in Bengal, Humayun started his return journey under adverse circumstances because many of his horses had died in the climate of Bengal. While Humayun was in Bengal, Sher Khan had captured Banaras, besieged Chunar and Jaunpur, and devastated the Mughal possessions upto Kannauj and Sambhal. Sher Khan had also captured Mongyr, so that communications between Humayun and Agra had been largely disrupted.

Humayun's absence from Agra brought to the surface the internal rivalries between Humayun and his brothers, Askari and Hindal who had served Humayun loyally so far. Before entering Bengal, Humayun had asked Hindal who had been given Tirhut and Purnia in jagir, to go there and bring provisions for the army. However, without permission, Hindal repaired to Agra. Meanwhile, many dissatisfied Mughal nobles also left Bengal and joined Hindal at Agra. At their instance, Hindal declared himself an independent king, and had the khutba read in his name. He even marched on Delhi, but the Mughal commander of the fort refused him admission, forcing him to return to Agra.

On hearing news of Hindal's rebellion, Kamran advanced from Lahore, and succeeded in persuading Hindal to give up his dreams of independence. Meanwhile, Humayun had succeeded in reaching Chausa on the boundary of Bihar and modern U.P. That he was able to bring his army almost intact out of Bengal and Bihar despite the harassing Afghan attacks, and the demoralization in his army, was an achievement for which Humayun deserves credit.

It is clear from all accounts that the Bengal campaign of Humayun was totally ill-conceived. He should have adhered to Babur's settlement of the east, and not gone beyond Chunar or, at the most, the town, Bihar, because the Mughals in India were not yet cohesive enough, and their nobility disciplined enough to rule and administer areas far away from Delhi, and obey the Emperor implicitly. Nor had they struck roots in the country, and were neither able nor concerned about gathering local support. The best thing that Humayun could have done in these circumstances was to allow distant regions, such as Gujarat, Malwa, Bengal etc. to be ruled by local rulers who accepted broad Mughal suzerainty and promised loyalty and support. However, Humayun was so obsessed with Mughal superiority, and under-estimated his Afghan opponents so much even after his disorganized army had managed to reach Chausa that he was confident of defeating the Afghans, and planned to do so rather than falling back on Agra. That is why it appears unlikely that he would have accepted Sher Khan's offer of peace said to have been made at this time which implied granting Sher Khan Bengal, the fortress of Chunar, and other jagirs in return for Bihar and a vague promise of loyalty, as some historians would have us believe. Having conquered Bengal, to give it up at this juncture would have been tantamount to Humayun's accepting defeat.

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In his fight with Sher Khan at Chausa (26 June, 1539), Humayun followed a faulty strategy, placing the river Karmansa at his back so that a retreat became difficult. He placed his soldiers badly and allowed Sher Khan to take him unawares. After the defeat, ' Humayun retreated to Agra. Kamran had 10,000 hardened troops at his disposal, but he refused to place them under Humayun's command since he had lost confidence in Humayun's military capacities. Earlier, he had ignored Humayun's urgent missive asking for reinforcements at Chausa, on the ground that if Humayun succeeded it would be harmful to him, that is, that he would try to throw him out from Lahore after defeating the Afghans.

Shortly afterwards, Kamran withdrew from Agra to Lahore, ostensibly on the ground of illness. This foredoomed the efforts of Humayun to face Sher Khan again. The battle of Kannauj (17 May, 1540) was fought bitterly, but the outcome was hardly in doubt. Sher Khan was now in a position to fulfil his ambition of expelling the Mughals from India. He was also in a better position to carry through Humayun's half-formulated project of unifying northern India under a single aegis.

It is clear that Humayun never understood the nature of the Afghan challenge, and grossly underestimated Sher Khan. Due to the existence of large numbers of warlike Afghan tribesmen all over north India, estimated by a later writer to be 500,000 families, the Afghans could always unite under a capable leader and pose a serious challenge. The Mughal nobility was fractious, and its members were not inclined to serve in areas far away from the Agra-Delhi region which was their new home. These were the two most important factors for the failure of Humayun in Gujarat, and against Sher Khan.

The opposition of Humayun's brothers, and Humayun's fault of character have been generally over emphasised. Despite differences, Humayun was, on the whole, loyally served by Askari and Hindal till his Bengal expedition. Kamran also did not offer any opposition till then, in fact, he helped to quell Hindal's rebellion. It was only after his defeat at Chausa that his brothers lost faith in him and drifted away, or opposed him, or even tried to get him killed. Despite periods of slothfulness, Humayun proved himself to be a vigorous ruler and a competent general till he came face to face with Sher Khan who showed himself to be a better tactician and a more skillful general. In some ways, Humayun was in advance of his times. His vague ambition of unifying north India under one aegis was not realisable, given the limitations of the Mughal ruling class, and its inability to strike roots in India's soil in such a short time. But he should not be condemned for putting the item on the agenda.

## EPILOGUE

After their retreat from Agra to Lahore, Humayun and his brothers were totally unable to decide upon a strategy of how to deal with Sher Khan. Kamran was reconciled to the loss of Punjab to Sher Khan, but was determined to hold on to Kabul. Humayun therefore decided to go to Sindh and to try to conquer Gujarat, and renew his fight with Sher Khan from there. Humayun wandered about in Sindh for two and a half years, but neither the rulers of Sindh, nor Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Marwar, were prepared to stick their necks out to help Humayun in this enterprise. Maldeo invited him, but seeing the small size of his following, set his face against him. Finally, after many adventures, Humayun took shelter at the court of the Iranian king, Shah Tahmasp and with his help, recaptured Qandhar, and then Kabul. It was during this period of wandering about without a kingdom that the best in Humayun's character came out. Even during his rule over Afghanistan, he showed no rancour against his brothers, and was almost forced by his nobility to take the action of blinding Kamran after his repeated rebellions. Humayun recaptured Delhi in 1555 following the disintegration, of the Sur empire. But he did not live long after it, falling from the top floor of his library. His death marked the end of one phase, and the beginning of another one in Mughal history.

# UNIT-XVII

## SHER SHAH SURI & NORTH INDIAN EMPIRE

### THE SURS

The rise of Sher Shah from the position of a petty leader of troops to being the ruler of one of the biggest empires which had risen in north India since the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the middle of the 14th century is a saga of courage and determination which has, rightfully, aroused a lot of admiration. However, it has also led to uncritical adulation of an individual rather than focusing on the political and social processes at work. As we have pointed out, the process of building an empire encompassing entire north India started with Sikandar Lodi's final victory over Jaunpur, and was carried forward by Babur and Humayun. Babur's victory over Ibrahim Lodi and Rana Sanga, and Humayun's campaigns in Malwa and Gujarat had shattered the old balance of power. This process was carried forward by Sher Khan's defeat of the ruler of Bengal, and Humayun's campaign in Bihar and Bengal against Sher Khan. Thus, the winner of the struggle between the two was slated to emerge as one who would be the master virtually of the entire north India. As it was, Sher Shah could not complete this process — Gujarat remained out of his empire, and it was Akbar who had to complete the process. Thus, Sher Shah's achievement of the unification of north India under one aegis should be seen as a part of an historic process which had been at work for almost half a century.

Similarly, the rise of Sher Shah to supreme power from the position of a small noble calls attention to the social and political conditions in north India at the time when bold, unscrupulous men could forge ahead. Political duplicity, intrigues, and occasional lack of moral scruples which can be seen on occasions in the case of young Farid have to be seen in this context so that the type of romanticisation of Sher Shah adopted by Afghan historians who wrote more than 40 years after the events can be seen in its proper historical perspective.

### SHER SHAH'S EARLY LIFE

We have hardly any reliable details of Sher Shah's family and his early life or rise to power, and these have been carefully constructed by modern historians. However, we need concern ourselves here only with the broad outlines of Sher Shah's early life. Sher Shah's grand-father, Ibrahim Sur, who was probably a petty horse-trader, came from Afghanistan to India towards the end of Ibrahim Lodi's reign. One of his early patrons, Jamal Khan Lodi Sarangkhani, assigned a few villages in Hissar-Firuzabad in modern Haryana to him for the upkeep of 40 troopers. In those uncertain times, the position of an individual depended upon the number of horsemen at his command. Both Ibrahim and his son, Hasan, emerged as leaders of Afghan free-booters whose services were utilized by Raimal, the chief of Shekhawati, so that following the death of his father, Hasan was placed in charge of the entire pargana of Narnaul. We have no idea of the number of sawars at his command at this time, but they must have been much larger than the rank of 40 sawars held by him.

After the final conquest of Jaunpur, Sikandar Lodi appointed as governor of Jaunpur Jamal Khan Sarangkhani who had supported him in his struggle of succession to the throne. At the death of Jamal Khan, his son Khan-i-Azam Ahmad Khan Sarangkhani succeeded with a rank of 20,000 sawars. To strengthen his position in a region where the old Jaunpuri nobles were still strong, Ahmad Khan appointed Hasan Sur to the iqta of Sahsaram and Khawaspur-Tanda with a rank of 500 sawars (c.1510). This was a big raise because Hasan Sur now became a small noble with a standard (flag). Another Sur whom Ahmad Khan promoted at this time was Muhammad Khan Sur under whose father Ibrahim Sur

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had served for some time. He was given the adjacent pargana of Chaund with the rank of 1500 sawars. Thus, Hasan Khan Sur was not the only person who rose rapidly at a time when bold, adventurous men were needed to settle areas which were still under the control of the old Jaunpur nobles, the local Rajput rajas and tribal chiefs.

We do not know precisely when and where Farid, later Sher Shah, was born. The consensus of opinion among modern scholars is that he was born in Narnaul in 1486 or so, during the reign of Bahlol Lodi (d. 1489). We know little about the early education of Farid except that, angry at his father's neglect of his mother in preference to a younger wife-an Indian slave-girl, Farid came to Jaunpur, and spent a couple of years studying religious works, Arabic, history etc. at one of the well-known madrasahs there. After some time, he was reconciled to his father who gave him administrative charges of the two parganas held by him (1515-16). This gave young Farid first hand experience of the functioning of administration at the pargana and village levels.

By all accounts, Farid gave a good account of himself, and helped to settle the parganas distracted by Rajput zamindars who could defy the shiqdar on account of the dense jungles around their villages. Farid raised local levies to cut down the jungles, and in the case of recalcitrant villages, slaughtered all the men, enslaved their women and children, and settled new peasants. To the other villagers, he was strict in collecting the dues, but generous in levying them. However, after 3-4 years (1519), due to the intrigues of his step-mother, Farid was displaced from his charge. Angry and without a job, Farid took to brigandage, robbing the Hindu rajas and zamindars of north and east Bihar. After some time, however, he joined the service of Taj Khan Sarangkhan, the commander of Chunar, and then of Nasir Khan Nuhani, the muqta of sarkar Ghazipur. A little later, we find him at Agra where he entered the service of Darya Khan naib. He submitted a petition to the then ruler, Ibrahim Lodi, through his patron, to dismiss his father from his jagir of Sahsaram as he was too old and under the influence of his Indian slave-girl. Ibrahim Lodi sternly turned down his request, censoring him for making a petition against his own father. However, he relented when Hasan Khan died (c. 1524). Armed with Ibrahim Lodi's farman, Farid came to Sahsaram and ousted his step-brothers who had taken possession of his father's property and jagir in his absence. There now began the usual tale of family intrigue. Farid's brothers repaired to Muhammad Khan Sur, the powerful jagirdar of Chaund, who offered to mediate between Farid and his step-brothers. To counter this, Farid, sought the help of Bahar Khan, son of Daulat Khan Nuhani who was the governor of Bihar. At issue was the principle whether the jagir should be divided like property between sons, as was the Pathan tradition. Farid rejected this, arguing that the traditions of Roh could not be continued in Hindustan, and the jagir should go to whomsoever the Sultan desired.

Following the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat, Bahar Khan declared himself king, under the name Sultan Muhammad Shah. Many Afghans who were close to him were honoured. Among these was Farid, who according to a modern historian K.R. Qanungo, was awarded the title of Sher Khan either on this occasion or earlier for services rendered rather than for killing a tiger (sher), as the Afghan historians would have us believe. Thus, by 1526, by the time Babur established himself in India, Sher Khan had risen to the position of being an important figure in the politics of Bihar. He was about forty years at the time, and his rise was by no means a sudden one.

## **RISE OF SHER SHAH TO POWER**

The conflict between Sher Khan and Humayun has been often seen as a conflict between Afghans and Mughals, largely ignoring the social and political background of east U.P. and Bihar which played no small role in the conflict. An important factor was the attempt of the Nuhani to establish a separate kingdom in Bihar, in opposition to the rulers of Bengal on one hand, and the Mughals on the other. The Sarwanis and Farmulis, who had a strong position in east U.P., wanted to restore the old kingdom of Jaunpur. For the purpose, they sometimes used the Nuhani king of Bihar, and sometimes Mahmud Lodi, the younger brother of Ibrahim Lodi. They could not succeed and, in the process, destabilized the



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Nuhani regime in Bihar. Sultan Muhammad died shortly after the battle of Panipat and along with him, the Nuhani dynasty of Bihar virtually came to an end. It was kept alive for some time only due to the efforts of Sher Khan.

There was a conflict in almost every Afghan noble household over the transfer or division of the iqta, or if we prefer the later word, jagir, held by a member of the family. Babur took advantage of this situation by winning over to his side some of the leading Afghan nobles. Thus, Bayazid Farmuli, the brother of Maruf, who had been contending for a long with his brother about the iqta of Awadh held by him, came over and was awarded Awadh. Likewise, Nasir Nuhani's brother, Mahmud Nuhani, came over and was given the iqta of Ghazipur held by his brother. Likewise, Fath Khan Sarwani was given the title of Khan-i-jahan and a large jagir in east U.P. In this way, Babur threw a spanner among the Afghans of east U.P. Sher Khan, who had been ousted from his jagir by Muhammad Khan Sur, also came over to the Mughal governor of Jaunpur, Husain Barlas, and received from him his old jagir and a few additional parganas. However, many of these Afghan nobles defected, and raised the standard of Afghan nationalism. Threatened first from the side of Sanga and later, under Humayun, from the side of Bahadur Shah, the Mughals were not in a position to ensure the continued possession of their jagirs by these Mughal-supported Afghan nobles in the face of the forces raised by their rivals who gathered first under the banner of Sultan Muhammad, and later under Sultan Mahmud Lodi. Sher Khan was also was one of those who defected.

Another factor which helped in the rise of Sher Khan was the important position enjoyed by women in Afghan society. This was perhaps a continuation of the greater freedom women traditionally enjoyed in tribal societies, as compared to more feudalised hierarchical ones. Thus, when the ruler of Bihar, Muhammad Shah, died shortly after Babur's victory at Panipat, power passed into the hands of his widow, Dudu, his son, Jalal, being a minor. Sher Khan won over the confidence of Dudu who appointed him the guardian of Jalal leaving the affairs of state in his hands. In another case, when the commandant of fort Chunar, Taj Khan Sarangkhanī died, his wealth and power passed into the hands of his wife, Lad Malika, despite the presence of her stepsons. In the troubled situation, and to save herself, Lad Malika proposed marriage to Sher Khan, and at the marriage presented him, according to Abbas Sarwani, one hundred and fifty pieces of rare jewels, seven mans of pearls, and 150 mans of gold. Thus, Sher Khan not only got money to raise a large army but a powerful fort with the parganas attached to it. Soon, Sher Khan had another lucky break. Gauhar Gosain, the childless wife of Nasir Khan Nuhani of Ghazipur, was widowed, and as Sher Khan had been in the service of Nasir Khan at one time, she proposed marriage to him, and brought him 300 mans of gold. A little later, Bibi Fath Malika, daughter of Mian Muhammad Kalapahar Farmuli, who was the sister's son of Sultan Bahlol, came into great wealth. She had, with her wealth, supported her husband's brother, Maruf Farmuli, in his opposition to the Mughals. After his death, she thought at first of retreating into Bhata (Rewa) in Bundelkhand to save her property, but was persuaded by Sher Khan to come to him on a solemn oath of protection and non-interference with her wealth and liberty of action. But a little later, Sher Khan took 300 mans of gold from her or, according to some manuscripts, 70 mans, leaving her a small amount of gold and some villages for her maintenance.

There has been a lot of discussion about the role of Sher Khan in the battle fought by Babur at Ghagra (1529) against the Afghan leaders, Biban and Bayazid, and at Dadrah (1532) against them by Humayun. In both cases, Sher Khan was compelled to join the Afghan rebels against his wishes, but he was not enthusiastic about a separate Afghan kingdom in Jaunpur because it would have adversely effected his position in Sahsaram, and because he had his own ambitions in Bihar. Also, while he considered Biban and Bayazid to be brave warriors, he had a poor opinion about their political sagacity and organizing capacities. However, Sher Khan's staying away from the battle of Dadrah cannot be considered the cause of the defeat of the Afghan leaders who were internally divided, and had no clear plans of battle.

In a manner of speaking, it was Babur who gave Sher Khan the opening which he fully exploited. After the death of Sultan Muhammad, his widow Dudu had joined the Bengal king, Sultan Nusrat Shah who had already acquired a dominating position in Bihar, having extended his control from Tirhut to Ballia.

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To counter this, Babur restored the Nuhani kingdom, only asking Jalal to pay him one crore of tankas annually. As we have noted, since Dudu, the Queen mother, was unable to manage the affairs herself, she appointed Sher Khan as naib (deputy) and tutor to her minor son, Jalal, and left all affairs of state in his hands, making him the virtual ruler of Bihar. Sher Khan devoted himself in improving the administration of Bihar, and centralising power in his hands till the Nuhani chiefs became jealous, and began to intrigue against him.

It was the conflict between Bihar and Bengal, and Babur's reluctance to be drawn into it, keeping out of Bihar, that gave Sher Khan the first opening in his scheme of dominating Bihar. Renewal of the conflict between Bihar and Bengal gave him the next chance. Afraid of the growing power of Sher Khan, the ruler of Bihar, Jalal Khan after the death of his mother fled for protection of Sultan Nusrat Shah of Bengal who found this a good excuse to invade Bihar and crush Sher Khan. However, the invasion failed, and only added to the wealth and power of Sher Khan. Also, from now on, the Nuhani dynasty was no longer in the picture in Bihar, but had become the agent of an enemy power.

Sultan Nusrat died in 1535, but the attempt to conquer Bihar was continued by his brother, Sultan Mahmud. Sultan Mahmud launched two campaigns, the first against Makhdum-i-Alam, the Bengali governor of North Bihar, who was accused of not having helped the earlier campaign against Bihar on account of his friendship with Sher Khan. The expedition failed. However, Makhdum-i-Alam was killed, and all his property which he had handed over to Sher Khan for safe-keeping in return for his help, passed into the hands of the latter. Sultan Mahmud now made a second and final bid to conquer Bihar. He sent a large force which was joined by the Nuhani. But Sher Khan won a decisive victory against this combined force at Surajgarh (1534). Although this ended the Bengali threat to Bihar, Sher Khan was not prepared to take any chances. In the following year, he invaded Bengal, and forced Sultan Mahmud to cede territory upto Sikrighali and to pay a huge indemnity. Sultan Mahmud now tried to seek the support of the Portuguese, almost like Sultan Bahadur in Gujarat. To counter this, in 1537, Sher Khan's son, Jalal Khan, invaded and captured Gaur after a siege. This meant the virtual end of Sultan Mahmud's dynasty. It also ended the danger of Portuguese encroachments on east Bengal.

Thus, the fluid position in eastern U.P. and Bihar which lasted for a considerable period due to Mughal pre-occupations elsewhere, the socio-political position inside Bihar and east U.P., and the continuing Bihar-Bengal conflict played a definite role in the rise of Sher Khan, Sher Khan was the leading person in Bihar ever since the death of Sultan Muhammad (c. 1530) and had at his credit many victories over the powerful kingdom of Bengal. Thus, he was far more powerful and self-confident than Humayun ever envisaged, or gave him credit for.

## **THE SUR EMPIRE (1540-56)**

After his victory over Humayun at Kannauj, Sher Shah formally crowned himself. His first task was to hound the Mughals out of India, and to ensure that they were not able to return. He was able to do this without much difficulty on account of the deep division in the Mughal camp. As we have seen, at Lahore Kamran was neither prepared to fight Sher Khan, nor allow Humayun to take over Kabul, thus forcing Humayun to seek his fortune in Sindh, almost alone. At Sher Shah's approach to Lahore Kamran retreated to Kabul while Mirza Haider Dughlat moved to Kashmir, and conquered it. Sher Shah's forces marched upto the Khyber. While Sher Shah was at Khushab, many Afghan leaders from Roh called on him and received favours, while many Afghans from Roh joined his armies. But Sher Shah wisely decided not to try and incorporate the freedom-loving Afghans in the area into his empire. Thus, his empire did not extend beyond the Indus. This suggests that by this time most of the Afghans who had come to India at the time of Bahlol Lodi had become Indianized, and looked upon India as their home. However, as a protective measure, Sher Shah thoroughly subdued the Gakhbars who lived in the Salt Ranges, and put up a new powerful fort at Rohtas to control them, and to interpose a check on any possible Mughal incursion into India. The task of completing this work was entrusted to Todar Mal Khatri.

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As a part of Humayun's pursuit, Sher Shah had sent an army to Multan, and himself spent some time there. This was to put pressure on the rulers of Sindh not to support Humayun, but to capture him. Multan, which was considered to be a part of Punjab, was brought under Sher Shah's control, but no effort was made at this stage to enter upper Sindh, and to pursue Humayun any further. As it was, with the dispersal of the Mughal forces, Humayun was no longer a threat to Sher Shah.

Two years later, in 1543, Sher Shah organized a campaign to liberate Multan from the Biloch tribes which had over-run it. The commander, Haibat Khan Niazi, was asked "to destroy the robber chief Fath Khan Jat of (Kot) Kabulah and expel the Baloches from Multan and restore its prosperity." Perhaps, this step was designed to safeguard India's trade with West and Central Asia in which Multan was a principal mart. This was also the purpose of Sher Shah building a new road from Lahore to Multan. The step also had a strategic purpose: it was designed to put pressure on Maldeo who was hobnobbing with Humayun. Haibt Khan carried out a thorough policy of pacification, and Multan as well as upper Sindh, including Bhakkar and Sehwan, were annexed to the Afghan empire.

Having secured his position in Punjab and the North West, Sher Shah had time to building up a sound system of administration, rather than to engage himself in a career of constant conquest, as was the current ideal. Thus, apart from pinpricks, no serious effort was made to dislodge Mirza Haider Dughlat from Kashmir, even though he had proclaimed Humayun as the sovereign by having the khutba and sikka in his name. First, Sher Shah nipped in the bud signs of a rebellion in Bengal, where the local governor had married a daughter of the late Sultan Mahmud, and started reviewing troops sitting on a raised platform like the former Bengal rulers. Thereafter, Sher Shah's campaigns were confined to Malwa, Rajasthan, and, as we have seen, Multan and Upper Sindh. His last step was to assert his suzerainty over Bundelkhand. We are told that he had planned to invade the Deccan, i.e. Khandesh and Ahmadnagar, after this campaign.

After the retreat of Humayun from Malwa, Mallu Khan had, under the title of Qadir Khan, declared himself king, but he had been forced to allow local chiefs, including the Rajputs of Chanderi and Raisin, to function as almost independent potentates. Sher Khan invaded and conquered Malwa in 1542, but allowed many of the Hindu rajas to continue in their principalities. The following year, he returned to Malwa to crush a rebellion there, and used the opportunity to oust the powerful Rajput chief Puranmal from Chanderi-22 miles from modern Bhopal. Puran Mal who had defied Sher Shah earlier, withstood the siege. He came out of the fort with four thousand Rajputs and their families after a binding agreement had been reached by the two parties. But the Rajputs and their families were slaughtered when they were resting near Sher Shah's camp, despite the promise of a solemn safe conduct. This is a blemish on Sher Shah which cannot be washed away by the argument of some Afghan historians that no promise needed to be kept with an infidel king, and that the Rajputs had kept Muslim women from respected families in their houses, a charge which Puran Mal had denied. It might be mentioned that a similar charge was levied earlier on his father, Silhadi.

The conquest of Malwa and Chanderi was a prelude to the conquest of Marwar where Maldeo had ascended the gaddi in 1531. He had steadily augmented his power till it comprised almost the whole of western and eastern Rajasthan including Sambhal and Narnaul in Shekhawati. His armies were also said to have been seen near Hindaun and Bayana on the outskirts of Agra. He had strongly fortified the old forts, such as those of Ajmer, Merta and Jodhpur, and built new ones at strategic points. His conquest of Satalmir and Pokharan had enabled him to induct into his army large number of Bhatias who were famous for their valour. His last conquest had been that of Bikaner ruled by his kinsmen who had died fighting to the last man before the fort surrendered. However, two of the ruler's son, Kalyanmal and Bhim, had escaped earlier, and taken shelter at the court of Sher Shah, along with Biramdeo of Merta.

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In his mad policy of expansionism, Maldeo came into conflict not only with the thikanedars (hereditary fief, holders) his kinsmen, subordinate to him whom he had ousted from their thikanas, but also with the Rana of Mewar, the Kachhawahas, the Shaikhawati chiefs etc. These internal divisions played a big role in the subsequent defeat and downfall of Maldeo.

It is difficult to say what the true ambitions of Maldeo were. That he wanted to establish a Rathor hegemony over the whole of Rajasthan is understandable. But the argument of K.R. Qanungo that he had before him the vision of a political mirage of reviving the eighth century Rashtrakuta empire appears unhistorical. As Qanungo himself points out, unlike Sanga, Maldeo did not have the support of the Rajput “tribes” i.e. various clans of Rajputs or even his own clan of Rathors because of his policy of unbridled aggrandizement and his many faults of character. However, in term of real politik, no empire based only on Rajasthan could hope to successfully challenge and defeat a power which had behind it the backing and combined resources of Punjab and the Upper Ganga Valley upto the border of Bihar. Maldeo was aware of this, and shrank from an open confrontation with Sher Shah. Thus, after his conquest of Malwa in 1541, Sher Shah occupied Ranthambhor, and the Kachhawaha country of eastern Rajasthan without encountering any opposition from Maldeo. Sher Shah’s next step was to capture Shaikhawati, including Nagor. This and a message to Maldeo agreeing to recognize his conquest of Bikaner if he would expel or capture Humayun, with an implied threat of invasion if he did not comply was sufficient for Maldeo to grow cold towards Humayun who was advancing towards Jodhpur with a small retinue on the basis of an earlier invitation extended to him by Maldeo. In this changed situation, it was wise for Humayun to turn away, though it does not follow that Maldeo had intended to arrest his own guest. This averted Sher Shah’s threatened invasion, but as events proved, it only postponed the day of reckoning. No power based on Delhi and Agra was likely to tolerate a power in Rajasthan which could threaten it from the flanks, and disrupt communications with Malwa and Gujarat.

Early in 1543, Sher Shah advanced from Agra with an army of 80,000 horses, and a strong park of artillery, and camped at Jaitaran, mid-way between Jodhpur and Ajmer. Maldeo had an army of 50,000 but the Rajputs lacked artillery. In his usual fashion, Sher Shah had dug trenches and earthworks around his camp to protect his position including his artillery. It would have been suicidal for Maldeo to attack the well fortified Afghan camp. After facing each other for a month, it seems that Rao Maldeo wanted to retreat to Jodhpur and Siwana where he could prepare a better defence. But this was not to the liking of Maldeo’s sardars who considered retreat, even a strategic one, to be dishonourable. Difference of opinion, or forged letters from Sher Shah sowing doubts in Maldeo’s mind about the loyalty of some of his sardars, led to disunity in the Rajput camp of which Sher Shah took advantage. While Maldeo retreated with the bulk of his army, Sher Shah had little difficulty in overcoming the small gallant band of Rajputs. Maldeo took shelter in the fort of Siwana, but Jodhpur and Ajmer fell to the Afghans. After establishing his outposts there, Sher Shah turned to Mewar. The Rana purchased peace by surrendering Chittor. Sher Shah set up his out-posts upto Mt. Abu. Thus, he became master of all Rajasthan except a tract in the west. Sher Shah’s oft quoted remarks that “I had given away the country of Delhi in exchange for a handful of millets” should not lead us to conclude that victory was almost in Maldeo’s grasp if he had attacked boldly. Sher Shah’s remark was, in fact, a tribute to the gallantry of Jaita and Kupa, the leaders of the Marwar army, and the willingness of the Rajputs to face death even in the face of impossible odds.

The conquest of Rajasthan should logically have led to the conquest of Gujarat, upper Sindh with its capital at Bhakhar, having been captured earlier. But for some odd reason, from Rajasthan Sher Shah turned to the conquest of Bhata (Rewa) in Bundelkhand. While besieging its fort, Kalinjar, Sher Shah died in May 1545 from burns when a rocket rebounded from the wall, and set fire to a bundle of rockets where he was standing. But he had the satisfaction of seeing the surrender of the fort before he died.

Sher Shah was succeeded by his second son, Jalal Khan, who took the title of Islam Shah. Islam Shah’s reign of almost nine years was spent mostly in the civil war with his elder brother, Adil Khan, and in



struggle with the nobility. Although Islam Shah had been a noted warrior in Sher Shah's time, he was both harsh and deeply suspicious, specially in his dealings with those nobles who had been close to his father, and who had helped to build the empire. At the same time, Islam Shah tried to assert the superior position of the monarchy, treating the nobles as servitors instead of being considered partners in the kingdom, as was the Afghan tradition. Thus, he issued detailed instructions which were read out every Friday in a gathering of high grandees where the slipper and the quiver of the Sultan were put on a high chair (qursi), and all the high grandees who were commanders of 20,000 or 10,000 or 5000 sawars advanced in proper orders and bowed to them. He also tried to exercise greater financial control over the iqtas or jagirs of the nobles which led to the charge that he wanted to bring all the jagirs under imperial control (khalisa). He also tried to pay cash salaries to the soldiers, instead of jagirs.

All these steps led to resentment on the part of the Afghan nobles which burst forth after the death of Islam Shah in 1553, and led to the speedy disintegration of the Sur empire. This gave an opportunity to the Mughals to reassert themselves.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF SHER SHAH AND ISLAM SHAH

Although Sher Shah ruled only for about five years, he has many contributions to his credit. Sher Shah's foremost contribution was the establishment of law and order over the length and breadth of the empire. Sher Shah laid great emphasis on making the roads safe, and took stern action against robbers and dacoits. He was convinced that the safety of the roads could only be ensured if the zamindars, some of whom were in league with the robbers, were kept under control. Thus, he took stern action against Fath Khan Jat who had devastated the entire tract of Lakhi Jungle (in the modern Montgomery district, and the old sarkar of Dipalpur) and had caused confusion from Lahore to Delhi by his violent behaviour. The governors of the sarkars Sambhal (near modern Moradabad) and of Lucknow suppressed the contumacious zamindars and rebels of the area so thoroughly that, we are told, they cut with their own hands the jungles "which they had nursed like their own babes" where they had found shelter, and sought deliverance after repenting for having committed theft and highway robbery. Similarly, we are told that the governor of Kannauj dealt sternly with rebels and highway plunderers in the area under his control. Thus, establishment of law and order implied not only making the roads safe, but of bringing to book zamindars and the raiyat which were remiss in paying land revenue, or in carrying out imperial orders.

Sher Shah laid great emphasis on improving roads and the system of communications, both to help military movements and to foster trade and commerce. The roads also ensured greater control over the countryside. Thus, he restored the old imperial road from the river Indus in the west to Sonargaon in Bengal. He also built a road from Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor, which must have linked up with the roads leading to the sea-ports of Gujarat. He built a third road from Lahore to Multan which was the starting point for caravans to west and central Asia. He built a fourth road from Agra to Burhanpur, again linking it with the roads leading to the sea-ports of Gujarat. We are told that for ensuring safety on the roads and for extending comforts to the travellers, he built sarais on the highway at a distance of two karohs (4 miles). Separate apartments were built for the Hindus and the Muslims where they could get beds and cooked food, and Muslim and Brahman cooks were appointed for the purpose. There also was provision for uncooked food-supplies being given to Hindus who had their own caste rules. According to Abbas Khan, Sher Shah made a rule to the effect that "whoever came to the sarai was to be served with food out of government money according to one's rank and his pony was given grain and drink." A custodian (shahna) was appointed in each sarai to safeguard the goods of the merchants, and rent-free lands were allotted in the neighbourhood for their expenses, and for the expenses of the imam and the muezzin for the mosque which was built in each sarai.

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We are told that Sher Shah built 1700 such sarais. They were really fortified inns, and were built strongly because some of them have survived even to-day. We are told that Sher Shah caused markets to be set up in every sarai. Many of the sarais became mandis where the peasants came to sell their produce, and were the nucleus for the growth of towns (qasbas) where trade and handicrafts developed.

These sarais must have been popular because we are told that later, Islam Shah ordered a sarai to be built between every two sarais of Sher Shah. The sarais were also used for dak chowkis (postal service) for which two horses were kept at every sarai. By this means, by relays of horses news from a distance of 300 kos could reach in a day.

Sher Shah adopted other measures, too, to promote trade and commerce. He struck fine coins of silver and copper of uniform standard in place of the debased coins of mixed metals of earlier times. His silver rupee remained a standard coin for a long time. He also made some effort to standardize weights and measures.

In Sher Shah's empire, goods paid customs duty only two times—at the place of entry and at the time of sale. As an example, Abbas Sarwani tells us: "When they (the merchandise) came from Bengal, the custom was levied at Garhi (Sikrighali)". He adds, "When it (merchandise) came from the direction of Khurasan, the custom duty was levied on the borders of the kingdom, and again a second duty was levied at the place of sale." It is not clear why the produce of Bengal was clubbed with foreign merchandise. Abbas Sarwani goes on to say, "No one dared to levy other customs, either on the road or at the ferries, in town or village."

For the safety and tranquility of the roads Sher Shah made it a rule to make the muqaddams (headmen of villages) and zamindars responsible for apprehending the culprits if the theft took place within their charge, or to make good the loss if they were unable to do so. If murder had been carried out, and the murderer not traced, the muqaddams themselves were to be put to death. It was a barbarous rule to club the innocent with the guilty, but it was based on the principle that theft and highway robbery were committed either at the instance of the muqaddams or that the muqaddams at least had full information about them. In any case, Sher Shah's approach appears to have yielded good results so that Abbas Sarwani uses the traditional metaphor for the situation that "In the days of the rule of Sher Khan if an old white-haired woman proceeded on the road with a basket full of good and ornaments on her head, none of the thieves and night patrols, out of dread of Sher Khan, could even go near her." This was a traditional metaphor used by many writers to emphasize safety on the roads, and is not meant to be taken literally. Abbas Khan's emphasis was on the dictum "First make the roads safe from the robbers, if you want the country to remain populous and prosperous."

Sher Shah also urged the local and other officials not to injure the travellers and the merchants, and not to lay their hands on the property of the merchants if any one of them should die by accident and without heirs. Also, officials were to purchase goods from the merchants only at their market price. That these injunctions were not always followed in practice is shown by similar regulations being made later on by Jahangir, and Bernier's complaint of the mistreatment of the merchants by high nobles under Shah Jahan.

It has been said that the most striking contribution of Sher Shah was his reform of the revenue system. He was well qualified to do so because he was fully acquainted with the prevailing revenue system as incharge of his father's jagir, and as the virtual ruler of Bihar for ten years after 1530. Sher Shah wanted that the assessment of land-revenue should not be based on cropsharing or estimation. Nor should the village head-men and zamindars be allowed to pass their burden on to the shoulders of the weaker sections. Hence, as a ruler, he insisted upon the system of measurement (zabt). Although a system of measurement of the sown area was very old in India, and had been instituted or revived by Alauddin Khalji, the system of measurement introduced by Sher Shah was different from the traditional system. In

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the traditional system, the crop-yield was estimated on the basis of sample cuttings in the sown area. Under Sher Shah, lands were divided into three categories — good, bad and middling, and the average yield computed. One-third of the average yield was the share of the state. On this basis, a crop-rate (ray) was drawn up, so that as soon as the sown field was measured, the share of the state could be determined. This could then be converted into rupees on the basis of local rates. The peasants were given the option of paying in cash or kind, though Sher Khan preferred cash. We are told that only Multan was excluded from measurement on account of special circumstances, the old system continuing there, with the state share being only one-fourth. He also laid down the charges to be paid to the measuring parties.

The measurement of fields was to be carried out every year. As a safeguard against famine which was a recurrent feature, a cess at the rate of two and a half seers per bigha was also levied.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the extent to which these reforms were applied to different parts of the empire under Sher Shah and Islam Shah, and whether the settlement was made with each individual cultivator, or with the village headmen (muqaddams) and zamindars. Although Abul Fazl says that under Sher Shah and Islam Shah, Hindustan passed from crop-sharing and estimation to measurement, detailed study by Irfan Habib show that even under Akbar the system of measurement was prevalent only in the settled parts of the empire in the doab, Punjab and Malwa, and that even there it is probable that it did not cover the whole land in any province. However, the starting of the zabt system was undoubtedly a significant development. We are told that the amount each peasant had to pay was written down on a paper called patta, and each one was informed of it. No one was allowed to charge anything extra. This has led some modern historians to compare it to the ryotwari system of the British whereby the state established direct relations with the peasants. However, modern research does not support this. While an attempt was made to assess the obligations of individual cultivators, the local head-men and zamindars were involved both in the process of assessment and collection of the land-revenue, and received remuneration for their services. No attempt was made by the medieval state to do away with the muqaddams and the zamindars because it was in no position to do so. All that it could do was to limit their exactions.

We find some contradictory elements in Sher Shah's attitude towards the peasantry. We are told that he was very solicitous of the interests of the peasantry. While looking after his father's jagir, he is supposed to have said, "I know that the humble raiyat are the pivot of agriculture. If they are happy the cultivation will thrive. If the raiyat are in a bad condition, the agricultural output will diminish." Thus, he was very careful that when his army marched the cultivated fields were not affected. Horsemen were posted to prevent the soldiers entering into the cultivated portions of the farmers' land, and he took stern action against those soldiers who were found violating this. Abbas Khan says that if on account of the narrowness of the passage, the cultivation came to be trampled down by acts of necessity, trustworthyamins were appointed to measure the devastated portion of the cultivation and then to pay the compensation money to the raiyat.

However, Sher Shah solicitude applied only to peasants who were fully loyal, observed the imperial regulations, and paid their dues without demurr. No mercy was to be shown to those zamindars and their followers who were remiss in making the payments, or did not attend the office of the amils. In that case, their villages were to be captured, the men slain, women and children enslaved, their animals and property seized, and new peasants settled in the area. This, apparently, was a traditional practice.

It does not seem that Sher Shah made any changes in the system of government in the country. The lowest unit was the pargana which comprised a number of villages. Each village had a headman (muqaddam) who looked after law and order, and a patwari who kept accounts. Neither of them were government servants, but were entitled to a share in the produce. The pargana was under the charge of a shiqdar who looked after law and order and general administration, and a munsif or amil whose responsibility was to measure the land for land-revenue. Both these officials were responsible for the

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collection of land-revenue. They were assisted by two clerks who maintained accounts both in Persian and the local language (Hindavi).<sup>\*</sup> There was also a khazanadar or poddar who kept the cash and the money collected. Sher Shah considered the posts of amils to be profitable ones, and changed the amils every two years so that others close to him could also benefit. This implies that the regulations he had made prohibiting collection of cesses and charges beyond those permitted were flouted in practice, and he had no means of stopping it.

Above the pargana was the shiq to which the word sarkar had begun to be used increasingly from the time of the Lodis. Although we are told that the sarkar was headed by a shiqdar-i-shiqdaran, no persons with such a title is found anywhere. The word used for the head of the sarkar was the faujdar or the muqta, and he was assisted by a munsif or munsif-i-munsifan who was responsible for the assessment of land revenue, and settling the boundary disputes between parganas. Both these officials were responsible for the collection of land-revenue which sometimes implied military operations, as we have seen.

There has been a lot of controversy whether Sher Shah had a system of provincial organization or not. Recent research shows that in the Sultanat there was no provincial organization as such but sometimes a number of shiqs were grouped together, and called khitta or vilayat. This generally happened in frontier areas such as Bengal or Punjab, or some of the more turbulent areas. It appears that Sher Shah more or less maintained the same system. In Lahore, Bihar, Multan, Jodhpur, Ranthambhor and the hill-areas around Nagarkot, a number of shiqs or sarkars were group together under the control of an amin or muqta who was really a military commander. Thus, Haibat Khan Niazi was placed in charge of the vilayat of Punjab, Haji Khan was placed in charge of entire Malwa, and Khawas Khan was placed in charge of the vilayat of Jodhpur so that the faujdars of the sarkars of Ajmer, Nagor, Mewat were under him. Bengal was fragmented into units or shiqs because of fear of rebellion, and a non-military man, Qazi Fazilat, was appointed amin, merely to coordinate.

Thus, provincial governments evolved only under the Mughals. Sher Shah's contribution was to stabilize and further consolidate the boundaries and structure of the shiqs or sarkars which remained the real unit of administration even under the Mughals. We know very little about the structure of the central government under Sher Shah. We are told that Sher Shah did not like the Mughal system of government in which large powers were left in the hands of the ministers who were corrupt. Hence, he looked into everything himself, and devoted himself to work unremittingly, and constantly toured the country.

This type of personal administration is supposed to be typified by his army organization. He introduced the branding system (dagh) of the horses and descriptive-rolls (chehra) which had fallen into disuse. He imposed it very harshly. Descriptive rolls of even sweepers and female slaves in the palace were recorded. We are told that he used to personally interview every soldier and fixed his pay before he was inducted into the army, and had the horses branded in his own presence. He maintained a personal army of 150,000 cavalry, 25,000 bowmen and infantry men, including matchlock-men and bowmen, a park of artillery and 5,000 war elephants. In addition, there were nobles, some of whom were commanders of 20,000 sawars, or 10,000 or 5,000 sawars. We do not know how their soldiers were recruited. Perhaps, the Afghan nobles must have recruited them on a tribal basis. Although we are told that Sher Shah himself fixed the monthly stipends of newly recruited soldiers, we do not know how much they were paid. It seems that both the nobles and the soldiers were paid by means of land-assignments or iqtas.

Before undertaking any campaign, he asked his chiefs and soldiers if any of them was without iqtas so that arrangements could be made for grants to them before setting out. The chiefs were under strict instructions not to take anything out of the iqtas reserved for the soldiers. Thus, the question of Sher Shah wanting to do away with the iqta or jagir system does not arise.



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However, howsoever hard an individual might work, it was impossible for him to personally supervise the administration of a vast country such as Hindustan. It seems that there was a revenue department and a department of the ariz which looked after the army. There also was a sadr who looked after the revenue-free grants made to religious people, scholars, etc., the sadr being asked to review all the grants made earlier. Thus, the traditional departments must have continued, but those at their head were perhaps allowed little power or authority. Such over-centralization proved harmful once a masterful man like Sher Shah had been removed from the scene.

Sher Shah gave great emphasis on justice. He used to say, "Justice is the most excellent of religious rites, and is approved alike by the king of infidels and of the faithful." Also that "None of the devotions and prayers can be equated with justice and here all the sections of infidels and Islam are one on the point." "Justice implied making no distinction between men of his own tribe and near relations and others in awarding punishment, and to prevent oppression by those in power, i.e. the high grandees and others to "avert the sighs of the injured and the oppressed." It is difficult to say how effective he was in practice in this sphere, despite the presence of a large number of spies who reported on everything. Qazis were appointed throughout the kingdom to dispense justice though we know little about their working. Panchayats and caste bodies must have continued to provide civil law to the Hindus, while zamindars and shiqdars were also involved in providing criminal justice.

Sher Shah's reputation as a builder rests largely on the magnificent mosque he had built for himself at Sahsaram which was in a class by itself for strength, stability and harmony. He built a city at Delhi on the bank of the Jamuna the only surviving parts of which are the Old Fort with its massive battlements, and the magnificent mosque inside it. These examples suffice to show that Sher Shah had great understanding and sensibility for architecture.

Although Sher Shah was generous in providing support and patronage to religious divines and scholars, the Sur period was too brief to produce any remarkable work of note, the only exception being the Hindi work Padmavat by Malik Muhammad of Jais in east U.P.

## CHARACTER OF THE STATE UNDER THE SURS

Sher Shah's state is said to be "a compromise between the Afghan and Turkish theories of sovereignty" The Afghan sardars were not supposed to be partners in the kingdom, but like Sher Shah himself, any of them could aspire to suzerainty. Although Sher Shah was a despot, and kept the nobles under strict control with the help of spies, he paid attention to the susceptibilities and needs of his nobles and the soldiers. He paid special attention to the recruitment of Afghans who rallied around him. Large jagirs or iqta were given to the nobles. Khawas Khan, a favourite and leading noble of Sher Khan, had the whole sarkar of Sirhind as his maintenance iqta which he placed under the charge of his slave, Bhagwant. Khawas Khan, it may be noted, was not an Afghan, but the son of an Indian slave of Sher Shah, Malik Sukkha. However, the nobility under Sher Shah and Islam Khan was predominantly Afghan. Recent research has shown that Barmazid Kur who was a close confidant of Sher Shah, and who had been appointed in charge of the sarkar of Ajmer after its conquest whom K.R. Qanungo had wrongly identified as Brahmajit Gaur as a brahman from east U.P., was in fact a Sur and was called as such by some of the Afghan historians of the time. The word "Kur" which meant one-eyed, or squint eyed was applied to him as a sobriquet. He had a reputation for cruelty because when Humayun fled from Agra after his defeat at Kannauj, Barmazid captured a few hundred Mughals and executed each one of them. He also killed any prisoner entrusted to him.

Sher Shah tempered his despotism by generosity and benevolence. He is reported to have ordered his high officials to maintain records of all the disabled and handicapped persons in different towns, cities and territories. All of them received maintenance allowances as well as cash grants. He maintained a large langar khana (free kitchen) for the poor and the needy and this example was followed by some of his nobles.

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Sher Shah was an orthodox Muslim and observed his prayers regularly. He was well acquainted with religious sciences, and constantly associated with learned men and religious divines. However, he was not bigoted. The cruel treatment meted out to Puran Mal of Chanderi cannot be justified, but it was a political measure which was given a religious gloss. Although jizyah continued to be collected, it is called a city tax which implies that it was collected in the countryside as a part of land-revenue. There are no reference to destruction of temples. There are a few references to grant of rent-free lands not only to Muslims and foreign scholars, but also to brahmans, temples and maths. Thus, when Sher Shah was leading the expedition to Kalinjar, he met a brahman and was impressed by his frankness in speaking and gave him in grant one entire village in sarkar Kalpi and five hundred rupees in cash.

Islam Shah took an important step in limiting the influence of the ulama. He issued detailed orders not only on administration and revenue matters which had to be followed in every sarkar, but also in religious matters, without bothering whether they were in conformity of the sharia or not, and “none could dare refer any of these orders to the qazi or the mufti.” As the administration tightened, more and more Hindus were appointed to the revenue department, to the discomfiture of the Afghans. Opportunities for the Hindus broadened till under Adali, a successors of Islam Shah, Hemu, who had started official life as a shuhna of the market at Delhi, rose to the highest position of wazir. Although this happened in a period of disintegration, it showed a trend whereby the Afghans state set up by Sher Shah was slowly opening out and the social base of the ruling class becoming broader. But a basic change had to await the arrival of Akbar.

# UNIT-XVIII

## CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

### AKBAR-CONFLICT WITH THE AFGHANS AND HEMU

The return of the Mughals to Delhi in 1555 had not ended the Afghan danger, and the Mughals came within an ace of being thrown out of India again, following the death of Humayun at Delhi (1556). As Ishwari Prasad says “...even in the disruption of the Afghan empire, there were ample resources, both in men and leaders, to have made the reconquest of India by the Mughals a virtual impossibility.” The Mughals had defeated a much larger force than theirs headed by Sikandar Sur at Sirhind in 1554, but Sikandar still had powerful forces at his disposal in the north-east corner of Punjab. Adali, another claimant to the Sur throne, dominated Bihar and east U.P. from his capital at Chunar. Bengal was under the control of Muhammad Khan Sur. 50,000 Afghans had assembled near Jaunpur under the son of Jalal Khan Sur. Hearing of the death of Humayun, the Afghans had thrown off the demoralization which had gripped them earlier when, “thousands upon thousands of Afghans would flee at the sight of ten of the large-turbaned horsemen i.e. Mughals” (Badayuni). The resurgent Afghans drove the Mughals out of Bayana, Etawah, Sambhal, Kalpi, Narnaul and Agra, and Hemu, a general of Adali, “having swept before him the Amirs from the frontiers of Hindustan (i.e. north-west India),” according to Badayuni, advanced upon Delhi with a force of 50,000 sawars, 1,000 elephants, 51 pieces of cannon and 500 falconets.

The rise of Hemu who has been called a baqqal (trader)<sup>1</sup> has been a subject of much historical speculation. A resident of Deoli- Sachari, then the chief town of Alwar, he is said to have started life as a seller of saltpeter at Rewari, and was then shuhna (superintendent) of the market at Delhi under Islam Shah, and had also done the work of soldiering. The stages by which he rose to be the Chief Commander of the forces of Adali, and the position of wazir are not known, although he had the confidence of Adali from the beginning. He is reputed to have won twenty-two battles against the opponents of Adali or Sultan Adil Shah. However, it would be wrong to project Hemu as the leader of some kind of a Hindu resurgence. According to Abdul Fazl, after his victory at Delhi against Tardi Beg, “the ambition of sovereignty” was stirring in Hemu’s mind. Badayuni says that he assumed the title of Bikramjit like a great Raja in Hindustan from whom the people of Hind take their era, and that he “had done his best there to subvert the ordinances of Islam”.

But Badayuni refrains from giving any details. Nizamuddin Ahmad merely says that Hemu had assumed the title of Raja Bikramjit. However, the assumption of the title of “Vikramjit” does not imply that Hemu had proclaimed himself as an independent king, and none of the authors we have quoted above say so. In fact, the military force at the disposal of Hemu consisted almost entirely of Afghans. At the second battle of Panipat fought with Bairam Khan on November 5, 1556, Hemu’s left wing was commanded by Ramaiyya, the son of his sister, but there is no reference to his army consisting of Rajputs. In this situation, it would have been disastrous for Hemu to declare himself an independent king. As it was, we are told that there was some murmuring against Hemu among the Afghans who were, according to Badayuni, “sick of his usurpation.. prayed for his downfall”. This was no doubt on account of jealousy at his rapid rise, and the confidence placed in him by Adali who had provided him with the military forces and abundant treasures. The rise of Hemu was really an index of the relatively more open society which had developed under the Afghans, and the growing accord of the Afghans with the Hindu rajas. This continued in the time of Babur, as we have seen, and was reflected in the subsequent Afghan support to Rana Pratap.

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The defeat of Hemu at the battle field of Panipat was due in part to the disaffection of some of Afghan sardars against him, Hemu's disregard of artillery which he had earlier carelessly allowed the Mughals to capture, and his excessive reliance on his well-armed and trained elephants. Even then, the outcome of the battle was uncertain: both the Mughal left and the right wings having been thrown into disarray, and Hemu advancing towards the centre till, by chance, an arrow pierced his eye, and he fainted. Not seeing him, the army panicked, and dispersed. Hemu was brought to Bairam Khan who killed him after the young Akbar had been persuaded to touch his neck lightly with his sword.

A minaret was made of the heads of the slain. We are told that immense treasures and stores were captured. Although Hemu's wife escaped with elephants laden with gold, the gold she left behind was so great that it was given away on shields. Subsequently, Hemu's home was attacked and his father killed. The historian, Abul Fazl, praises Hemu for his lofty spirit, courage and enterprise, and wishes that if Akbar had come out of his veil, or there had been some far-sighted master of wisdom in his court, they would have kept Hemu as a prisoner, and if he had been persuaded to join royal service, he would have rendered distinguished service.

The Afghan danger did not disappear even after Hemu's defeat. It took more than six months military operations and siege of Sikandar Sur at Mankot before he surrendered. Adali had been killed earlier in a battle with the king of Bengal. But the Afghans of Jaunpur continued to be active. According to Abul Fazl, "The Afghans still carried in their brains the vapours of sedition." Ali Quli Khan Zaman chased away the Afghans at Sambhal who had collected a force of 20,000 sawars. He then advanced on Jaunpur which he gained without opposition. Afghan sardars continued to hold the powerful forts of Chunar and Rohtas, and made repeated efforts to establish a separate principality of Jaunpur. Thus, after the downfall of Bairam Khan (1560), the Afghans proclaimed Sher Khan, a son of Adali who was the commandant of Chunar, as their king, and advanced on Jaunpur with a force of 20,000 horse, 50,000 infantry and 500 elephants. Ali Quli Khan Zaman who was governor of Jaunpur, was fortunate in defeating them with the help of local jagirdars. The Afghans made a third attempt on Jaunpur in 1564 when they set up Awaz Khan, son of Salim Sur, as the king, and besieged the city. After an initial victory the Afghans dispersed for loot, enabling Ali Quli Khan Zaman to gain a complete victory over them.

Even afterwards, the eastern areas continued to pose a problem. After defeating the Afghans, Ali Quli Khan Zaman himself began to dream of independence in the region. He established an active alliance with the Afghans of Bihar, and maintained good relations with the Afghan ruler of Bengal.

Thus, the situation facing the Mughal empire in the east during the early years of Akbar's reign was remarkably similar to the one facing Humayun at the time of his ascending the throne. We shall see how precisely Akbar tackled it.

## **STRUGGLE WITH THE NOBILITY: BAIRAM KHAN'S REGENCY**

Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, who had been born at Amarkot on 15 October 1542 when Humayun was in flight from Bikaner, had an adventurous life. When he was only one year old, Humayun had to abandon him and flee to Iran in the face of an attempt by Kamran to capture him. Akbar remained in the custody of Kamran for two years, and was well treated. It was only when Humayun had captured Qandahar with the help of Iranian forces, recovered Kabul and then lost it to Kamran that the latter had shown the meanness of exposing young Akbar on the battlements to the artillery fire of Humayun. Akbar had escaped unhurt. Thereafter, a number of tutors were appointed to impart to Akbar the training considered necessary for a young prince. But Akbar was more interested in hunting, riding, animal sports and other past-time such as pigeon-flying, so that he neglected his studies to the extent that he never learnt to write.



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When Akbar was at Kalanaur campaigning against Sikandar Sur, news was received of Humayun's death at Delhi after a fall from his library. The assembled nobles raised Akbar to the throne (1556), and Bairam Khan, who had been appointed his tutor (ataliq) by Humayun, and was the chief man on the spot, was appointed the wakil mutlaq, or in charge of all matters, political and financial. Since the Mughal position was still very insecure, and there was a lot of factionalism and demoralization in the nobility, many nobles having fled in panic at the advance of the Afghans, no one objected to the high position accorded to Bairam. Bairam showed firmness in executing Tardi Beg for his cowardice in evacuating Delhi, and punished others also. Earlier, another noble, Abul Muali, who had been close to Humayun, was apprehended while attending a feast held in honour of Akbar's coronation, and put in jail. While these actions may have been necessary, it is clear that Bairam used the situation for removing from the scene two of his potential rivals. That Tardi Beg's execution was kept concealed for three months lends credence to this charge. It is also underlined by the decision of Munim Khan, another potential rival of Bairam Khan, who was governor of Kabul and was a close confidant of Humayun, to postpone his departure from Kabul to India on learning of these developments. This provides the background to what has been called Bairam Khan's regency which lasted for four years, from 1556 to 1560.

During his regency, Bairam Khan had many achievements to his credit. The threat to Kabul from Mirza Sulaiman, the ruler of Badakhshan, was averted, and the kingdom extended from Kabul to Jaunpur in the east, and upto Ajmer in the west. The powerful fort of Gwaliyar was captured. An expedition was sent to conquer Malwa. An effort was made to capture Ranthambhor, but had to be given up following Bairam's downfall.

Bairam had to face many problems in his dealing with the nobility while holding the highest office. As we have seen, the firm action taken by Bairam Khan to curb any potential rivals cowed down the nobility, and they were outwardly docile and obedient, as long as Bairam Khan enjoyed the confidence and support of the young king. But Maham Anaga, Akbar's foster-mother, who had nursed Akbar right from the beginning, her relations, and the relations of other foster-mothers, such as the Atka Khail, were inwardly extremely jealous of Bairam's preeminence, and tried to create a rift between Akbar and Bairam Khan. Their efforts were strengthened when Akbar's mother, Hamid Banu Begum, and other women relations of the young Emperor who had remained at Kabul during this period due to political uncertainty, joined him at Agra. They tried to poison Akbar's mind by using minor incidents, such as when some elephants ran towards Bairam's tent and Bairam thought that the incident had been planned to remove him, and gave drastic punishments, or his redistribution of the royal elephants to some of his followers, taking some elephants away from Akbar. Akbar instinctively supported Bairam. However, the nobles began to be restive at Bairam's domination, and his effort to keep all power in his hands and in the hands of a coterie dependent on him or raised by him. Since Bairam Khan was not a sovereign, he could not raise a new nobility dependent on him, but could only push forward comparatively junior and low ranking officers loyal to him. This, in turn, alienated a large section of the nobles. Matters were made worse when some of these officers lacked efficiency or behaved in an arrogant manner. The case of Shaikh Gadai, the sadr, and a favourite of Bairam Khan is a case in point. The revenue aspects of the empire were being earlier looked after by Pir Muhammad Khan, an old noble, as Bairam's agent (wakil). He was removed and dismissed from service by Bairam Khan due to an unintended personal affront—Bairam Khan had gone to see Pir Muhammad since he was ill, but his servant, not recognising Bairam Khan, refused to admit him! Shaikh Gadai who was sadr, and close to Bairam Khan, now began to interfere in revenue affairs. He was very arrogant and niggardly in giving madadd-i-maash (revenue-free lands), and that, too, only after a personal appearance by the applicant. Shaikh Gadai was not low-born, nor was he a Shia, as has been alleged by some modern historians. Nor was he a new appointee, having been appointed sadr in the first year of Bairam's regency. He has been praised by the orthodox Badayuni for his scholarly attainments. Thus, according to Badayuni, for several years, he was resorted to as an authority on religious questions by the sages and principal men of Hindustan, Khurasan, Transoxiana and Iraq. This precludes his being a Shia. Bairam was opposed by the Turkish nobles since he was a Turkman, i.e. an Iranized Turk, and was considered a Shia. But Bairam was

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a liberal, and associated with people from all sects. Badayuni praises him for his wisdom, generosity, sincerity, goodness of disposition, and humility, and that the second conquest of Hindustan, and the building up of the empire was due to his valour. He also says that Bairam was “a great friend to religion”, and did not miss his regular prayers. Since Badayuni was an orthodox Sunni, this must be considered praise indeed. The dominant group of the nobles at the court were Chughtai Turks. Bairam worked with them and made no effort to displace them. In fact, he had cordial relations with the powerful group of Turkish nobles represented by the Uzbeks, such as Ali Quli Khan Zaman, his brother Bahadur Khan, etc. The Turkish nobles were prepared to work with Bairam Khan, but they were extremely envious, and always tried to poison Akbar’s ears against Bairam Khan. They found an opportunity to malign Bairam Khan when Shaikh Gadai, who was considered only a pen-pusher or cleric<sup>2</sup>, began to interfere in high revenue and administrative affairs. His arrogance also caused offence all round.

But neither the envy or jealousy of those who themselves wanted to exercise all powers and authority, and their resentment at the rise of comparatively low-ranking officers would have had much effect if Akbar who was growing up, had not wanted to exercise power himself. It was here that the role of the ladies close to him became important. Maham Anaga explained to Akbar that “as long as Bairam Khan would remain, he would not allow His Majesty any authority in the affairs of the empire; and that in reality the imperial power was in his hands” (Nizamuddin). Some mistakes on the part of Bairam made these remarks more pertinent. It was felt strongly that while the servants of the emperor had poor jagirs, and were kept in the depth of poverty, those serving Khan-i-Khanan Bairam Khan were in ease and luxury. Worse, the emperor had virtually no privy purse at all so that on one occasion, his request for seventeen rupees was about to be turned down when Maham Anaga intervened, and made the payment from her own funds.

We need hardly concern ourselves with the conspiracy which led to Bairam Khan’s downfall, following Akbar’s move from Agra to Delhi on the pretext of a hunting expedition. Once Akbar issued the farman calling all the nobles to come to him, even those close to Bairam deserted him. Bairam submitted, but was goaded into rebellion by those who wanted to ruin him. Bairam turned back from Bikaner on his way to Mecca and entered the Punjab as a rebel. Akbar soon triumphed over him, and Bairam submitted once again. Akbar gave Bairam the option of a handsome jagir in the sarkar of Kalpi and Chanderi, the post of the emperor’s confidential advisor, and a journey to Mecca. Bairam chose the last, but while on his way, he was assassinated by an Afghan out of personal spite at Patan in Gujarat. Since Bairam’s wife, Salima, was a cousin of Akbar, Akbar married her and brought up her son, Abdur Rahim who became a great noble in course of time.

The downfall of Bairam Khan cannot be seen as a reaction against Khurasani (eastern Iran) nobles. There was no diminution of the position of the Turkish nobles during his time. His downfall has been seen by some modern historians as a reaction by the nobles against a centralizing tendency. Such a policy could succeed only if implemented by a ruler who had the necessary military skill and political sagacity. Hence, Bairam Khan’s success in centralizing all powers and authority in his hands could only be ephemeral. Bairam did not try to curb the financial and administrative powers of the nobles in their jagirs so that the revenues of the khalisa had virtually dried up. The all round increase of the jama, or assessed income by him led to a widening of the gap between the paper income and the real income. This led to increased opportunities of favouritism and became another factor which made Bairam Khan and his favourites the target of attack by the nobles who felt that they had not received their due share in the allotment of productive jagirs.

## STRUGGLE FOR WIKALAT, REVOLT OF UZBEK NOBLES AND OTHERS

The downfall of Bairam Khan led to increased factionalism in the nobility and efforts of powerful nobles to act independently, in disregard of imperial wishes and interests. In this situation, the post of wakil, which was the most prestigious post, combining financial, military and administrative powers became a point of struggle between different factions. The two immediate contenders for the post were Maham Anaga who wanted the post for her son, Adham Khan, and Shamsuddin Atka Khan, the foster-father of Akbar, who had played an important role in the downfall of Bairam Khan. After some experiments, Akbar gave the post to Munim Khan, a close associate of Humayun, who had been governor of Kabul and whom Akbar called “Khan Baba” or “Baba-am” (My baba or father), as he had called Bairam Khan. Munim Khan chose to work in close association with Maham Anaga, doubtless because she was influential and enjoyed the confidence of the young emperor. In consequence, her power grew, and many followers of her were given high posts. Some historians consider the period from the downfall of Bairam (March 1560) to the first wikalat of Munim Khan, (Sept. 1560-Nov. 1561) to be the period when Maham Anaga’s influence was at its height. According to Abul Fazl, this was the period when Maham Anaga considered herself as the “the substantive wakil, and sat on the masnad as such.” However, even this period cannot be called a period of “petticoat government” because Akbar’s wishes had to be taken into account and his orders obtained before any matter was settled. Although, in the words of Abul Fazl, “Akbar was still behind a veil”, i.e., he did not take interest in day to day administration, he asserted himself on several occasions. Thus, in early 1561, when Akbar learnt that Maham’s son, Adham Khan, who had been sent to conquer Malwa, had kept with him the choicest spoils of war, including some rare beauties, he made a forced march and made Adham Khan yield the elephants and other booty. Again, Akbar proceeded to Kara (near modern Allahabad) against Ali Quli Khan Zaman to make him disgorge the treasures he had accumulated in the wars against the Afghans in Jaunpur. Ali Quli Khan Zaman had enjoyed the patronage and support of Munim Khan. Munim Khan’s removal, in November, 1561, and appointment of Atka Khan as wakil sharpened the party conflict, and led to a diminution of Maham Anaga’s influence. This led to the murder of Atka Khan in his public diwan by Adham Khan (June 1562). Akbar was very angry and punished Adham Khan by having him thrown from the staircase of the fort till he died. This marked the end of Maham Anaga’s surviving influence, and she died soon afterwards. Not to be vindictive, Akbar erected a fine mausoleum for Adham Khan which has survived.

After the murder of Atka Khan, Munim Khan was made the wakil once more! But Akbar now decided to take steps to strengthen central control over the nobility. The first step taken in 1561 was to order an enquiry into the revenue arrears of different sarkar and subahs (called vilayats) administered by different commanders. The background to this was that many nobles had encroached on the income of the khalisa areas, especially if they were the commandants (hakims) in the area in which their jagirs were located. It was due to this that the imperial treasury was almost empty. This also explains Akbar’s insistence on getting a proper share of the spoils of war gained by various nobles. Another step taken at this time was to separate the executive and revenue responsibilities of jagirdars, there by reducing the size of a jagir, and even breaking it up. This was first implemented in the jagirs held by the wakil, Munim Khan, in the sarkar of Hissar-Hruza. “However, it is difficult to say to what extent this policy could be applied to the large jagirs held in adjacent areas by some of the powerful nobles and their clansmen. Thus the Atka Khail had their jagirs in the Punjab; the Uzbeks east UP and Malwa; the Qaqshals in Kara-Manikpur, and the Mirzas around Sambhal. It was only after defeating the powerful group of Uzbek nobles that Akbar was able to break up these large clan headings.

The leading Uzbek nobles, Ali Quli Khan Zaman, Bahadur Khan, Sikandar Khan, Iskandar Khan and Abdullah Khan were closely related to each other and had held important posts and commands from the time of Humayun. Bahadur Khan had taken active part in the battle of Panipat against Hemu, and had been wakil for a short period after the downfall of Bairam Khan; Ali Quli Khan Zaman had distinguished himself in fighting against the Afghans of east U.P. and was governor of Jaunpur. The first to show an inclination towards independence was Abdullah Khan Uzbek, the governor of Malwa. He started

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behaving independently, and when Akbar reached near Sarangpur, which was then the capital of Malwa, in order to pull him up, Abdullah Khan fled to Gujarat (1564). The sins of Abdullah Khan had been many but he was forgiven at the instance of Munim Khan. However, this rebellion strengthened Akbar's prejudices against the Uzbeks about whom, according to Nizamuddin, he had a bad opinion. Akbar also had a poor opinion of Khan-i-Zaman at his conduct in falling in love with a camel driver's son whom he would call "My Padshah," stand before him and bow down and do "kornish". At the time, Ali Quli Khan Zaman and his clansmen controlled Awadh, Jaunpur and Banaras, i.e. areas which had once been parts of the kingdom of Jaunpur. Taking advantage of the strong sentiment of regional independence which had been reflected in successive Afghan rebellions, Ali Quli Khan Zaman had developed close friendship with Sulaiman Karrani, the Afghan ruler of Bengal. He had also tried to befriend some of the Afghan sardars of Bihar, and recruited soldiers from all groups in Jaunpur — Hindustanis, Afghans and Uzbeks so that he collected a force of 30,000. It may be argued that these were only defensive measures on the part of the Uzbeks nobles who felt that they had not received due rewards for their services, and feared that Akbar was prejudiced against them and wanted to destroy them. However, not to take any chance, in 1565 Akbar planned a hunt in the area, and sent a messenger asking Iskandar Khan, governor of Awadh, to come to his court. Alarmed, the Uzbeks nobles met at Jaunpur, and decided upon an open revolt. One group under Iskandar Khan attacked Kannauj by way of Lucknow, and another group attacked Kara Manikpur (near Allahabad).

In facing the Uzbeks in east U.P., Akbar had to take into account that the Bengal ruler was keen to bring Bihar under his control, and had invested fort Rohtas. At the same time, the Bengal ruler tried to prop up the Uzbeks rebels of Jaunpur as a barrier between the Mughals and Bihar. For the purpose, he sent an army under two well known Afghan generals, Sulaiman Mankali and Kalapahar, to aid Ali Quli Khan Zaman.

Akbar took vigorous diplomatic and military measures to meet this threat. He dispatched an envoy to the powerful ruler of Orissa, an old rival of the Bengal ruler, who agreed to take active steps against the latter if he did not desist from aiding Khan Zaman. A messenger was also sent to the commandant of fort Rohtas to offer help against the Bengal ruler. Akbar was able to isolate the Uzbeks diplomatically and soon put them militarily on the run. He made Jaunpur his head-quarter and advised his nobles to build houses there till the Uzbeks had been crushed completely. The operations against the Uzbeks lasted two years. Akbar would have been able to destroy them earlier if Munim Khan, on account of his old friendship with the Uzbeks and because he wanted to preserve a balance, had not wanted to protect the Uzbeks and not halted operations against them at a critical time. Despite his reservations, Akbar agreed, at Munim Khan's instance, to pardon the Uzbek leaders and also to restore their jagirs (1566). Meanwhile, Akbar had to face a new danger. His half-brother, Mirza Hakim, had been ousted from Kabul by Mirza Sulaiman of Badakhshan and sought refuge in the Punjab, a step to which Akbar agreed. However, while on the way, some evil-doers suggested to Mirza Hakim that he could easily capture Lahore since Akbar was busy in the east with the Uzbeks. Mirza Hakim agreed, and after sacking Bhera laid siege to the fort of Lahore. Hearing of these news, Akbar started from Agra with a force of 50,000. Mirza Hakim, who had failed to win over the nobles of Punjab by bribery and promises of reward, retreated when Akbar reached near Lahore in early 1567. Akbar did not pursue Mirza Hakim beyond the Indus. Mirza Hakim was able to patch up a peace with Mirza Sulaiman who left Kabul and returned to Badakhshan.

In Akbar's absence, the Uzbek nobles rose in rebellion again, siezed the country upto Kannauj and besieged the town. Further, in the hope of creating disaffections in Akbar's camp, and in order to emphasize that their break with Akbar was complete, they proclaimed Mirza Hakim as the king, and issued the sikka and had the khutba read in his name. But they failed completely in their objectives. Mirza Hakim had already left the Punjab. He had been a failure at Kabul and was seen as a broken reed. Nor did the Uzbek nobles enjoy the prestige and power they had earlier.



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Hence, the danger faced by Akbar by the rebellion of the Uzbeks in the east, and of Mirza Hakim's advent into the Punjab in the west in 1566 should not be unduly exaggerated. Akbar's domestic situation was now so firm that when the sons of Sultan Hussain Mirza found that their jagir of Sambhal was too small for their growing family, and rose in rebellion, they were easily quelled by the local officials, and had to flee to Malwa, and then to Gujarat.

Returning from Lahore, Akbar vigorously pursued the Uzbeks. In a desperate battle near Karra in June 1567, Khan-i-Zaman was killed and Bahadur Khan was captured and executed. To make clear his new position of power, Akbar removed the various nobles of the Atka clan from the Punjab, and, "like stars dispersed them, giving to each one of them a jagir in various corners in Hindustan" (Bayazid Byat, Akbar's earliest biographer).

The defeat of Uzbek nobles and of the rebellion of the Mirzas virtually ended the challenge of a section of the old nobles which looked askance at the process of centralization of authority in the hands of the king, and wanted a more decentralized set up in which the power and privileges of the nobles could be preserved. However, decentralization of power created the danger of dissidence among the nobility as also reassertion of regional sentiments in areas such as the old Jaunpur kingdom, Malwa etc. Except Asaf Khan who was an Irani, and rose in rebellion in order to keep the gains of his war in Garh-Katanga, most of the rebellions during this period were led by Turani nobles. This was a definite factor in the induction of a large number of Iranis into the nobility at this time, as also of Indian Muslims, such as the Barha Saiyids. We shall revert to this point later on.

## EARLY EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE (1560-76)

During a brief period of about fifteen years, the Mughal empire expanded from the upper Ganga valley to cover Malwa, Gondwana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal. A major credit for these conquests goes undoubtedly to Akbar for his unbounded energy, initiative, perseverance and personal leadership qualities, and his uncanny ability to be personally present at critical junctures, often by making almost incredibly long marches. However, his success was also in no small measure due to the rise of competent and dedicated men. Akbar's ability to spot talent and his willingness to advance men who were sometimes of a humble social background made the government much more open to talent than at any time earlier.

### Malwa

The process of expansion virtually began with the conquest of Malwa in 1561, and gained momentum with the defeat of the Uzbek rebellion in 1567. Akbar sought justification of the conquest of Malwa on the ground that it had once belonged to Humayun. At the moment, it was being ruled over by Baz Bahadur, a son of Shujaat Khan, who had been governor of Malwa under Sher Shah, but had rebelled with the rise of Adali. Baz Bahadur had been a noted warrior. He had established himself by defeating and killing all his brothers. However, he had been defeated by the redoubtable Rani Durgavati in his attempts to extend his rule over Gondawana. Like Adali, he was a reputed musician, and his love of music and poetry — the latter addressed to the beautiful Rupmati who was his companion, had become a household word in Malwa. Nizamuddin Ahmad, Akbar's bakhshi, tries to provide further justification of the Mughal attack on Malwa by saying that Baz Bahadur occupied himself with "unlawful and vicious practices". These are, however, not specified. Nizamuddin goes on to say that Baz Bahadur "had no care of his kingdom, For this reason the arms of tyrants and oppressors had become long on faqirs and on the poor; and most of the raiyat and the greater part of the people were stricken almost to death by the hand of his tyranny."

Thus, Akbar's conquest is sought to be portrayed as one based on liberating the people from tyranny and unjust rule. Whatever may have been the nature of Mughal rule later on, the invasion of Malwa

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under Adham Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan, (1561) far from providing relief to the people, resulted in unspeakable cruelties. After being defeated, Baz Bahadur fled, leaving behind all his effects and women and dependents, including Rupmati. Adham Khan mercilessly killed all the prisoners, not sparing Shaikhs and Saiyyids, and dragged many of the beauties to his haram. But Rupmati preferred death to such dishonour. Akbar intervened, and marched to Malwa, not so much to punish the perpetrators of such cruelties, but to get his share of the loot! Later, when Adham Khan was recalled to the court, Pir Muhammad invaded Burhanpur in Khandesh where Baz Bahadur had taken shelter, and repeated the cruelties perpetrated in Malwa. Although, Baz Bahadur recovered Malwa for a brief time, he had to flee a second time, and after taking shelter with Rana Udai Singh for some time, repaired to Akbar who enrolled him as a mansabdar of 1000, which was soon raised to 2000 because of his knowledge of music.

### **Garh-Katanga**

While the empire had been expanded to include Malwa, similar attempts were made by Asaf Khan, the governor of Kara (Allahabad) to gain both treasure and territory at the expense of Garh-Katanga, or modern Gondwana. The state had been gradually built up during the 15th century by over-running and subordinating many rajas in the region. At the moment, it comprised territory of about 48,000 square miles, comprising many forts, popular cities and towns, and about 70,000 inhabited villages. Named after two towns, Garh and Katangi in the modern district of Jabalpur, its population consisted mostly of Gonds. Hence, the tract was also called Gondwana. For the past sixteen years, the kingdom was being ruled by Rani Durgavati who was both beautiful and talented. Daughter of Raja Shalivahan of Mahoba, her husband had died leaving behind a son who was three or four years old at the time. Since then the Rani had run the affairs of state with the help of competent advisors. She was skilful both in the use of bow and a gun, and it is said that when she heard of a tiger, she would not rest till she had killed it. Although comparatively remote, the kingdom had to wage a series of wars both in Bhata (erstwhile state of Rewa in Bundelkhand), and with the rulers of Malwa. The recent Mughal conquest of Malwa, and forcing Bhata to accept Mughal suzerainty, had made the kingdom vulnerable to Mughal pressure from both the sides. The Rani does not seem to have realized it fully, although she had sent her minister, Adhar Kayastha, to Akbar for peace. The negotiations had failed, probably because Akbar demanded her submission, and cession of some territories. Asaf Khan, the governor of Kara, who had learnt of the Rani's fabulous wealth and the state of her affairs through spies, had been itching for an attack on her kingdom, and had been ravaging her borders. Possibly, his attack with 10,000 troops in 1564 was at first regarded as another such frontier raid because the Rani who was supposed to have a force of 20,000 cavalry, numerous infantry and 1000 elephants was able to raise only a small force of about 2000 to oppose Asaf Khan. Her minister, Adhar Kayastha, advised the Rani not to fight Asaf Khan with such slender resources, but retreat into her kingdom to augment her forces. But in the usual Rajput fashion, she considered retreat to be dishonourable. She advanced, and gained some advantage in a fight with the Mughal advance guard, but was defeated near Damoh by Asaf Khan's main forces, which by the time had swelled to 50,000. These included the forces of some of the subordinate rajas of the Rani who had defected from her. Wounded, the Rani preferred to stab herself to death in place of capture and dishonour. Thus died one of the most gallant woman-warrior and ruler of the country.

Asaf Khan now advanced to the capital Chauragarh which was gallantly defended to his death by the Rani's son, Bir Narayan, after the women had performed jauhar. Asaf Khan got immense wealth, an uncalculated amount of gold and silver, jewels and 1000 elephants. Kamla Devi, a younger sister of Durgavati, who had remained unhurt, was sent to the Imperial harem.

Although the conquest of Gondwana added immensely to the royal territories, its immediate effect was to turn the head of Asaf Khan. Like Adham Khan in Malwa, he kept most of the treasures, and sent only 200 elephants to Akbar. Akbar was incensed, but kept quiet on account of the Uzbek rebellion. Even then, hearing that he was to be asked to give accounts, Asaf Khan fled. He went first to the Uzbeks, then returned to Gondwana where he was pursued. Finally, he submitted and Akbar restored him to his previous position. He was to do good service later. According to Abul Fazl, though a Tajik and belonging

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to the writing class (ahl-i-qalam), “ he did deeds which made Turks humble” . This was the way Akbar reared and promoted men of all classes on the basis of their merit. As for Carh-Katanga, Akbar saw no use holding on to it. Asaf Khan was recalled in 1567, and Garh-Katanga restored to Chandra Shah, a brother of Rani’s deceased husband, after taking ten forts to round off the subah of Malwa.

## Rajasthan

Unlike Malwa and Garh-Katanga, the Mughal occupation of Rajasthan was neither based on desire for territory nor lure for wealth. No empire based on the upper Ganga basin could feel secure if a powerful rival centre of power existed on its flank in Rajasthan. That is what had led to the conflict of Babur with Rana Sanga, and of Sher Shah with Rao Maldeo. The domination of Rajasthan was also the means of an end. Routes both to Gujarat and its sea-ports and to Malwa ran through it, and control over either of them could not be secure without a minimum control over the states of Rajasthan.

The Mughals had established their rule over parts of Mewat in 1556, followed by Ajmer and Nagor. In 1562, when Akbar made his first visit to the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer, Raja Bhara Mal, the ruler of Amber, had submitted. This was followed by the Mughal occupation of the powerful fort of Merta, and for some time of Jodhpur when there was a disputed succession following the death of Maldeo. Maldeo had nominated Chandrasen as his successor whereupon his elder brother, Ram Chandra, had repaired to the Mughal court for help, and been reinstated. But Chandrasen had recovered Jodhpur soon after.

This was the situation when, following the crushing of the Uzbek rebellion, Akbar decided to turn his attention towards Rajasthan. The most powerful and prestigious kingdom in Rajasthan at the time was undoubtedly Mewar. The fact that the Rana’s son, Sakat, had been in the Imperial camp at Dholpur when Akbar asked him what service he would do if he attacked the Rana suggests that some negotiations between the Rana and Akbar had been in progress though we have no idea of the nature of these negotiations. Abul Fazl says that the Rana, proud of his steep mountains and strong castles, his possessing abundant land and wealth, and number of devoted Rajputs, was not prepared to lower his head of obedience before anyone, for “ none of his ancestors had bowed down and kissed the ground.” It is obvious that what Abul Fazl is referring to is personal submission, something on which Akbar had insisted even when, during the siege of Chittor, the Rajputs had offered to accept Mughal suzerainty and to pay peshkash. The Rana, Udai Singh, had also offended Akbar by giving refuge to Baz Bahadur, the ousted ruler of Malwa, and to the Mirzas after their flight from Sambhal.

The strength of the fort of Chittor was such that trying to starve the defenders by a long siege, and sapping under the walls after making sabats or covered passages upto the walls were the only two methods available to the besiegers. We are told that for the making of sabats and digging of mines, about five thousand experts builders and carpenters and stone-masons were collected, but due to the continual firing by the Rajputs, one or two hundred of them died everyday. This may explain in part Akbar’s bitterness when he ordered a general massacre following the conquest of the fort after four months of close siege when the Rajputs, after warding off many Mughal attacks, and the death of their redoubtable warrior, Jaimal, had in desperation done jauhar and died fighting. We are told that in addition to those who had sallied out, there were 8000 Rajputs inside the fort who died fighting, partly in defence of their temple. There were also 40,000 peasants inside the fort who had been aiding them. There was a general order of massacre and in all about 30,000 people were killed, though the skilled marksmen who had been one of Akbar’s objects of revenge, escaped by a ruse. This was the last time Akbar ordered such a slaughter. However, it cannot be justified, and only means that Akbar had not yet shaken off the Central Asian tradition of barbarity to one’s defeated opponents.

The fall of Chittor (March 1568) was followed by the capture of Ranthambhor, as also of Kalinjar in Bundelkhand. But more important, when Akbar was at Nagor (1570), rulers of important states in Rajas-

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than—Marwar, Bikaner and jaisalmer accepted Mughal suzerainty and, in return, were allowed to continue to rule over their states. They were granted mansabs and jagirs. Thus, Mewar was left alone to uphold the flag of regional independence.

## **Gujarat**

Akbar was now free to turn his attention to Gujarat. Since the death of Bahadur Shah, Gujarat had been racked by succession disputes and efforts of nobles to put up their own nominees, real or fake, on the throne. There had been growing dissidence which was made worse by the Mirzas who had seized Broach, Baroda and Surat. The Portuguese were also on the look-out for expanding their control over Gujarat and its ports. In this situation it was not possible for Akbar to allow a strategically important area which was also rich in its handicrafts and agriculture production to go to rack and ruin. According to Nizamuddin, it had been brought to the notice of Akbar that in Gujarat “which was arranged like a paradise,” the tyranny of the rulers of that country, and the refractoriness of the group of men who had become rulers were giving rise to the desolation of the country and the ruin of the people. However, before Akbar acted on his own, he was invited by Itimad Khan Habshi, then the ruler at Ahmadabad, to intervene in order to put down anarchy in the country.

Towards the end of 1572, Akbar marched on Gujarat at the head of a large army by way of Ajmer, Merta and Sirohi. On account of the support of the Habshi and Gujarati nobles, Akbar met no opposition in occupying Ahmadabad. But he had to take action to expel the Mirzas from south Gujarat. In this campaign, Akbar displayed great personal daring and energy. Learning that Ibrahim Hussain Mirza was trying to escape, he attacked his strong detachment at Sarnal with merely forty men. Although he won a victory, he could not prevent the Mirza from escaping. He then laid siege to the strong fort of Surat early in 1573, and compelled it to surrender. This induced many of the local rajas to submit. The Portuguese also came and made presents to the Emperor. Earlier, at Khambayat, Akbar had for the first time seen the sea, the Sea of Oman (Arabian Sea), and sailed on it. According to a contemporary, Arif Qandhari, on 17 Shaban / 23rd December 1572, “His Majesty boarded a fast moving boat and ordered that an assembly of pleasure and enjoyment may be arranged, and he gave himself to a drinking bout there.”

After his success at Surat, Akbar appointed Khan-i-Azam Aziz Koka, a favourite who was his milk-brother, as governor of Gujarat, and placed nobles in charge of the sarkars of Patan, Dholka, Broach and Baroda. He then returned to Agra since the situation in the east demanded his attention.

Akbar's administrative arrangements were remarkably similar to those adopted by Humayun during his conquest of Gujarat. The situation following the departure of the emperor from the scene was also remarkably similar—the various elements, the Abyssinian (Habshi) and Gujarati nobles, the Mirzas and the Hindu rajas rose everywhere and joined hands to expel the Mughals. However, instead of retreating as Askari had done, Aziz Koka entrenchment himself at Ahmadabad. Akbar put off his plans for an eastern expedition, and undertook another of his fantastic personal interventions. He left Fatehpur Sikri and reached Ahmadabad in eleven days at the head of about 3000 troops. The Emperor's presence demoralized the opponents, and ensured a great victory. This broke the back of the opposition to the Mughal rule over Gujarat, (1573), though sporadic resistance continued off and on for some time.

## **Bengal**

The conquest of Gujarat cleared the way for Akbar turning his attention to the affairs of the east. After the death of Islam Shah, Bengal had become independent. After a confused struggle, Sulaiman Karrani had come to power. The Karranis had large jagirs in Bihar and under them, the influence of the Bengal king over Bihar had become strong once again. Thus, the city of Patna founded by Sher Shah, and Hajipur on the other side of the Ganges were under the rule of the Afghan ruler of Bengal. Even the powerful fort of Rohtas was held by the Bengal king. Hence, Akbar's campaign to the east was aimed not only at the conquest of Bang and Lakhnauti (north Bengal), but also, as Nizamuddin Ahmad says, “the country of Bihar”. The immediate cause of Akbar's decision to send an expedition to the east was the



fact that unlike the earlier Bengal ruler who had kept a semblance of loyalty to the Mughal king by not insisting on a separate khutba and sikka, Daud Khan, proud of his army of 40,000 well' mounted cavalry, 1,40,000 infantry, 3,600 elephants, and a park of artillery said to consist of 20,000 guns and thousands of war-boats, declared himself independent and had the khutba and sikka issued in his own name. It is clear that under proper leadership, the Afghans of Bengal and Bihar could have faced Akbar with a serious challenge. At first, Munim Khan, the governor of Jaunpur, was asked to take urgent steps to deal with the situation. Munim Khan advanced on Patna and besieged it, but could make no impact on the strongly entrenched Afghans. As soon as Akbar was freed from the Gujarat affairs, he advanced with a large army and flotilla of boats. After the conquest of Hajipur and Patna, Akbar pursued Daud Khan into Bengal. However the command was soon entrusted to Munim Khan, who was made governor of Bengal, and Akbar returned to Agra. Here again, while like Humayun, Akbar considered the campaign against Bengal and Bihar to be a combined operation, his management of the operation was in stark contrast to Humayun's—he first consolidated his position in Gujarat, and did not involve himself personally in the campaigning in Bengal.

Although Munim Khan had concluded a treaty with Daud in March 1575 after defeating him in a well contested battle at Tukaroi (district Balasore), Munim Khan's death soon after at Gaur led to a renewed outbreak of hostilities in which Daud reoccupied his old capital, Tanda. The Mughals made a shameful retreat to Bihar. Akbar now appointed Hussain Quli Khan-i-Jahan as the new governor of Bengal, and in another well contested battle, Daud Khan was defeated and killed (1576).

The Mughal victory over Daud Khan may be considered virtually the final act in the struggle against the Afghans, although struggle with the Afghan rulers of Orissa, and with the powerfully entrenched Afghan zamindars in the southern and eastern areas of Bengal continued sporadically till the reign of Jahangir.

## RELATIONS WITH THE RAJPUTS

The policy of seeking a special relationship with the Rajputs matured under Akbar, and was one of the most abiding features of Mughal rule in India, even though the relationship came under strain later on. The relationship between local rulers and central authority had many ups and downs during the Sultanat period. The Turkish rulers were always on the look out to reduce the power and influence of the local rulers (rais) many of whom were Rajputs. In general, they demanded from them formal submission, a promise to provide military help when demanded, and payment of peshkash. Alauddin Khalji was the first ruler who postulated an active alliance with an autonomous raja, Ram Deo of Deogir. The raja was invited to Delhi after his submission, loaded with presents and not only was his kingdom returned to him, Navsari, a district in Gujarat, was given to him in gift. Alauddin also married his daughter, Jhatyapali, while his son and heir-apparent, Khirz Khan, was married to Dewal Devi, daughter of the former ruler of Gujarat. But this policy came to an end with the death of Ram Deo, followed by that of Alauddin Khalji and Khirz Khan.

Bahlul Lodi and Sikandar Lodi tried to establish friendly relations with some of the Rajput rajas of the Gangetic doab and, we are told, some of them were even given the position of amirs. This seems to have helped in establishing friendly relations between the Afghans and the Hindu rajas which persisted for a long time even after the Mughal conquest of India.

After returning to India, Humayun embarked upon a policy of conciliating and winning over the zamindars — a term used in official documents to include the autonomous rajas, both Hindu and Muslim. According to Abul Fazl, when Humayun was at Delhi, "in order to soothe the minds of the zamindars (he) entered into matrimonial relations with them". Thus, in 1556, when Hasan Khan of Mewat, "who was one of the great zamindars of India," came and paid homage, he had two beautiful daughters, one of whom was married to Humayun, and the other to Bairam Khan.

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The attempt to establish special relations with the Rajputs was, thus, part of a broader policy towards the zamindars or the indigenous ruling sections in the country. According to Shaikh Fakhruddin Bhakkari who wrote in the middle of the 17th century, when Humayun was at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the ruler of Iran, the latter enquired from Humayun the causes of Mughal expulsion from India, and which class of people in India constitutes clans and were outstanding and brave. When informed that these were Rajputs and Afghans, he advised Humayun to “rear the Rajputs” since “without gaining control over the zamindars it is not possible to rule in Hind.” The author goes on to say that Humayun, at the approach of his death, advised Akbar that “this qaum (the Rajputs) should be reared up because they are not given to transgression and disobedience but only obedience and service.”

Thus, the Mughal desire to conciliate the zamindars, i.e. the indigenous ruling class of India, and the reputation of the Rajputs of loyalty and service formed the basis of their alliance with the Rajputs. The Rajputs had also made a favourable impression on Akbar when, in 1557, he was riding upon an elephant which had gone out of control, and everyone had fled away except a band of Rajputs under Bhara Mal, the ruler of the small principality of Amber, who had stood firm.

The story of Akbar’s marriage with Bai Harkha, daughter of Raja Bhara Mal of Amber, at Sambhar on his way back from Ajmer where he had gone the first time to pray at the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti is well known. The background of this was that when Akbar was proceeding to Ajmer, Bhara Mal had approached Akbar that he was being harassed by Mirza Sharfuddin, the Mughal hakim of Mewat, on account of his conflict with his elder brother, Suja. Bhara Mal who had only a small following had agreed to pay peshkash, and given as hostage his son and two of his nephews, but Sharfuddin was not satisfied, and wanted to destroy him. Akbar insisted that the Raja should submit to him personally, and that a daughter of the raja should be married to him. Once this had been done, Akbar asked Sharfuddin, who was married to the emperor’s sister, not to interfere with the raja.

There are many misconceptions about Akbar’s policy of establishing matrimonial relations with the Rajput rajas. In a feudalized polity, a personal relationship was considered a better guarantee of loyalty. However, in such a society marriages between royal houses was both a bond and a mark of submission. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (5th Century A.D.), it is clearly mentioned that all the subordinate rajas were required to send a daughter to the Imperial house-hold. This attitude persisted, though the early Turkish rulers did not demand that the subordinate Hindu rajas establish matrimonial relations with them. However, in course of time, we see many instances of marriages between Muslim and Hindu ruling houses. We have mentioned the marriage of Alauddin Khalji with a daughter of Ram Deo, the ruler of Deogir. Firuz Shah Bahmani married the daughter of Deo Ray of Vijaynagar in 1406, the marriage being celebrated in a grand manner. Marriages between Rajputs rajas and other Muslim rulers can also be recorded from this time. Thus, in 1485, Raja Bhan of Idar married his daughter to Muhammad Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, for the sake of the restoration of his kingdom. Bhawani Das, a relation of Rana Rai Mal, gave his daughter as tribute to Abul Muzaffar Nasiruddin Shah of Malwa after his conquest of Chittor in 1503-04. She was well-treated and given the title of Rani Chittori. According to the Banki Das ri Khyat, Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Marwar, had married one of his daughter, Bai Kanaka, to Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat; another, Lal Bai, to Islam Shah Sur, and a third one, Ratnavati, to Haji Khan Pathan, a slave of Sher Shah who was the virtual ruler of Mewat. There were also marriages with the powerful Qaim Khani rulers of Nagor in Shekhawati who were Chauhan Rajputs but had become Muslim in the time of Firuz Tughlaq. Bhara Mal himself had given his eldest daughter in marriage to Haji Khan after he had invaded Amber. Around this time, Akbar married Rukmavati, a daughter of Tipu who was the daughter of Mano Guno Rohila, and who is called Maldeo’s patar (common law wife).

It will be seen that most of these marriages were due to special circumstances, such as an invasion or procuring help against an enemy. Such marriages had not led to any stable relationship between the two sides. After his marriage with Bhara Mal’s daughter, Akbar emphasized in various ways his special

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relationships with the family. Thus, during the Uzbek rebellion, Bhagwant Das, the son of Bhara Mal, was constantly in attendance with him. Bhagwant Das was with him when, in 1562, in a somewhat foolhardy manner, Akbar attacked with a small escort the rebel village of Paraunkh in modern Etah district which, along with it, had eight villages (athgarh) which were notorious for their insolence, robbery, boldness and turbulence. Later, on a number of occasions, Bhagwant Das was assigned the responsibility of guarding the Imperial camp, including the royal ladies, a position which was given only to nobles who were related to the ruler, or enjoyed his close confidence. The birth of Salim from the Kachhawahi princess in 1569 filled Akbar with a sense of thanksgiving, and drew him closer to the Kachhawaha ruling house. Thus, in 1570, when Daniyal was born, he was sent to Amber to be brought up by the wife of Raja Bhara Mal. In 1572, when Akbar left for the Gujarat campaign, Bhara Mal, along with Abdullah Sultanpuri, was placed in charge of the capital, Agra, where all the royal ladies were living.

Although Akbar had adopted a number of liberal measures— forbidding soldiers to enslave the women and children of rebellious villagers, remitting pilgrim taxes which “ amounted to krores,” and finally abolishing jizyah in 1564, his relations with the Rajputs deepened only after the fall of Chittor in 1568, followed by the capture of Ranthambhor. In 1570, when Akbar was at Nagor, Rai Kalyan Mal of Bikaner presented himself before Akbar along with his son, Rai Rai Singh. A daughter of Kalyan Mal’s brother, Kahan, was married to Akbar. Rawal Har Rai of Jaisalmer also submitted, and proposed that one of his daughter be married to the Emperor. Accordingly, Bhagwant Das was sent to Jaisalmer to escort the Rawal’s daughter. The kingdom of all these rajas were restored to them, and both Kalyan Mal and Rai Singh were admitted to the Imperial service. Chandrasen of Jodhpur also waited on Akbar and offered his submission, and apparently one of his daughter was married to Akbar at this time. But on account of the opposition of his elder brother, Ram Rai, and his younger brother, Uday Singh, Jodhpur which had been under Imperial control since 1563, was not restored to him. In consequence, there was a long drawn out war with Chandrasen during which the kingdom remained under Imperial control or khalisa.

There is little reason to believe that these matrimonial alliances, and the earlier marriage of Bhara Mal’s daughter, were forced upon the Rajputs. It was more the force of circumstances, and a realization on the part of the rajas the benefits these marriages might confer on them. As Abul Fazl says, the rajas entering into such alliances were considered “ distinguished among other zamindars” . Nor did Akbar treat such an alliance as a test of loyalty and submission. Thus, no matrimonial relations were established with the Hadas of Ranthambhor. Surjan Had a was allotted jagirs in Garh-Katanga, served in Gujarat and elsewhere and rose to the rank 2000. Again, when the rulers of Sirohi and Banswara submitted, no matrimonial relations were established with them.

The evolution of Akbar’s Rajput policy can be divided into three main phases. During the first phase, which lasted till about 1572, the Rajput rajas who submitted to him were considered loyal allies. They were expected to render military service in or around their principalities, but not outside. Thus, Raja Bhara Mal, along with his son Bhagwant Das, was the constant companion of Akbar during the Uzbek rebellions, but there is no reference to his taking part in any military operations, though both Todar Mal and Rai Patr Das were actively involved in the operations. Nor was Man Singh required to take an active part in the siege operations against Chittor, though he was present in the Imperial camp throughout. Inside Rajasthan, when the Mughal forces besieged Merta, in 1562, a Kachhawaha contingent served on the side of the Mughals. When the Mughals besieged Jodhpur the following year, Ram Rai, the elder brother of Chandrasen, actively aided them. This was not unusual because during Mewar’s struggle with Malwa, many disgrubtled Rajput chiefs had fought on the side of the Khalji rulers of Malwa. Disaffected Khalji nobles had also sought refuge at the court of the Rana.

The second phase of Akbar’s Rajputs policy may be dated from his Gujarat campaign in 1572. At the outset, Man Singh was appointed with a well-equipped army to chase Sher Khan Fuladi and his sons. Although the sons of Sher Khan Fuladi eluded Man Singh, he captured their baggage, and returned laden with booty, and Akbar praised him. A little later, when Akbar attacked Ibrahim Hussain Mirzas at Sarnal

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with a small force, Kr. Man Singh led the van, and Bhagwant Singh stood side by side with Akbar during the engagement in which the Raja's son, Bhupat Rai, was killed. Akbar made the killing of Bhupat a personal issue. He took the unusual step of sending Bhagwant Das's sister, who was evidently Salim's mother, to Amber for the mourning. Later, he speared to death the captive, Shah Madad, foster-brother of Muhammad Husain Mirza, who had killed Bhupat.

The Kachhawahas were not the only ones to whom Akbar showed favour, or who fought on behalf of the Mughal state during this period. Before leaving for the Gujarat campaign, Akbar had given Rai Rai Singh of Bikaner charge of Jodhpur and Sirohi, to guard against any incursions from the side of the Rana, and to keep the road to Gujarat open. Subsequently, when Ibrahim Mirza sneaked out of Gujarat and besieged Nagor, Rai Rai Singh and Ram Singh (of Jodhpur) came up with forced marches and drove him off, after fighting a well-contested battle. Rao Surjan Hada of Ranthambhor, and Raisal Darbari of Shaikhawati also played an active role in the Gujarat campaign.

Thus, during this period, apart from being loyal allies, the Rajputs begin to emerge as the sword-arm of the empire. This point was further emphasized when in 1576, Man Singh was appointed to lead the Mughal army against Rana Pratap.

The third phase of Akbar's relationship with the Rajputs may be dated from 1578 when Raja Bhagwant Das and Kr. Man Singh arrived at the Imperial camp at Bhera in western Punjab in preparation for campaigns in the north-west including Kashmir. This development coincides with Akbar's break with the orthodox clergy, the expulsion of the sadr Shaikh Abdun Nabi, and the issue of Mahzar by Akbar which gave him the right to choose between different schools of law upholding the sharia. Till this time, Akbar had not moved out of the orthodox framework so that an orthodox mullah like Badayuni could say that although Kr. Man Singh had been placed in charge of both Hindu and Muslim troops at Haldighati, it was a case of "a Hindu wields the sword of Islam." In this the third and the last phase, the Rajputs emerge as partners in the kingdom, and a make-weight in the nobility against the others, especially the Turani nobles of whose loyalty Akbar was not certain following his break with the ulama.

In the new context, the Rajputs were employed to fight even against Mirza Hakim, the emperor's own half-brother. Soon after their arrival at Bhera, Bhagwant Das was asked to assist Saeed Khan, the governor of Punjab. It is possible that some administrative duties were also assigned to Bhagwant Das. In 1580, there was a wide-spread rebellion in the east in which nobles dissatisfied with some Imperial regulations were joined by a section of the orthodoxy clergy. They proclaimed Mirza Hakim as the ruler, and had the khutba read in his name. Mirza Hakim who had invaded the Punjab and besieged Lahore, had been led to believe that the issue of the Mahzar, and the importance given to the Rajputs had led to dissatisfaction against Akbar so that when faced with Mirza Hakim, the Iranis and Turanis would desert to him, and Akbar would be left alone with the Rajputs and the Shaikhzadas. As it was, Mirza Hakim's calculations proved totally incorrect. While Mirza Azia Koka and Raja Todar Mal were sent to deal with the rebellion in the east, Akbar advanced on Lahore where Bhagwant Singh and Saeed Khan were defending the fort. Akbar's army included trusted Rajput commanders. At his approach, Mirza Hakim retreated to Kabul. Akbar now decided to march to Kabul and asked Man Singh, Rai Rai Singh and others to cross the Indus. They inflicted a sharp defeat on Mirza Hakim. Akbar advanced to Kabul, but restored it to Mirza Hakim. However, great importance was given to the Rajputs in making defensive arrangements. Man Singh was placed in charge of the Indus region, and Bhagwant Singh was appointed governor of Lahore jointly with Saeed Khan (1581). A little later, Saeed Khan was transferred to Delhi, and Bhagwant Das remained the sole governor of Lahore (Jan 1583).

Thus, the Rajputs not only emerged as dependable allies who could be used anywhere for fighting, even against princes of blood, they also began to be employed in tasks of governance. Simultaneously, personalties with the Rajputs rajas were further strengthened by the marriage of Salim with the daughter of Bhagwant Singh (1583). At the same time, Jodhpur which had remained under khalisa for a



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long time was conferred upon Mota Raja Udai Singh, a younger brother of Chandrasen. Udai Singh's daughter, Jagat Gosain, was married to Salim. These marriages were made grand state occasions, with Akbar himself going in procession to the houses of the brides, and many Hindu practices followed. Daughters of the ruling houses of Bikaner and Jaisalmer were also married to Salim. Thus, Akbar wanted to bind his successor to his policy of alliance with the Rajputs. A little later, Daniyal was married to a daughter of Raimal, son of Rai Maldeo.

In the remaining years of Akbar's reign, the position of the Rajputs as partners in the kingdom and as sword-arm of the empire was strengthened further. In 1585-86, when two sipahsalar or subahdars were appointed to each subah, Rajputs were appointed, as joint-governors of four subahs — Lahore, Kabul, Agra and Ajmer. The most significant was the appointment of Kr. Man Singh and Raja Bhagwant Das to the two strategically important provinces of Kabul and Lahore. Rajputs were also appointed faujdars and commanders of forts. Later, Man Singh was appointed governor of Bihar and Bengal, and accorded the rank of 7000 which only one other noble, Mirza Aziz Koka, enjoyed. The Kachhawahas remained the most powerful section under Akbar. Thus, in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, prepared in 1593-94, out of the 27 Rajput nobles listed, 13 were Kachhawahas. Although other Rajputs did forge ahead — Rai Rai Singh of Bikaner was appointed governor of Lahore in 1590-91, and his son, Suraj Singh, was made the effective governor of Gujarat. But the excessive representation of the Kachhawahas in the service was only corrected when Jahangir ascended the throne.

The Mughal-Rajput alliance was mutually beneficial. The alliance secured to the Mughals the services of the bravest warriors in India. The steadfast loyalty of the Rajputs was an important factor in the consolidation and further expansion of the Mughal empire. On the other hand, service in the Mughal empire enabled the Rajput rajas to serve in distant places far away from their homes, and to hold important administrative posts. This further raised their prestige and social status. Service with the Mughals was also financially rewarding. In addition to their holdings in Rajasthan, the Rajputs rajas were accorded jagirs outside Rajasthan in accordance with their mansabs. Thus, the Kachhawahas at first held jagirs in Gujarat and then in Punjab when Bhagwant Das and Man Singh were posted there. Later, they were granted jagirs in Bihar and Bengal when Man Singh was governor there. There is little doubt that these jagirs formed a valuable source of additional income to the rajas. While these jagirs were transferable like any other jagirs, the Rajput rajas were granted their own homelands as jagirs: these were called watan jagirs. They were not transferred during the life-time of a ruler, but increased as his mansab increased.

The Rajput rajas were accorded broad autonomy within their own principalities, though they were expected not to levy prohibited taxes, such as rahdari or road tax. The Mughals were keen to see that rahdari was not levied in order to protect trade on the important trade-routes across Rajasthan to the sea-ports. They were also keen to promote the Mughal revenue system of measurement (*zabt*) to Rajasthan, but here they were less successful. The Rajputs had their own revenue-assessment called *rekh*, which was different from the Mughal assessment or *jama*.

The Mughals claimed a kind of paramountcy which implied that the Rajput rajas did not raid each other's territories, or try to resolve territorial disputes by resorting to war. Traditionally, there were a number of territorial disputes between the various Rajput states. Thus, the pargana of Pokharan was claimed by the Bhatias of Jaisalmer, and by the rulers of both Bikaner and Jodhpur. Akbar gave it to Mota Raja Udai Singh of Jodhpur but he could not take possession of it due to the opposition of the Bhatias. Merta was in dispute between Jodhpur and Mewar. Merta tried to assert its independence from both, which the Mughals supported for some time.

Another point of trouble in the various states were disputed successions. There was no tradition, either among the Hindus or the Muslim, of primogeniture, that is, of the eldest son succeeding a deceased ruler. Thus, dispute about succession between brothers can be traced back to the Mauryan, or even to

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the pre-Mauryan period. Tulsi Das, the famous Hindi poet who lived during Akbar's time, declared that both scriptures and tradition accorded the right of tika i.e. choosing a successor to the ruler. Even this was not always accepted, and led to civil wars. As sovereign emperor, the Mughal ruler claimed the right of giving his concurrence to a succession. Thus, when Rao Maldeo died, Akbar did not accept his nominee, Chandrasen, the younger son, as a ruler of Marwar, but gave it to his elder brother, Rao Ram. After his death, it was given to his younger brother, Mota Raja Udai Singh. In between, Jodhpur had remained under Imperial control, or khalisa. In 1593, Raja Ramchandra, the ruler of Panna, died, followed by the death of his son, Balbhadra. The chief men of the country raised his minor son, Vikramajit, to the gaddi, without any reference to the Emperor. Akbar was annoyed. He sent Patr Das to occupy the country and its capital, and insisted that it must be surrendered according to rules (ain) before it was granted to anyone. Ultimately, in 1601, Vikramajit was restored to the gaddi. This attitude is reflected in Jahangir's refusal in 1612 to accept Sur Singh as the ruler of Bikaner though he had been given the tika by his father, Rao Rai Singh. Jahangir at first gave the tika to Sur Singh's brother, Dalpat Singh, then restored it to Sur Singh.

Thus it was made clear that in the ultimate resort, the approval of the Emperor was necessary before succession could be considered legitimate. In other words, succession was a matter of Imperial grace, rather than right.

The Mughal concept of paramountcy gave peace to the country, and established a kind of pax Mughalica which enabled peaceful development. It also enabled the Rajas to work in distant places without bothering about peace in their own dominions. But the right to regulate succession contained within it the seeds of conflict under a Mughal ruler whose bona fides were, for one reason or another, suspect. A policy of broad religious toleration was, undoubtedly, an important factor in building and maintaining this alliance. An erosion of such a policy would, therefore, create mutual tensions.

## RELATIONS WITH MEWAR

Akbar was able to resolve his relations with almost all the states of Rajasthan with the exception of Mewar. Because of its size and its heavily wooded, hilly terrain, Mewar was ideally situated to stand out for independence, unlike the other Rajput states. It was also conscious of its position as the leading state of Rajasthan, and its acknowledged leader. That is why it was the first to feel at Chittor the weight of the Mughal might. After the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, the need to secure Mughal communications across the Mewar territories became even greater.

In 1572, when Maharana Pratap succeeded to the gaddi of Mewar, a series of diplomatic embassies were sent by Akbar to solve the outstanding issues with the Maharana. The first of these embassies was led by Jalal Khan Qurchi, a favourite of Akbar. This was followed by Raja Man Singh. Man Singh was received by the Rana in his characteristic courteous manner. The story that the Rana insulted him on account of his marriage relationship with Akbar is a later concoction. However, Man Singh's visit did not yield any diplomatic results, the Rana refusing to visit Akbar's darbar. However, the next visit by Raja Bhagwant Das had greater success. The Rana put on the robe sent by Akbar, and the Rana's son, Amar Singh, accompanied Bhagwant Das to the Mughal capital. However, no agreement could be arrived at because the Rana refused Akbar's insistence on his personal submission. There may also have been some differences between the two regarding Chittor. A final visit by Todar Mal also failed to resolve the issues.

Negotiations having broken down, all out war between Mewar and the Mughals was inescapable. However, Akbar gave his attention first to the conquest of Bihar and Bengal. In the meantime, he created a new machinery of administration, and began his quest for seeking a unity behind the multiplicity, first of sects within Islam, and then of all religions. He also gave attention to the unrest created within Marwar due to the activities of Chandrasen from his headquarters at Siwana. Chandrasen was relentlessly hunted from place to place, finally seeking shelter in Mewar. The powerful fort of Siwana was also captured (1575). Akbar then turned towards Mewar.

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Early in 1576, Akbar moved to Ajmer, and deputed Raja Man Singh with a force of 5000 consisting of Mughal and Rajput warriors to lead a campaign against Rana Pratap. In anticipation of such a move, the Rana had devastated the entire region upto Chittor so that the Mughal forces could get no food or fodder. He had also fortified the passes leading up to the hills. The Rana advanced with a force of 3000 from his capital at Kumbhalgarh, and took a position near Haldighati, at the entrance of the defile leading to Kumbhalgarh. Apart from a contingent of Afghans under Hakim Khan Sur, there was also a small contingent of Bhils whom the Rana had befriended, and whose help was invaluable to him in the days to come.

The battle of Haldighati (18 Feb. 1576) was mainly fought in the traditional manner between cavalymen and elephants, since the Mughals found it difficult to transport any artillery, except light artillery over the rough terrain. The Rana, it seems, had no firearms, either because he disdained them, or because he lacked the means to manufacture or procure them. In the traditional fight, the Rajputs were at an advantage. The impetuosity of their attack led to the crumbling of the Mughal left and right wings, and put serious pressure on their centre till Mughal reserves, and a rumour of Akbar's arrival turned the tide. The bravery of the Rajputs, the heat, and the fear of ambush in the hills prevented pursuit, and enabled the Rana to retreat into the hills in order to continue the fight. Thus, the battle failed to break the existing stalemate.

In the battle the Rana was supported in the main by contingents drawn from his subordinates, a notable exception being Ram Shah, an ex-ruler of Gwaliyar and his sons, and an Afghan contingent led by Hakim Sur which played a distinctive role. The Mughal forces were commanded by Kr. Man Singh. With both the Hindus and the Muslims divided, the battle of Haldighati can scarcely be considered a struggle between Hindus and Muslims. Nor can it be considered a struggle for Rajput independence, influential sections of the Rajputs already having cast their lot with the Mughals. The struggle can be regarded at best as an assertion of the principle of local independence. Sentiments of local and regional patriotism were strong in India during the 16th century and could always be buttressed by appeal to tradition and custom. However, such a slogan could not be carried very far. The experience of the Rajputs states was that lacking a regionally or nationally dominant power, Rajasthan was always prone to internecine warfare, with its attendant consequences.

Akbar followed up the battle of Haldighati by coming back to Ajmer, and personally leading the campaign against Rana Pratap. In the process, Goganda, Udaipur and Kumbhalmir were occupied, forcing the Rana deeper into the mountainous tract of south Mewar. Mughal pressure was also exerted upon the Afghan chief of Jalor, and the Rajput chiefs of Idar, Sirohi, Banswara, Dungapur and Bundi. These states, situated on the borders of Mewar with Gujarat and Malwa, had traditionally acknowledged the supremacy of whoever was the dominant power in the region, despite close marriage and clan ties with Mewar. The rulers of these states had no option but to submit. An expedition was sent to Bundi where Duda, the elder son of Rao Surjan Hada, in league with Rana Pratap, had established his control over Bundi and adjacent areas. Both Surjan Hada and Bhoj, the father and brother respectively of Duda, took part in the campaign. After great slaughter, Duda escaped into the hills, and Bundi was conferred upon Bhoj.

Thus, Rana Pratap was isolated. Although the Rana continued to wage a valiant, unequal fight against superior Mughal forces which were sent against him, and performed feats of valour under trying circumstances, he was marginalized in Rajput affairs. The Mughal pressure on Mewar relaxed after 1579, following rebellion in Bengal and Bihar, and Mirza Hakim's incursion into the Punjab. In 1585, Akbar moved to Lahore, and remained there for the next twelve years, watching the situation in the north-west. No Mughal expedition was sent against Rana Pratap during this period. Taking advantage of the situation, Rana Pratap recovered many of his territories, including Kumbhalgarh and the areas near Chittor. But he could not recover Chittor itself. During the period, he built a new capital, Chavand, near modern Dungarpur. He died in 1597 at the young age of 51, due to an internal injury incurred by him while trying to draw a stiff bow.

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It is difficult to say whether a more relaxed policy on the part of Akbar by not insisting on personal submission by the Rana would have been able to avert the blood-shed and human misery which took place during this period. By the time Rana Pratap died, the Mughal empire had been consolidated and brought under strict centralized control. The Rajputs too, had become firm allies and partners in the kingdom. Hence, Akbar could have adopted a more flexible policy about personal submission. However, both in the case of Kashmir, and Sindh which was being ruled by a Timurid, Mirza Jani Beg, Akbar continued to insist on personal submission, and sent armies to conquer them when the rulers refused to do so.

Rana Pratap was succeeded by his son, Amar Singh, A series of expeditions were sent by Akbar against Rana Amar Singh between 1598 and 1605. Prince Salim was sent against the Rana in 1599, but achieved little. He was again deputed for the purpose in 1603, but he had no heart in the enterprise. After his accession, Jahangir took up the matter more energetically. Successive campaigns were lead by Prince Parvez, Mahabat Khan, and Abdullah Khan, but could not make any impression on the Rana. Hence, in 1613, Jahangir arrived at Ajmer to direct the campaign personally. A large army was appointed under Prince Khurram to invade the hilly areas of Mewar. The relentless Mughal pressure, the heavy toll of life among the Rajputs, the depopulation of the country and the ruination of agriculture at last produced their effect. The Mewar sardars pressed for peace and opened negotiations with the Mughals through Prince Khurram. The Rana reluctantly gave his consent. The mild and statesman-like attitude adopted by Jahangir facilitated an agreement. Earlier, when he had sent an expedition against the Rana under the command of Parvez, he had told him: “ If the Rana and his eldest son who is called Karan should come and wait upon you, and he proposes service and obedience, you should not do any harm in this country” . He authorised Prince Khurram to negotiate with the Rana to whom he sent a most gracious farman impressed with his hand. The Rana came and waited upon Khurram, and deputed his son, Karan Singh, to wait upon Jahangir at Ajmer. In order to safeguard the Rana’s prestige, Jahangir did not insist upon his personal submission—a concession which Akbar had been unwilling to make. Karan Singh was accorded a very cordial reception and was loaded with gifts. He was accorded the mansab of 5000 zat, 5000 sarwar, and granted a jagir which included the pargana of Ratlam in Malwa, Phulia, Banswara, etc. As a mansabdar, Kr. Karan Singh was to serve the Mughal Emperor with a contingent of 1500 horsemen. Sagar, the son of Rana Udai Singh, who had joined Akbar during the rule of Rana Pratap, and granted the title of Rana and installed at Chittor by Jahangir, was set aside, and all the paraganas of Mewar, including Chittor were restored to the Rana. The principalities of Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. which had been granted an independent status in the time of Akbar were also placed once again under the overlordship of the Rana. The jama of all these territories was reckoned at a little over eighty crore dams (Rupees two crores), of which the tribute payable by Dungarpur, Banswara, etc., amounted to fifty lakh dams. The jagir granted to Kunwar Karan Singh was in addition to the territories belonging to the Rana.

Jahangir established a tradition that the Rana of Mewar would be exempted from personal attendance and service at the Mughal Court, though it was insisted upon that a son or a brother of the Rana would wait upon the Emperor and serve him. Thus, Prince Bhim, the younger son of Rana Amar Singh, served with Khurram in the Deccan. Nor did Jahangir insist upon the Rana entering into matrimonial relations with the Mughal Emperor. Both these traditions were maintained throughout the Mughal rule. But it may be doubted if any formal treaty was concluded between the Mughals and the rulers of Mewar to the effect.

The only condition Jahangir imposed upon the Rana was that the walls of Chittor fort would never be repaired. The Chittor fort was an extremely powerful bastion, and the Mughals were apparently reluctant to see it restored to a state in which it might once again be used to defy Mughal authority. Perhaps, they also regarded its ruined battlements as a symbol of Mughal victory over Mewar’s claim of independence.



Jahangir continued Akbar's policy of establishing personal relations with the Rajput rajas by entering into matrimonial relations with them. He had already married a Kachchawaha princess, Mani Bai, the daughter of Raja Bhagwant Das; and a Jodhpur princess, the daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh, in Akbar's life time (1585). Princesses from Bikaner and Jaisalmer had also been married to him. After his accession, he contracted a number of other marriages with Rajput ruling houses, including one with the daughter of Ram Chand Bundela and another with the daughter of Jagat Singh Kachchawaha, the eldest son of Raja Man Singh. All these marriages were contracted while Mewar still defied the Mughals. Once Mewar had submitted and the alliance with the Rajputs had attained a measure of stability, matrimonial relations between the Mughals and the leading Rajput states became rare.

## EMERGENCE OF A COMPOSITE RULING CLASS

The induction of the Rajputs and other Hindus into the Imperial service, and according them a status of equality with the others was a big step in the creation of a composite ruling class. An analysis of the list of nobles holding ranks of 500 and above given in the Ain-i-Akbari shows that between 1575 and 1595, the Hindus numbered 30 out of a total of 184, or about one-sixth of the total. Out of the 30 Hindus, the Rajputs numbered 27. However, these figures are not a true index of the significance of the Rajputs and other Hindus in the Imperial service. Badayuni who was one of those who was unhappy at this development and harps on the role of Akbar's Rajput wives in shaping his liberal religious policy, says: "... of Hindu infidels who are indispensable, and of whom half the army, and country, will soon consist, and of whom there is not among the Mughals and Hindustanis a quam so powerful, he (Akbar) could not have enough."

As has been noted, Akbar did not give service only to powerful rajas and zamindars. He opened the service to talent and in consequence many gifted and capable men, both Hindu and Muslim, drawn from an ordinary background, were taken into service, and some of them rose to high positions. Thus, among the Rajputs there were many who were subordinate sardars of the various rajas, but who attracted Akbar's eye and were taken into Imperial service. Among these may be mentioned Raisal Darbari, Rai Manohar, Bedi Chand, Lunkaran Kachawaha etc.

An even more significant section consisted of the revenue-experts many of whom belonged to the Khatri and Kayastha castes among the Hindus. These sections had for long worked at the lower level in the revenue affairs of the state, and also acted as financial advisors (peshkars) in the houses of a large number of nobles. Their induction into the higher echelons of the revenue-department was a recent phenomenon. Among these may be mentioned Todar Mal who had worked in the revenue-department under Sher Shah Sur. Under Akbar, he not only took part in many military campaigns against the Uzbek nobles and in Gujarat, he played a leading role in the Bengal expedition. He rose to the position of wazir and carried out important reforms in the revenue system. Another was Rai Patr Das, also a khatri, who was diwan of Bihar and Kabul subahs, was given the title of Raja Bikramajit, and rose to the mansab of 5000. The case of Birbal, a close associate of Akbar, is well known. Another was Rai Purushottam, a brahman, who was appointed as the bakhshi. When the subahs were organized, of the diwans in the twelve subahs, eight were khatri and kayasthas.

Thus, apart from including Rajput and other Hindu rajas or zamindars, into the service, a second channel of promotion, the administrative channel was opened up. This also benefited a section of Indian Muslims. During the times of Babur, Hindustanis, mainly Afghans had been inducted into the Imperial service. Many of the Afghans dropped out, particularly after the conflict with Humayun. After their return to India, the Mughals inducted into the service two sections of Hindustanis or Indian Muslims. These were, first, the Saiyads of Barha, famed for their military valour, who are supposed to have come to India from Arabia during the Sultanat period. On account of their reckless bravery, the Barhas earned under Akbar the right to serve in the vanguard of the army. But none of them rose to high positions. A second section of the Hindustanis were the Shaikhzadas. These included those who belonged to learned families or Shaikhs who had been settled in India for long. Shaikh Gadai, a favourite of Bairam Khan, was one of

these. Badayuni, himself a mullah, held an unfavourable view of these sections, calling them timeservers and hypocrites. Most of these lives on madadd-i-maash or revenue-free grants. A few were zamindars. The Shaikhzadas were an influential section in society, and after his break with the Uzbek nobles, Akbar seems to have made special efforts to conciliate them, and induct them into Imperial service.

Another section of the Hindustanis were the Kambohs. These, apparently, were a clan or tribe, members of which are also found among the Hindus and Sikhs of Punjab. The most prominent person among the Kambohs who were famous for their sagacity and quickness of apprehension was Shahbaz Khan who played a prominent role in many expeditions, especially against Rana Pratap, and in Bengal. As Mir Bakhshi he applied the dagh system very rigidly. He was known for his piety and his wealth. From the time of Jahangir the Afghans began to forge ahead. Their numbers grew as the Mughals expanded their control over the Deccan. The Marathas also began to be recruited into the service from that time. The development of a composite nobility implied a diminution in the domination of the Turani nobles in the service. As we have seen, after the rebellion of the Uzbeks, more Iranis, especially from Khurasan, i.e. eastern Iran began to be induced into the nobility. They were considered more suitable for administrative posts than the Turanis.

A recent study shows that between 1575 and 1595, out of a total 184 nobles holding ranks of 500 zat and above, the Turanis numbered 64 (34.78%), the Iranis 47 (25.54%), the Hindustanis 34 (18.48%), and the Rajputs and other Hindus 30 (16.30%). The background of the remaining 9 is not known. From the time of Akbar an attempt was also made to break clan-tribal ties. Thus, in the army, a rule was made that the military contingents of the nobles should be mixed ones, consisting of Mughals, Hindustanis and Rajputs. However, in view of exigencies, Mughal and Rajput nobles were allowed to have contingents consisting exclusively of Mughals and Rajputs.

Thus, under Akbar, a nobility in which there was a balance between ethnic and religious groups, and an army which was relatively free of narrow clan-tribal loyalties came into being. The basis of this was the concept which prevailed from the time of Nizamul Mulk's Siyasat Nama (10th century), that no ethnic group should constitute a preponderant section in the nobility or army so that the ruler was not dependent on any one of them. At that time, the ruling sections consisted of Muslims only. Akbar developed this concept further by including the Hindus, especially the Rajputs in the nobility and the army so that they could act as a counter-weight to the others.

A balanced nobility including different ethnic and religious groups could have paved the way for an integrated ruling class. But for that an integrated religious, cultural and political outlook was necessary. In the subsequent pages we shall examine the problematic of the emergence of such an integrated outlook within the framework of an ethnically balanced, composite ruling class.

## **REBELLIONS AND FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE**

We have seen how the empire grew rapidly upto 1576. Thereafter there was a phase of consolidation. However, the phase from 1580 onwards saw a serious rebellion in the east; strife in Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan and the North-west; and expansion of the empire in the east, west and the Deccan. Finally, there was the rebellion of Salim, the favourite son and future successor of Akbar.

Early in 1580, there was a serious rebellion by the nobles posted in Bengal. This rebellion may be considered the last attempt of the nobles to stop and, if possible, reverse the process of centralization of power in hands of the monarchy and, by implication, of the officials of the central government whose power and influence had grown apace after the crushing of the Uzbek rebellion in 1567. Thus, the system of branding of horses (dagh) and other animals introduced in 1574, and the insistence of the periodic review of the dagh and of the quality of the horses employed by the nobles had caused deep resentment. On account of the Bengal campaign against the Afghans, these regulations had not been strictly enforced. After the end of the rebellion, Rai Purushottam and Mulla Muhammad Yazdi were sent

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to set things in order. They behaved in a harsh and untactful manner, demanding to see old accounts. This was compounded by the intrigues of some agents of Mirza Hakim who tried to incite the nobles.

The mullahs were also discontented because many of them had lost their revenue-free lands or seen them reduced. The qazi of Jaunpur issued a ruling (fatwa) “insisting on the duty of taking the field and rebellion against the Emperor” because “the Emperor has in his dominions made encroachments on the grant lands belonging to us and to God.”

The final straw was when the allowance (bhatta) given for service in Bengal and Bihar was reduced to half or less. The rebellion engulfed both Bengal and Bihar where the rebels went so far as to read the khutba in the name of Mirza Muhammad Hakim.

Akbar took energetic steps to curb the rebellion, and also introduced some conciliatory measures. The rebellion had been largely brought under control by Mirza Aziz Koka and Todar Mal by the time Mirza Muhammad Hakim invaded Punjab. Even at the height of the Bengal-Bihar rebellion, his invasion would have hardly made any difference. Akbar had remained in command at Agra with a large army, and Mirza Hakim, who was known to be a drunkard and a paltroon who had lost Kabul a number of times earlier, could hardly have stood up to Akbar. This, perhaps, was the reason why, after Mirza Hakim's retreat from Lahore, and the advance of Mughal armies to Kabul, Akbar restored it to Mirza Hakim. Also, since the rebellion in the east had not yet ended, he had no desire to extend his commitments.

The next phase of the expansion of the empire in the north-west took place after the rise of Abdullah Uzbek who captured Badakhshan in 1584, ousting the Timurids. Afraid of an Uzbek attack on Kabul, Mirza Hakim and the ousted Timurid prince from Badakhshan, Mirza Sulaiman, appealed to Akbar for help. Before Akbar could do anything, Mirza Hakim died from excessive drinking (1585). Akbar instructed Man Singh who was in charge of the frontier regions, to advance to Kabul and occupy it. To coordinate the affairs, Akbar himself advanced upto the Indus and camped at Attack, and appointed Man Singh as governor of Kabul. Simultaneously, energetic steps were taken to keep the Khybar pass open from the Afghan tribesmen who had risen in rebellion. This entailed a series of expeditions in an inhospitable region. It was in one of these operations that Akbar's favourite, Birbal, who had rashly advanced too far into the mountain defiles, was surrounded and killed. Akbar was grief-stricken, but it made him even more determined to quell the Afghan tribesmen. This was done but the process was slow and painstaking.

In 1586, Akbar decided to conquer Kashmir, the local ruler, Yaqub Khan, who had submitted to Akbar, having refused to come and pay personal homage. After an initial invasion by Raja Bhagwant Das had been repulsed, the task was completed by Qasim Khan (1587). Soon after, many hill rajas of Jammu, as well as Ladakh and Baltistan (called Tibet Khurd or small, and Tibet Buzarg or big), submitted. Akbar made his first visit to Kashmir in 1589.

Soon afterwards, in 1590, Akbar sent a force to capture lower Sindh, upper Sindh with its capital at Bhakkar being already under Mughal control. The conquest of lower Sindh was necessary for opening up the trade route from Qandahar to Multan and down the river Indus to the sea. Meanwhile, some of the areas in North India, such as Baluchistan which had remained outside Imperial control were also subdued. The final act was the capture of Qandahar. This gave to the Mughal a scientific, more defensible frontier.

In the west, Kathiawar was conquered. Man Singh was transferred from Kabul to Bihar in 1587. He adopted a forward policy and conquered Orissa, as also Dacca in East Bengal which was under Afghan control. Cooch Bihar was also forced to accept Mughal suzerainty. Having thus rounded off Mughal conquests in North India, Akbar turned towards the Deccan. We shall deal with Mughal relations with the Deccan in a separate chapter. The last year of Akbar's reign were clouded by the rebellion of his son and chosen successor, Salim. Though Akbar was too well settled to be shaken, it raised once again the problem of succession which progressively worsened as Mughal rule itself became firmer, and struck roots in the soil.

# UNIT-XIX

## STATE AND GOVERNMENT UNDER AKBAR

### AKBAR'S CONCEPT OF SUZERAINTY

We have discussed earlier how from the fourteenth century, following the disintegration of the Mongol empire, new, liberal thinking arose in West and Central Asia, and was reflected in the state founded by Timur. Although the successors of Timur were keen to be portrayed as orthodox Islamic rulers they were not prepared to give up the yassa of Chingiz which, among other things, enjoined upon the ruler to consider "all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another". The Timurid belief that they had the divine right to rule was widely respected so that none of the begs aspired to sit on their throne. This provided a certain stability once a ruler had demonstrated his capacity to rule. It were these traditions that Babur brought with him when he laid the foundations of the Mughal state in India. Humayun followed in his foot-steps.

In India, too, the fifteenth century saw a wide diffusion of the liberal sufi orders in which love of God, and devotion to Him was given precedence over formal worship, and no distinction was made between devotees of different faiths. Bhakti sants, like Kabir, Raidas and Nanak laid emphasis on unity of all bhakts, irrespective of their caste or religions. In many provincial kingdoms which arose during this time, Hindus were admitted into the service of the state at high levels, a policy of broad religions toleration generally followed and patronage given to local languages and literatures. Thus, Akbar had a rich, liberal tradition to draw on when he assumed the reigns of governments after the end of Bairam Khan's regency.

Akbar's religious ideas, and his concept of suzerainty have been put forward in detail by his biographer, Abul Fazl. According to Abul Fazl, "Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun". This light was called farr-i-izidi (the divine light), and it was "communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of any one, and men in the presence of it bend the forehead (in) submission". Thus royalty was a divine gift. The ruler was not dependent on it on the ulama, and everyone had to submit to one who possessed it. The concept was by no means a new one. It was based on the pre-Islamic Sassanian concept of royalty in Iran, and was known to Balban when he tried to adopt Iranian forms of royalty. But Abul Fazl combines this old concept with a number of features, drawn from Muslim and Hindu thinking. Thus, a ruler endowed with farr-i-izidi had a paternal love towards the subjects; a large heart which implied a sense of discrimination, courage and firmness and attending to the wishes of great and small; and a daily increasing trust in God, and prayer and devotion so that he is not upset by adversity, punishes the tyrant and behaves with moderation and with reason.

Abul Fazl's concept of state and sovereignty have to be seen in the context of his understanding of society, as also his religio-spiritual notions. Following the ancient Hindu traditions, as also influenced by Muslim thinkers such as Jalaluddin Dawwani, Abul Fazl classified human being into four categories: the first being the warriors, second the artificers and merchants, third the learned, and fourth the husbandmen and labourers. By relegating the learned i.e. the religious classes (brahmans, ulama) to the third, not to the first category as in the Dharmashastras, Abul Fazl tried to downgrade these highly pretentious and self-opinionated sections. He also based himself on the existing social reality. Abul Fazl cites the ancient Greek tradition of classifying human being into three on the basis of their qualities: nobles, base and intermediate. The noble included those who had pure intellect, sagacity capability of administration or of composition or eloquence, personal courage for military duty. The base and intermediate sections included the various professions. The ignoble or base comprised those who were opposed to common weal of mankind, such as the hoarding of grain, those opposed to any virtue, such as buffoonary; and trades such



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as a barber, a tanner, a rope-dancer or a sweeper from which “the disposition is naturally averse from”. Butchers and fishermen “who had no other profession but to take life” were also included in this category. They were relegated to separate quarters of the city, and were forbidden under threat of fine from associating with others. This section was marked by “evil disposition and conduct”.

The intermediate section comprised various callings and trades; some that “are of necessity such as agriculture, and others which could be dispensed with such as dyeing and others again, simple, such as carpentry, iron-mongery, and the manufacturing of scales or knives”. Elsewhere, the intermediate category of men were those characterized by good views on account of amiableness of disposition, and who spoke charitably of all men.

Abul Fazl’s view about human beings, particularly the lower classes called the base or the ignorable, reflected in large measure the prejudices of the contemporary upper classes. It was implied that the lower orders should not aspire for a share in state power, and that the task of administering the state should be the preserve of those belonging to noble families, and to the upper castes. Prevalence of evil sections in society was a justification for royal depotism, for only a king who possessed the necessary qualities could control these sections. Secondly, it was necessary for a king endowed with *farr-i-izidi* to establish social stability by not permitting “the dust of sectarian strife to arise”. It was also “obligatory” for him “to put each of these (sections) in its proper place, and by uniting (their) personal ability with due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish”. Thus, stability, even dignity implied the maintenance of one’s due station in life. Akbar is quoted as saying that the *daroghas* should be watchful “to see that no one from covetousness abandons his own professions”. Elsewhere, we are told that Akbar quoted with approval Shah Tahmasp’s statement that “When a menial takes to learning he does so as at expense of his duties”.

Despite his strong belief in hierarchy, Abul Fazl was concerned with the need of absorbing into the king’s service men of talent, irrespective of their social background. Thus, he states that Akbar was moved by the spirit of the age for he “knows the value of the talent, honours people of various classes with appointments in the ranks of the army, and raises them from the position of a common soldier to the dignity of a grandee”. These views were reiterated by Akbar in the advice given by him to Prince Daniyal when he was sent to Allahabad in R.Y. 42/1597-98 “Judge nobility of caste and high birth from the personality (of the individual), and not goodness from ancestors, or greatness from (the nobility) of the seed”.

Abul Fazl’s basic concept was of a liberal absolutism under a ruler of high endeavour endowed with the highest moral and spiritual qualities, and enjoying heaven’s mandate, so that he was not dependent on any set of religious leaders for legitimization. Although Abul Fazl tried to portray this concept of state and sovereignty in terms of old Iranian traditions, there can be little doubt that the type of secularist poly-religious state, based on a composite ruling class drawn from different ethnic and religious groups, hierarchical in nature yet open ended to a fair extent, and humane in its dealing with the masses, based on the concept of equal justice for all, irrespective of birth, religion or status, was an ideal which was far in advance of anything postulated or practised in Asia, or in Europe at that time. It is interesting to note that Abul Fazl nowhere uses the words *dar-ul-Islam* or *dar-ul-harb* to describe the polity of his times, because such distinctions had ceased to be meaningful, this being one of the justifications advanced by him for the abolition of *jizyah*. Abul Fazl was convinced, or would have us believe that Akbar’s conquests were not based on a spirit of aggrandisement, but was part of a larger plan to establish an all-India polity based on justice and tolerance, in other words, a state which could be called a *dar-ul-sulh*.

## STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT-CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL

Akbar inherited a structure of government based on the experience of the Delhi Sultanat. Babur and Humayun had no time to revise the system, a new impetus to it being given by Sher Shah. After Akbar had taken the reins of government in his own hands, and after dealing with the rebellions of Uzbek nobles and the Mirzas, and the conquest of Gujarat, Akbar turned his attention to the task of reorganisation of government. The system he devised had some novel features. The functions and responsibilities of the various departments were carefully laid down so that they did not encroach on each other, and at the same time balanced and supported each other. Thus, a system of checks and balances was devised. In this way, Akbar infused new life into the system.

Akbar hardly made any changes in administration at the district and sub-district levels, the sarkar and the parganas continuing to function as before with some changes in the designation of officials. An important contribution of Akbar was the development of a provincial administration, patterned on the central system of government.

Detailed rules and regulations were devised for controlling both the provincial and district administration. We have some idea of these from the Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl. New regulations continued to be devised, and these were later brought together as Dastur-ul-Amals or Rule Books. Thus, an essentially bureaucratic system of government gradually emerged. However, the ruler remained the kingpin of the system.

## THE VAKIL

Although there were a number of departments of government in the Islamic countries outside India, as well as in the Delhi Sultanat, the Central Asian and Timurid tradition was of a single wazir who supervised the various branches of government, including the revenue and the military. Thus, Babur's wazir, Nizammuddin Khwaja, was the political and financial head of the government. He was, however, primarily a military man, and took a leading part in Babur's military campaigns, and commanded troops at Panipat and Khanua. Humayun's wazirs, Amir Wais and Hindu Beg, were very influential, and supervised all the branches of government. They, too, were primarily military men.

A new situation, arose with the appointment of Bairam Khan as Vakil and ataliq (guardian) of the emperor. He was all powerful, directing policy, appointing and dismissing officials at the highest level, and controlling both revenue and military affairs. Thus, as Vakil, Bairam Khan exercised the functions of an all-powerful wazir.

As Akbar took the reins of government in his hands, he devised ways and means to ensure that such a situation did not arise again. As we have seen, some of the successors of Bairam Khan, with Maham Anaga behind the scene, thought that they could continue to exercise the type of powers which Bairam Khan had enjoyed. The drastic punishment of Adham Khan for stabbing Atka Khan signalled that Akbar would not allow the vikalat to be the tool of factional politics.

Munim Khan was made the Vakil, but he ceased to be the moving spirit of the state, and the effective head of the administration. In 1564-65, Muzaffar Khan Turbati, an Iranian who had been diwan of Bairam Khan, was made diwan of the Empire, with Todar Mal as his assistant. Gradually, the revenue and financial affairs were separated from the office of the vakil. After the downfall of the Uzbeks in 1567, Munim Khan was appointed governor of Jaunpur, and then of Bihar. Thus, his role in the central government came to an end. After that the post of vakil was not filled for seven years. It was in the nineteenth year (1575) that Muzaffar Khan was appointed vakil, combining the posts of vakil and diwan. But he worked more as a financial expert, and held a comparatively modest rank of 4000. Raja Todar Mal and Shah Mansur who were joint-diwan at the time, were ordered to work in consultation

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with him. But in the beginning of the twenty-fourth year (1579), Muzaffar Khan was posted to Bengal and he ceased to have any connection with the central government. Thereafter for ten years, between 1579 and 1589, no vakil was appointed. In this way, Akbar made it clear that the post of a vakil was a favour for him to bestow but which was not indispensable for the administration.

In 1595, Mirza Aziz Koka, a favourite of Akbar and his playmate, was made vakil, and he remained in that post till Akbar's death. Though personally very influential, he does not seem to have played any role in administration. Thus, like Munim Khan earlier, his term of office was more for show and personal dignity than for any real power or substantial work. As a modern historian, Ibn Hasan, says: "The power (of the vakil) was gone but the show of power and marks of outward distinction and prestige were retained".

## THE CENTRAL MINISTRIES

While dealing with the problem posed by the vakil or an all-powerful wazir, Akbar tackled the problem of organising the ministries. These were four in number, the revenue department headed by the diwan or the wazir; the military department headed by the Mir Bakshi; the department of Imperial establishments (karkhanas) and the royal house-hold under the Mir Saman, and the judicial and revenue-free (inam) grants departments under the sadr. Although four was a traditional figure suggested by Ibn Khaldun, all departments were not equal in power or importance. In course of time, the wazir's position became the most powerful and influential, closely matched by that of the Mir Bakshi.

### Diwan

According to Abul Fazl, the person who headed the department of income and expenditure was the wazir, also called diwan. In practice, under Akbar, the word diwan or diwan-i-ala was used more generally. There were several reasons for this. The diwans of Akbar were often men of humble social backgrounds who had attracted the emperor's attention by their knowledge and skill of revenue affairs. Although very influential and close to the emperor, they were generally not given high mansabs. Also, Akbar was still experimenting, and sometimes appointed two or even three persons as diwans to discharge the duties of diwanship.

The duties of a diwan are fairly well known. He was the lieutenant of the emperor in financial matters, superintendent of the Imperial treasures, and checked all accounts. Underplaying his political role, Abul Fazl calls him "in reality a book keeper". The mustaufi or Auditor of Accounts, and the accountants of the various ministries—the army, the royal court, the household, the Imperial work-shops, and diwan of the khalisa, were "under his orders, and act by the force of his wisdom". (Abul Fazl).

The diwans were drawn from the class of writers or ahl-i-qalam as distinct from warriors. However, a few of them, such as Muzaffar Khan who was in addition the vakil for some time, and Raja Todar Mai were also employed in military operations, thus emphasising the point that there was no hard and fast dividing line between civil and military affairs during those times.

The growth of the diwan's department began with the appointment of Muzaffar Khan Turbati in the ninth year (1565). Muzaffar Khan who had been Bairam Khan's vakil, had been imprisoned after his downfall. Knowing his competence, Akbar released him, and appointed him amil of pargana Pasrur, and then diwan of bayutat or the Imperial karkhanas. His varied experience made him eminently fit for the post, and soon he acquired so much influence that the Emperor consulted him in the matter of appointment of high officials, even ministers. During his diwanship of eight and a half years (1563-1572), he carried out several important financial reforms. But Muzaffar Khan fell out of favour because power had turned his head: he first annoyed Akbar when he abused him while playing a game of chaupar with him. He was exiled to Mecca, but recalled while he was on the way, and made vakil. He was removed for opposing certain financial and military reforms.

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Muzaffar Khan was undoubtedly a competent diwan who was associated with the finance department for sixteen and a half years. During the period, some very competent officials such as Raja Todar Mai and Khwaja Shah Mansur were inducted into the ministry. It was this band of expert, knowledgeable, loyal and hard working officials who carried out the new revenue system, called the dahsala or Ten Yearly system. This band broke up when in 1579 Muzaffar Khan was appointed governor of Bengal.

In popular memory, the dahsala system is associated with Todar Mal. As is well known, Todar Mal earned his reputation as a military engineer by building fort Rohtas under Sher Shah. His precise role in the revenue reforms of Sher Shah is not clear. Todar Mal was associated with the revenue department for several years before he was made diwan of Gujarat in 1573. He was soon brought to the central finance department and was made mushrifi-diwan in 1575. According to Abul Fazl, the post of mashrif-i-diwan was higher than diwan but lower than wakil.

It was the team of Todar Mal and Shah Mansur who divided the empire into twelve provinces, each with a governor and a diwan. But it was Shah Mansur who implemented the new dahsala system which had been worked out earlier: Todar Mai had been asked to implement it, but he was deputed to Bengal at the time. Shah Mansur fell in disfavour for his strictness in enforcing the dagh system or branding of horses in the newly conquered areas of Bihar and Bengal. Though he was restored to favour soon afterwards, he came into trouble again in 1581, being charged, falsely, for being in league with Akbar's step-brother, Mirza Hakim, and was executed. It is widely believed that it was Todar Mal who had the forged letters prepared on the basis of which he was executed. Akbar either did not know it, or ignored it. Shortly afterwards, Todar Mal was appointed Diwan-i-ala. During the next ten years, till his death, Todar Mal played an important role in carrying out further reforms in implementing the dahsala system. As was his usual practice, during the period Akbar also associated others with the revenue system. Mir Fathullah Shirazi was one of these. He was a great favourite of Akbar, and for some time, Todar Mal was asked to work under him.

After Todar Mal's death, we do not hear of any great diwan. But the work of the department was now set, and could continue under men of a lower calibre. All in all, Akbar assembled a team of highly skilled financial experts, and gave them his full support and backing. None of them, however, was allowed to feel that he was indispensable. Akbar took the important step of separating the financial from the military and political powers and functions, so that the wazir, instead of being a danger to the state and a source of intrigues, brought efficiency and responsibility to his task. Akbar respected the diwans for their efficiency and loyalty but he never sacrificed discipline, and stern action was taken whenever necessary. There were at times signs of rivalries and personal animosities concerning official rank, but the vigilance of Akbar kept them under control and they were not allowed to effect the administration.

### **Mir Bakhshi**

The post of Mir Bakhshi had been in existence in the Delhi Sultanat since the time of Balban under the name of diwan-i-arz. It was well recognised that in order to limit the powers of the wazir, a separate military department was a necessity. The recruitment of the army, the inspection of horses, and the muster of troops at regular intervals were some of the permanent duties of this ministry. The Mir Bakhshi of the Mughals enjoyed all the powers of the diwan-i-arz, but his influence was even greater since all nobles were given a military rank or mansab, and it was the Mir Bakhshi who presented all candidates for appointment to the Emperor. He kept a register of all the mansabdars who were employed for civil and military duties. All promotions, including appointments to all high officials of the state, such as wakil, wazir, sadr passed through the Chief Bakhshi. He was not the commander-in-chief but was the pay master-general, and could be asked to arrange for disposition of troops in battle. The soldiers and horses of the mansabdars were also presented by the bakhshi after the branding of the horses and verification of the soldiers. Similarly, the horses and soldiers of all mansabdars were periodically inspected by the bakhshi.



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The Mir Bakhshi presented before the king all high officers of state coming from the provinces or leaving the court for their posting. Embassies and distinguished visitors were all presented to the king by the Chief Bakhshi. Thus, he or his representative was present in the public darbar, or the private audience hall.

The Mir Bakhshi was also the head of the intelligence department, and all news-reports sent by the waqia navis from different provinces were put by him before the king. The influence of the Mir Bakhshi was added to by the fact that he made arrangements for the palace guard and made recommendations for rewards to them. He accompanied the king on his tours and looked to the arrangements of the royal camp, especially the allotment of places within the camp to the mansabdars.

Thus, as Ibn Hasan observes, the Mir Bakhshi's "influence extended beyond his own department and his nearness to the king in the darbar added much to his prestige". The wazir and the Mir Bakhshi were the two leading officials in the government, and checked and supported each other. Thus, all appointments, after confirmation, had to go to the wazir's office for allotment of jagir, and presented to the emperor by the Bakhshi on return. The same procedure was followed in case of promotions.

### **Mir Saman**

Under the Delhi Sultanat and in the system of administration in the Islamic countries of West Asia, there was no separate household department as under the Mughals. The Mir Saman who was in charge of the royal household, was considered to be in charge of a department, like the wazir and the Mir Bakhshi. Neither the word Mir Saman or Khan-i-Saman was used in Akbar's time, but came in use under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Under Akbar, it seems that the office of the Mir Saman had not emerged. We do however, hear of the diwan-i-bayutat who was in charge of the karkhanas. The karkhanas included factories and stores maintained by the central government. They dealt with every article from precious stones, pearls to swords and daggers guns and artillery. The diwan-i-bayutat maintained horses and elephants for the army, beasts of burden such as camels, mules etc. for baggage, and other animals (elephants, horses etc.) for the royal hunt. Thus, the diwan-i-bayutat was an important officer who dealt with the household, the darbar and the army, and was close to the king. Hence, as Mir Saman he rose in course of time to be head of a separate ministry.

The department not only purchased and stored all kinds of articles of use for the king, and the inmates of the haram, but was the greatest manufacturing agency in the country for weapons for war and articles of luxury. As such, the Mir Saman had to be in close touch with the Mir Bakhshi. Each karkhana had a darogha who had special knowledge of the article being manufactured, and an account and a mushrif to look after the administration. We are told that Akbar made it a point to visit the workshops frequently, and that he did not "shrink from watching and even himself practising for the sake of amusement the craft of an ordinary artisan." (Monserrate)

### **Sadr**

The sadr or sadr-us-sadur was the head of the ulama and was considered to be the chief advisor of the king regarding the enforcement and interpretation of sharia or the holy law. He was also called the qazi-ul-quzzat, or head of the judiciary, and appointed qazis all over the empire. However, the king himself was the final court of appeal, and heard cases with the help of the mufti. As the most distinguished scholar of Islam and its religious head, the sadr exercised a kind of censorship over the education, ideas and morals of the people. According to Ibn Hasan, "It was in this capacity that he exercised an immense influence, and his hands reached every individual of the state".

A major responsibility of the sadr was to award subsistence allowances (madadd-i-maash) to deserving scholars, divines and weaker sections such as women of noble families. The subsistence allowance could

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be in cash or in terms of grant of land. This was, in fact, a tremendous power of patronage which some of the sadrs used for personal enrichment. The most powerful of the sadrs under Akbar was Shaikh Abdun Nabi. According to Badayuni, he distributed enormous areas in land to the people as maddad-imaash, and that after him no one alienated a tenth part of what he gave in religious endowments.

Akbar had great respect for Shaikh Abdun Nabi because of his learning, and having come from a family noted for piety and learning. Akbar not only attended his discourses, but once or twice reverently picked up the Shaikh's shoes and placed them before his feet. But Akbar became disgusted with him when bribery, mismanagement and rapacity was revealed in an enquiry into the grants of lands made at his instance. The Shaikh was also found to be narrow and bigoted, and he lost Akbar's sympathy when he executed a prominent brahman of Mathura on a charge of blasphemy. He was exiled to Mecca in 1579. Thereafter, Akbar carried out reforms separating aima or revenue-free grant lands from khalisa, and consolidated them so that the grantees were not harassed by being given scattered lands in different parts. Later, they were grouped into six circles under individual sadrs. The powers of the sadr of granting subsistence lands were largely taken away: they could only make recommendations to the Emperor.

Akbar was keen that deserving Hindu scholars and religious men should also benefit from these grants. He therefore appointed as chief sadr men who had more tolerant views, and "ought to be at peace with every party" (Akbar Nama). Grants to the Hindu holy men had not been unknown earlier but such grants become more widespread under Akbar due to this policy. Hindu Rajas and zamindars continued to make such grants to Hindu holymen, temples etc.

## PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

As we have seen, under the Delhi Sultanat there was no clear division of the empire into provinces with definite boundaries. The holders of iqtas, who were called muqtis, had executive and military power and were expected to help in the collection of land revenue and maintenance of law and order, particularly protection of the royal pathways. Some of the muqtis who had larger and strategically important areas under them were called walis or amirs. The stable administrative unit was the sarkar.

Akbar inherited this system and continued it till 1580. In 1580 the empire which by then had extended to include Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal, was divided into twelve subahs or provinces. The head of administration in the subah was called sipahsalar or commander, though later the word subahdar began to be used. The head of the subah, or governor, was assisted by a diwan, a bakhshi, a sadr-cum-qazi, a mir adl for justice, a kotwal, a mir bahr or superintendent of rivers and ports, and a waqia-navis or news writer. These officers were subordinate to the governor but were not appointed by him. They were appointed directly by the emperor, and were answerable to him, and to the head of their ministry at the centre. Thus, the principle of checks and balances was carried to the provincial governments.

Under Akbar, Orissa which had been conquered later was included in Bengal, while Kashmir was included in subah Kabul. Modern U.P. and Haryana formed four provinces—Allahabad, Awadh, Agra and Delhi. Later, after the expansion of the empire into the Deccan, three more subahs—the subahs of Khandesh, Berar and Ahmadnagar were formed. They were put under the control of a viceroy who was often a prince of blood. In 1586, as an experimental measure, Akbar decided to appoint two governors in every province. According to Abul Fazl, this step was taken because if one governor had to be absent for duty at court, or fell ill, the administration would continue unhampered. Perhaps, a real purpose was to limit the powers of the governor. But it led to needless acrimony and had to be abandoned. Interestingly, in many subahs, such as Kabul and Agra, a Muslim and a Rajput Raja were given joint command, while Lahore and Ajmer were placed exclusively under Rajput rajas.

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The Ain-i-Akbari gives the geographical boundaries of the subahs along with a brief account of the climate, general conditions, products, history, etc. of each province. The provinces are divided into sarkars and parganas, and the assessed income of each sarkar, the castes of the zamindars, and the military forces— cavalry, infantry, elephants at their disposal is also given. This was so because the autonomous rajas were not listed separately as states, but included in the subahs as sarkars and parganas. Thus, Mewar was included in sarkar Chittor, Kota is mentioned as a pargana of sarkar Ranthambhor, while Jaipur (Amber) was a pargana of sarkar Ajmer. There was a considerable range in the size, assessed income etc. of the subahs, with Bengal having twenty-four sarkars with an assessed income (jama) of about one and a half crore rupees and, on the other end, Multan with three sarkars with an assessed income of only about thirty seven lakh rupees. Other provinces fell in between these two extremes.

The provincial governors have been called viceregents of the emperor. The governor was the commander of the provincial army, and was responsible for law and order, the general administration as well the welfare and prosperity of the people of the subahs, as the letters of appointment of the governors indicate. He was to help the diwan in collecting the land-revenue by controlling and, if necessary, punishing the recalcitrant or rebellious zamindars. He was also to help the diwan in extending cultivation, construct reservoirs, wells, water-courses, gardens, sarais and other useful public works, and to repair old ones. He was entrusted with the administration of criminal justice, but was to use the utmost deliberation before inflicting the capital punishment on anyone. He was asked to undertake tours of the province and to keep himself in touch with all important happening in his province through trusted spies and news-writers. It is significant that the governor was also instructed not to “interfere in anyone’s creed”. The governor was also responsible for collecting the tribute from vassal chiefs in the province. There was no definite term for a governor, but governors were constantly transferred.

The diwan was the second most important officer in the subah. Although, at first, the governors were permitted to appoint the diwans to assist them, from 1595 the diwans began to be appointed centrally, possibly on the recommendation of the chief diwan. Henceforth, the diwan ceased to be a subordinate of the governor, but a colleague, though the governor remained the head of the administration. We can postulate the duties of the diwan from later records since Abul Fazl gives us no such information for Akbar’s reign. The provincial diwan had to send fortnightly reports to the Central diwan on financial matters and the cash-balances with him. He was responsible for collection of the land revenue and other taxes, and for their auditing and accounting. A principal duty of the diwan was to extend and improve cultivation with the help of amils in the sarkars. But he was also to check extortion of the amils, and to supervise their work. He also supervised the lands given for charitable purposes.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the duties of the bakhshi and the sadr in the subah, their duties being on the model of their ministries at the centre. The bakhshi also acted as the head of the intelligence service, and this sometimes brought him into conflict with the governor, if he sent complaints against his conduct to the court. The sadr recommended grants to religious men and was also head of the judiciary department. Akbar was not satisfied with the work of the qazis and had appointed a mir adl as a judicial officer in the provinces. The qazi was to act as his assistant. The kotwal was in charge of law and order in the city. He also looked after the general amenities in the city, such as weights and measures, as also control of gambling houses and houses of prostitution etc.

The point to note is that the governor of the province was the head of a team, and it needed tact and skill on his part to deal with officers each of whom was zealous of his privileges, and had direct access to the centre. But these checks and balances could only operate when there was a capable sovereign at the centre, with a skilful and cohesive team of officials to assist him. Akbar’s policy of keeping a careful watch on the conduct of the provincial governors with the help of other officials, the news-reporters and spies, constant tours where he heard the grievances of the people, and taking steps against those who were guilty of oppression were effective in preventing the forces of regional separatism raising their

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head. On special occasions, the emperor also appointed high officials to enquire into complaints against provincial or local officials.

Thus, Akbar tried to establish a provincial system of government which acted as a link to the local administrative units, and as a transmission belt for information to the centre.

## **DISTRICT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

As we have noted earlier, for purposes of administration the provinces were divided into sarkars and parganas. Each sarkar was headed by a faujdar who was responsible for the general government, and law and order including safety of the roads. He was also to assist the amalguzar who was responsible for the assessment and collection of land revenue. The faujdar may be considered the man on whose shoulders rested the day to day functioning of the administration. In that sense, he has been compared to the collector in a district under British rule, though the precise duties of the two varied considerably. Unlike the collector under British rule, the faujdar also commanded the local armed forces, but was not directly responsible for the assessment and collection of land-revenue. The qazi was responsible for criminal justice, as also civil law among Muslims, or when one of the party to a dispute was a Muslim. Each sarkar was divided into a number of parganas. Each pargana had a shiqdar for general administration, an amil for assessment and collection of land revenue, a treasurer, a qanungo who determined the pargana and village boundaries and kept the local revenue records, and clerks or karkuns.

## **THE WORKING OF GOVERNMENT-THE RULER**

Since the ruler was the centre of government his attitude towards public business set a standard and a norm. These, in turn, were widely emulated by the nobles. Akbar set the standard of appearing three times everyday for state business. The first appearance was in the morning after sunrise, after which a public darbar was held. The morning appearance which was called jharoka darshan was an innovation of Akbar, and was designed to establish a personal bond between the ruler and his subjects. This was an occasion when people could submit their petitions and present their cases without hindrance. A decision could be taken on the spot, or, as under Shah Jahan, the clerks of the judicial department took notes, and placed them before the ruler in the open darbar, or in the private audience chamber. The jharoka darshan was sometimes used for witnessing animal fights, or reviewing the contingents of nobles. In course of time, as Akbar's prestige rose, some people made it a rule not to eat or drink till they had the darshan of the king. This was a practical demonstration of the old Indian traditions of attaching divinity to the office of the king.

After jharoka darshan, Akbar retired to the public audience hall, or the diwan-i-khas-o-am where everyone, high or low, was allowed to present petitions and present cases in person. According to Badayuni, "Huge crowds assembled and there was much bustle." Officers posted or returning from a campaign or from a posting were received, and news-letters from the provinces read-out. All the nobles present in the capital or the camp were required to be present. Akbar spent one and a half pahars, or about four and a half hours every day at the public audience hall.

The second appearance was in the afternoon when Akbar reviewed the condition of the horses, elephants and transport animals maintained by the state. An even more important function was to go round to the various karkhanas, or to conduct other routine business. According to Monserrate, the Jesuit priest whom Akbar had invited from Goa, Akbar had built a work-shop near the palace where the finer and more reputable arts, such as painting, goldsmith work, tapestry and carpet making etc. and even manufacture of arms were carried on. Monserrate says, "Hither he very frequently comes and relaxes his mind with watching those who practice their arts." In between these two appearances, Akbar retired to the royal household for a meal and rest, and to hear and dispose of petitions from the ladies of the haram/harem.



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Confidential business of the state was conducted in the evening in a building called ghusal-khana (bathroom). This was so called because in between the diwan-i-am and the female apartments was a building where Akbar used to take a bath, after which a few trusted persons were admitted to see him. Later, the diwan and the bakhshi and a number of other nobles were also admitted. Shah Jahan renamed it the Daulat Khana-i-Khas, but the term ghusal khana continued, so much so that the post of darogha or supervisor of the ghusal-khana became an influential post because the holder of the post could regulate entrance to it, or knew who came and went.

The Diwan-i-Khas was also used for bringing together “the learned, the wise and the truth seekers” who held discussions on various topics (Ain-i-Akbari). Generally, Akbar retired late at night after hearing music.

It will thus be seen that the Emperor tried to see a cross-section of the people, and to be accessible to them. The Jesuits were struck by Akbar’s pleasant spoken and affable manner of talking to nobles or common people, and that “It was hard to exaggerate how accessible he (Akbar) makes himself to all who wish audience to him”. In fact, this wish to be close to the people sometimes made him adopt unconventional methods. Thus, we are told by Abul Fazl that in 1560-61, when there was a large gathering near Agra for people going for celebrations at the tomb of the popular saint Salar Masud Ghazi at Baharaith (modern West U.P.), Akbar, according to habit, went incognito, “observing the various sorts and conditions of humanity.” He was almost recognised by some ruffians, but he escaped by rolling his eyes to change his appearance. There is no record of any earlier Muslim ruler in India having the confidence of venturing out alone in this way among the people.

Akbar’s significant contribution in the functioning of government was to establish a routine which was strictly followed by his successors till the time of Bahadur Shah I, and of bringing the monarchy closer and more accessible to the people in various ways.

## LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

The land revenue system as it emerged under Akbar may be considered the culmination of developments which had started much earlier, even before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanat, as we have noted in the earlier volume. Thus, the attempts of the state to realize the land revenue in cash, and preparing a system of measurement in order to obviate the need of a large army of officials to assess the collection of produce at the time of the cutting of the crops, and demanding the share of the state out of it, has been attempted in some areas in India before the arrival of the Turkish rulers. But we do not know much about the details of these measures.

Under Alauddin Khalji, an attempt was made to assess the land revenue on the individual cultivator in the upper doab area, so that the burden of the strong did not fall on the weak. To what extent it succeeded is a matter of speculation. He also introduced a type of measurement of the cultivated land. But it was different from the systems of measurement which was introduced by Sher Shah, and developed further by Akbar.

Before we discuss the actual system of land-revenue administration which was virtually the basis of the financial system of the state, we may first ascertain the basic approach of the ruler or the ruling classes on the subject. Ziauddin Barani clearly enunciates this when he says that Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq’s policy was that “The Hindus (i.e. the cultivators) were to be taxed so that they may not be blinded by wealth, and so become discontented and rebellious, nor, on the other hand, be so reduced to poverty and destitution as to be unable to pursue their husbandry.” Some modern historians call this a policy of reducing the peasants to a level of bare subsistence. However, this tends to conceal the fact that there were big differences in the villages even at that time regarding the size of holding, agricultural assets (ploughs, bullocks etc.) and economic status. We have to see how the land-revenue system effected these different sections.

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Again, it has been argued that the efforts of all medieval rulers was to maximise the collection of land revenue. This, again, presents a picture of growing pressure of the state on the cultivators, whereas, from the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, it was constantly emphasised that the land-revenue demand having reached a maximum, further increase of land-revenue could only be effected by expansion and improvement of cultivation. However, there were situations and phases when the lives of the cultivators became unbearable, leading to a crisis and a breakdown. Such situations need to be analysed concretely, not as part of a general proposition.

The evolution of the revenue system under Akbar, leading to what is called the *dahsala* or Ten-Year system in the 24th year of his reign (1579), was the logical evolution of the system of measurement (*zabt*) adopted by Sher Shah, which had continued to operate in Hindustan, that is, the area from Lahore to Ilaahabas (Allahabad), till the early years of Akbar's reign. During Bairam Khan's regency, because the number of claimants was large, the *jama* or assessment was artificially inflated, leading to considerable discontent and infighting among the nobles, as has been noticed earlier. After assuming full charge of the administration in 1562, Akbar tried to reform the system. Asaf Khan, an Irani, was appointed *wazir*, but could do little and was removed. However, Aitmad Khan, a trusted eunuch, who had been appointed *diwan* of the crown-lands (*khalisa*), effected reforms which relieved Akbar of his immediate financial worries. He separated the *khalisa* lands from *jagirs* lands, after an enquiry had been made regarding the income of different kinds of lands. Apparently, the most productive lands were included in the crown lands. Badayuni simply says that unprecedented economy was effected in expenditure.

Till the tenth year (1566), no change was made in Sher Shah's crop-rate (*ray*) which was converted into a cash-rate, called *dastur-ul-amal* or *dastur*, by using a single price-list. However, this caused much distress because the prices on which the crop-rates were converted into cash-rates were those prevailing in the royal camp. Since prices in the countryside, and in areas away from the royal camp were generally lower, the peasant would have had to pay more. But the major problem was that the state still had little idea of the actual state of cultivation, including productivity, the area sown, etc. No proper assessment of land-revenue could be made in the absence of such information.

In the eleventh year (1567), Muzaffar Khan and Raja Todar Mal effected a major change. *Qanungos* were asked to provide information about the area of land cultivated and uncultivated, produce of the land, and the land revenue-figures or statistics (*taqsimat*). The statements of the area under direct administration (*khalisa*) for the years 1567-71 were checked by ten superior *qanungos*, and on that basis the assessment, called *jama-i-raqmi* which had continued since the time of Bairam Khan, was set aside, and a new estimate of the revenue for the empire was made. It was on the basis of the information provided by the *qanungos* that, instead of a single price-list for the whole empire, the crop-rates began to be converted into cash on the basis of the prices prevalent in differing regions.

These different prices are reflected in the rate list (*dasturs*) from 1562 to 1579 called the nineteen-year price rates for different provinces given by Abul Fazl in the *Ain*. The rates are in the form of maximum and minimum. Thus in subah Agra, the cash-rate (*dastur*) for wheat varied from 56 to 60 dams per *bigha* in the eleventh year, and from 36 to 74 in the seventeenth year. It is not clear whether the cash-rates or *dasturs* reflected not only variation in prices, but also of productivity. In the beginning the state demand was calculated on the basis of measurement every year. But later, this was replaced by estimation or *kankut*.

This system was better than the previous one but proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The *qanungos* being local *zamindars*, were not interested in revealing in full the actual state of affairs. Thus, neither the crop-rates, nor the *jama* based on the record of the actual produce were found to be correct. Also, the system of *kankut* or estimation provided loop-holes to local officials for corruption. Finally, since the price-lists from the regions had to be scrutinized and approved by the court, and the movements of the emperor being uncertain since the empire had expanded, there were interminable delays. In consequence, in the terse words of Abul Fazl, "abundant distress used to occur."

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## THE DAHSALA SYSTEM

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Thus, incomplete information, and the rapid expansion of the empire aggravated the problem. This, in essence, was the background of the Dahsala or the Ten-Year rates proclaimed in the twenty-fourth year (1579), on the basis of which state demand was expressed as a cash rate based on local productivity and local prices. But before this measure was enforced, two preliminary steps were taken. In the nineteenth year (1574), officials, called (amil) but popularly known as karoris, were placed in charge of lands which could yield a crore of tankas or two and a half lakh rupees. The karori, assisted by a treasurer, a surveyor and other technical staff was to measure the land of a village, and to assess the area under cultivation. According to some observers, he was also to survey the banjar i.e. uncultivated land, and to encourage the peasants to bring it gradually under cultivation, preferably within three years. This was an impossible task, and we are told that many karoris were brought to book for their failure. The primary purpose of the karori experiment, it seems, was to carry out the measurement of the cultivated area because it was in the same year that a new jarib, or measuring rod consisting of bamboos joined by iron-rings was introduced. This replaced the old jarib of hempen rope which expanded when wet, and was a cause of much abuse. This karori experiment was introduced in the settled provinces, from Lahore to Allahabad.

A second step was taken in 1576 when the areas of Hindustan (from Lahore to Allahabad), were brought under khalisa, or direct administration of the crown. This, combined with the introduction of the branding of the horses, or the dagh system, led to serious discontent in a section of the nobility, as has been noted earlier. However, it appears that the steps were meant to gain first-hand experience of agricultural conditions, rather than a desire to do away with the jagir system, as some modern historians have argued. Having gathered the needed information, the system of jagirs was restored.

By 1579, sufficient experience had been gained regarding produce of land, local prices etc. On that basis, and on the basis of their yield, lands were grouped into assessment circles which were also called dasturs. According to Abul Fazl, the crops, the area sown, and the price of produce in every pargana during the last ten years was "ascertained", and "one-tenth thereof was fixed as annual revenue." The state demand was no longer based on a single crop-rate which was then converted into a cash-rate on the basis of prevailing prices, but on a series of cash-rates based on the crop and the area sown. The advantage of this system to the state was that as soon as the crops were sown, and the measurement (Zabt) of the sown area carried out, it knew what its rough income could be. To some extent it benefited the peasant also. But it also meant that the risk of cultivation was largely thrown on to the shoulders of the peasant.

Before we discuss the specific features of the system, it should be clarified that the did not mean a ten year settlement but was based on average of the produce and prices during the last ten years. The manner in which the average prices of the various crops was worked out was a complex one. According to a modern study, they were not based on an average of the prices on which crop-rates were converted into cash rates during the past ten years. Instead, the productivity and local prices during the past ten years were worked out afresh on the basis of information, and then averaged out. But this was not followed in the case of cash-crops or high grade crops such as cotton, indigo, sugar-cane, oilseeds, poppy, vegetables which were always charged in cash. Since such crops had wide price fluctuations, a good season was chosen, and became the basis of the revenue demand.

For purposes of laying down the state demand, both productivity and continuity of cultivation were taken into account. Lands which were continually under cultivation were called polaj. Lands which were fallow (parauti) for a year, paid full rates when they were brought under cultivation. Chachar was land which had lain fallow for three to four years due to inundation etc. It paid a progressive rate, the full rate being charged in the third year. Banjar was cultivable waste-land. To encourage its cultivation, it paid full rates only in the fifth year.

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The lands were further divided into good, bad and middling. One-third of the average produce was the state share. However, in some areas, such as Multan and Rajasthan, one-fourth was charged. In Kashmir, where saffron was sown, the state share was half.

The state demand should not be confused with what the peasant had to part with in practice. The land revenue demand did not include various other kinds of imposts such as cess on cattle, trees etc. There was also the share demanded by zamindars, the local officials, (qanungo, muqaddam, patwari, etc.), and the expenses of village upkeep. We shall discuss this when we discuss village life and standard of living. However, the land revenue demand was undoubtedly the heaviest demand which the peasant had to meet under threat of severe action, including ejection and loss of life, if he failed to meet it.

## THE WORKING OF THE DAHSALA SYSTEM

The dahsala system based on measurement or zabt, was introduced in the region extending from Lahore to Allahabad as also Gujarat, Malwa, and parts of Bihar and Multan. However, as a modern historian, Irfan Habib, says, it is “improbable that the Zabt covered the whole land in any province”. According to the Ain, the amalguzars were instructed to accept any system of assessment which the husbandman preferred. The prevalent systems mentioned, in addition to zabt are kankut or appraisement, and batai or crop-sharing. In kankut, the whole land was measured, either by using the jarib or pacing it, and the standing crops estimated by inspection. If there was any doubt, the crops were cut, and estimated in three lots—the good, the middling, and the inferior, and a balance struck. Abul Fazl says, “Often, too, the land taken by appraisement gives a sufficiently accurate return”.

The second method was crop-sharing. This, again, was of three types: first was bhaoli where the crops are reaped and stacked, and divided by agreement in the presence of the parties. The second type was khet batai where the fields were divided after they were sown. The third type was lang batai where after cutting the grain it was formed in heaps and divided. This system needed a large number of intelligent inspectors, otherwise there was deception.

There was another system in Kashmir where, following the practice in some parts of Central Asia, the produce was computed on the basis of ass loads (kharwar), and then divided.

Another system of assessment mentioned by contemporaries is nasaq. There is considerable controversy among modern historians about its nature. Moreland called it group assessment. R.P. Tripathi disagreed but was not sure of its exact nature. Irfan Habib considers it estimation on the basis of previous assessment. The peasants were given an estimation on the basis of the previous assessment, whether based on zabt or batai, or any other method. If they refused to accept it, a new assessment could be carried out. In this way, annual measurements, or appraisement could be avoided. It seems that gradually nasaq based on zabt became the standard system, but the option of batai was always there, particularly when there had been a series of crop failures.

Similarly, although the state preferred cash, the peasant had the option of paying either in cash or in kind on the basis of crop-sharing. Sometimes, crops of one season (winter or summer) were paid in cash, and the other in kind. Whenever the state share was paid in kind, it was inevitably sold and converted into cash, as revenue-papers from Rajasthan during the seventeenth century indicate. Thus, the system was much less rigid than the official accounts indicate.

There is a controversy whether the state dealt with the individual cultivator, or which the village as a whole. As in the case of Alauddin Khalji earlier, the Mughal theory was that group-assessment would mean the burden of the rich being passing on to the poor. However, this belief was not based on support to some kind of peasant egalitarianism: medieval societies both urban and rural were basically



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hierarchical, with a rigid division between the privileged or ashraf, and the unprivileged, or the ajlaf. Group-assessment was objected to because in essence it concealed the true state of agriculture in the village, thereby, government losing the opportunity of charging as much as the village could pay. Hence, the entire emphasis was on ascertaining the true state of agriculture in the village, both its actual paying capacity and the potential. For the purpose, it emphasised the need to assess the land-revenue on the individual cultivator on the basis of his actual cultivation. Further, the state encouraged the cultivator to pay directly to the state, which implied to the imperial treasury if the area was under khalisa, or to the agent of the jagirdar if it was assigned in jagir. But here village realities came into play. Much of the country was under the control of zamindars or chiefs. These chiefs paid only a stipulated sum of money as land revenue by way of peshkash. Since the time of Alauddin Khalji, the state had been trying to carry out a survey of the state of agriculture in the village in order to levy a land-revenue based on actual cultivation. Measurement or zabt was the most effective way of ascertaining the real state of agriculture in a village. Akbar's great contribution was that he was able to procure in a large measure the cooperation of the zamindars, represented by the qanungo, in this task. But this was largely confined to the settled area extending from Lahore to Allahabad. In order to get their co-operation, the zamindars were allowed to collect their traditional dues from the area under their control, as well as to collect land revenue for which they were granted a percentage of the collections. Much emphasis has been laid on the state issuing a patta or qabuliat (letter of acceptance) to the peasant, setting out the area sown, the crop, the schedule, and the amount due from him. Since the peasant was illiterate, the patta had little meaning for him. But it was a device on the basis of which the state could check the actual collection made by the village headman, or by the zamindar.

Thus, while assessment was based on the individual cultivator, the responsibility of collection vested with the village headman or the zamindars or both. In practice, there was still a considerable leeway by which the zamindars, or the more prosperous cultivators could manipulate the assessment in their favour, or conceal their holdings. The zamindars also remained socially strong in many regions on account of difficult terrain, and their caste/clan links with the dominant sections of the peasants. Despite these limitations, the control of the state over the villages in this area was more extensive than ever before.

The question has been raised whether the dahsala assessment was permanent, or whether it was meant to be revised periodically. It has been pointed out that it was permanent for all practical purposes, because no settlement was carried out either during the remaining years of Akbar's reign or by his successors. But this does not mean that state gained nothing from the expansion and improvement of cultivation, or that the peasant has no redress on account of natural disasters, or fall in prices. Expansion and improvement of cultivation was one of the principal aims of the Mughal government. We have already seen that banjar or uncultivated wasteland which was extensive in those days, paid land-revenue at a concessional rate for four years when brought under cultivation. According to the Ain, the amalguzar or revenue collector was instructed to "strive to bring waste-land under cultivation and take care that what is in cultivation fall not waste". He was further told, "Should there be no waste land in a village and a husbandman is capable of adding to his cultivation, he should allow him land in some other village." The amalguzar was further instructed to give agricultural loans or taqavi for seed, implements etc. in case of drought, or for bringing banjar land under cultivation. Such help was available for digging and repair of wells also. Concessions were also given for increase of superior or cash crops.

Thus, the state promoted and shared the benefits of the expansion and improvement of cultivation. This also applied to prices. We are told in the Akbar Nama that in the 43rd year (1598) as a result of Akbar's prolonged stay at Lahore, and the resulting rise in local prices, the revenue-demand in the region was raised by 20 per cent; and when, on his departure, the prices fell, this was discontinued. In the 30th and the 31st year, (1585, 1586) when there was a sharp fall in prices due to exceptionally favourable production, substantial reduction in demand was made in the three provinces of Delhi, Allahabad and Awadh. Remissions were also made in case of drought by declaring a portion of the cultivated area as "not sown" (nabud).

Thus, although the peasant was to some extent safeguarded against the risks of cultivation, the system was rigid enough that remissions were often tardy as well as insufficient. This, and the high scale of revenue-demand seems to have led to the piling up of arrears. It seems that under Todar Mal, the government dealt harshly with the amils to realize these arrears which, in turn, would have led to harshness against the peasants. The situation was sufficiently serious for Akbar to have set up a Commission in 1585. The recommendations of the Commission show how some of the regulations were abused: the arrears were sometimes inflated on account of the demand being based on guess and computation, not on the basis of the area actually sown. Sometimes, even lands which had fallen out of cultivation were assessed. The amils were harassed by arresting them arbitrarily or holding back a portion of their salary against possible arrears without sufficient reason, or not paying the amils for the additional men they had employed for measurement or as soldiers to overawe the cultivators. Corrupt amils were also ordered to pay back the amounts they had collected from the peasants illegally. It was partly due to the recommendations of the Commission that a standard rate was fixed for the remuneration of the measuring parties, a charge which was payable by the cultivators.

It was at this time, also, that a new yard, gaz-i-Ilahi was introduced, replacing the old gaz-i-Sikandari. It was 41 digits or about 33 inches, being 14 per cent longer than the previous yard. In consequence, the bigha which was 60x60 yards, also became bigger in size by 10.5 per cent. This needed a revision of the dasturs for the kharif and rabi crops. Moreland who had written on the subject more than fifty years ago was doubtful whether such adjustment was made. But recent statistical study shows that the rates given in the Ain were actually the revised rates based on the change in the size of the bigha.

Thus, the picture which emerges is of a system in which a uniform set of grain rates per bigha, valued at a uniform, and then at local prices, gave way to local grain-rates valued at local prices. When this broke down due to rapid expansion of the empire, schedule of cash-rates were fixed on the basis of productivity and the crops sown, based on past experience. This system continued, although periodic adjustment were made. The measurement system (zabt) remained the preferred system, though other systems continued side by side, or following a break-down. However, annual measurements gradually fell into the background as the system stabilised, giving way to appraisalment (nasaq). Stability also helped in the process of expansion and improvement of cultivation, although its extent and impact is a matter of controversy.

## THE MANSABDARI SYSTEM AND THE ARMY

Mansabdari was a unique system devised by the Mughals in India. In its broadest aspect, the mansab or rank awarded to an individual fixed both his status in the official hierarchy as well as his salary. It also fixed the number of armed retainers (tabinan) the holder of a mansab was supposed to maintain for the service of the state. The holder could be given any administrative or military appointment, or kept in attendance at the court. Thus, mansabdari was a single service, combining both civil and military responsibilities. The salary could be paid in cash, but generally it was paid by grant of a jagir. Grant of a jagir implied the right of collecting all the payments due to the state.

The mansabs granted to nobles ranged from 10 to 5000, forming sixty-six categories in multiples of 10 upto 100 and thereafter by 50 or 100. But it is not certain that all these sixty-six grades were actually granted, the number sixty-six being a notional, sacred number. Although the word mansabdar was a generic term, popularly only those holding ranks upto 500 were called mansabdars, those from 500 to 2500 were called amirs, and those from 2500 and above amir-i-umda, or amir-i-azam. Later, all those holding ranks below 1000 began to be called mansabdars. Since it was a single service, theoretically, a person was supposed to enter at the lowest level, and work his way up. But the king could and often did appoint distinguished people at a higher level. This was also extended to hereditary chiefs or rajas. Mansabs above 5000 upto 10,000 were reserved for princes of blood. However, towards the end of Akbar's reign, two nobles, Mirza Aziz Koka and Raja Man Singh, the former being Akbar's milk-brother,

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and the latter being related to him by ties of matrimony, were raised to the rank of 7000. Till the end of Aurangzeb's reign, 7000 remained with one exception the limit of the mansab any noble could aspire to. However, during the period the ranks granted to princes rose to the dizzy height of 40,000 zat.

## EVOLUTION OF THE MANSABDARI SYSTEM

The numbered gradation of the mansabs has often been traced back to Chingiz who had divided his army from 10 to 10,000. Due to the influence of the Mongols, we begin to hear of nobles holding the rank of 100 (yuz-bushi) or 1000 (hazara). But such numerical ranks had not become general. Some nobles were called commanders of a tuman or 10,000, but this was utilized to denote the highest rank, rather than the actual number of troops I commanded which in practice could be only one-tenth of it. Under the Lodis and Surs, we hear of nobles who held ranks of 20,000 or 10,000 or 5,000 sawars. Here, again, we have no idea of the actual numbers of horsemen these nobles commanded. Thus, the division of the service from 10 to 5000 into a regular hierarchy of grades was a unique contribution for which credit has to be given to Akbar.

There is a general agreement that this numerical division of the mansabs was effected by Akbar in the eleventh year of his reign (1567). Although Abul Fazl gives the mansab ranks to nobles such as Bairam Khan who had died earlier, it seems that this was only a way by which Abul Fazl tried to indicate the status of these nobles in the hierarchy. Significantly, other historians of the time, including Nizamuddin who was the bakhshi and dealt with the military organisation, does not ascribe ranks to any noble who had died before 1567.

It is difficult to be certain how many horsemen a mansabdar actually entertained during this period because the jama was highly inflated at the time. As the state gradually gained a better knowledge of the state of cultivation, and of the likely realization (hasil), Akbar took steps to reduce the gap between the number of horsemen on paper and those actually employed. The chief means of this was the introduction of the branding or dagh system in the eighteenth year (1573-74). The dagh system implied that the descriptive roll of every soldier entertained by the mansabdar was noted, and the number and quality of the horses were periodically inspected. Those who failed to do so were penalized. Promotions also depended upon conforming to it. According to the historian, Badayuni, who was himself a mansabdar of 20, first a mansabdar would be awarded a mansab of 20 so that he could serve in the guard, or the palace or the fort as required. When he had presented those twenty horsemen through the brand (dagh), according to regulations, he could be given a mansab of 100. Thereafter, when he had brought this number of muster, according to his capacity and imperial favour, he could attain a mansab of 1000 or 2000 or even 5000.

The dagh system was resisted by the nobility, and some of the senior nobles, such as Munim Khan and Muzaffar Khan who was wakil were reluctant to present their contingent for the brand. Mirza Aziz Koka was degraded and put under surveillance for refusing to implement the measure. The dagh system placed enormous power in the hands of junior officials who sometimes used it to harass even senior and respected nobles. Some of the diwans also adopted harsh methods which were responsible for a serious rebellion in Bengal and Bihar in 1580. Akbar tried to rectify the situation as we have noted.

Despite the strictness of the dagh, it was found that in practice the mansabdars were not maintaining the number of sawars they were required to. According to Badayuni, not only did he himself fail to bring the requisite number of cavalymen to the brand, his fellow mansabdars did not maintain the fixed number of cavalymen, brought borrowed men and borrowed horses to the muster, and dismissed them soon after and kept the jagirs the revenues of which were assigned to them in lieu of the salaries of the troops, and their own expenses.

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## ZAT AND SAWAR RANKS

This was the background to the introduction of the dual rank, the zat and the sawar in the 40th regnal year (1595-96). According to Abul Fazl, the mansabdars were grouped into three categories. Those who maintained sawars equal to their mansab number were placed in the first category. The second category comprised those who maintained half or more than that, and the third those whose sawars were less than half of their mansab number. It was at this time that the word zat began to be used in the sense of a personal rank. According to Abul Fazl, in the 41st year, “the rank of Mirza Shahrukh has been enhanced and pay assignment made to him for 5000 zat, with half the sawars.”

There has been a great deal of controversy for a long time regarding the meaning of zat and sawar. This was so because it was not realised that the mansab system evolved gradually under Akbar. Thus, it was different in the early phase upto 1594-95 when there was only a single rank. For our purposes, the earlier controversy can be disregarded, and left to specialists. In the dual zat and sawar system which came into being after 1595-96, zat indicated the personal pay and status of a noble, and the sawar rank the actual number of horsemen he was expected to entertain. This implied that a mansabdar of 4000 zat, but only 2000 sawars, was higher in rank than a mansabdar of 3000 zat and 3000 sawars. The zat rank also indicated the number of horses and elephants and beasts of burden and carts a mansabdar was expected to maintain. Thus, a mansabdar of 5000 zat, was required to maintain 340 horses, 100 elephants, 140 camels, 100 mules, and 160 carts. Mansabdars of the rank of 400 or less were exempt from this. The quality of the horses— Iraqi, Turki, Yabu (mixed), Jungla (Indian) was clearly laid down.

So also the quality of the elephants. There is some uncertainty whether the cost of the maintenance of these animals and beasts of burden was met by the mansabdar out of his zat salary, as a modern historian Abul Aziz thinks, or was an additional payment, as Shireen Moosvi argues, “so that the keeping the animals was an advantage and not a burden.” We might also argue that since the Mughal army was meant to be a highly mobile force, and since the nobles were frequently on the march or under transfer, the maintenance of such a transport corp was essential. Abul Fazl makes it clear that not only the sawars and their mounts, but the beasts of burden were also to be presented for the dagh.

## ZAT AND SAWAR SALARIES

The state carefully regulated both the number and quality of horses a sawar was expected to maintain. The general rule was that for 10 sawars there should be 20 horses. This was called the dah-bisti or ten-twenty system ( $3 \times 3$  horses = 9;  $4 \times 2$  = 8 horses;  $3 \times 1$  = 3 horses; total 20 horses.) This was done to ensure the mobility of the cavalry which was the main fighting force of the Mughals. A second horse was needed as a replacement if the mount was tired, or injured or dead. The salary of the sawar was fixed both on the number of horses (one, or two or three) and the quality of the horses a trooper kept. Thus, the monthly salary of a trooper with an Iraqi horse was Rs. 30 per month, with a mujannas (mixed) Rs. 25, Rs. 20 for a Turki, Rs. 18 for a yabu and so on.

The salary of a sawar in Akbar’s time before the dagh was as follows: Mughals, Afghans, and Indian Muslims drew a salary of Rs. 25 per month if they had three horses; Rs. 20 per month if they had two horses, and Rs. 15 per month if with one horse. A Rajput with three horses received Rs. 20 per month, and Rs. 15 if with two horses. The salary of a Rajput with one horse is not mentioned by Abul Fazl, but it may have been Rs. 12 per month. The lower salaries awarded to Rajputs, was discriminatory, but also had the effect of encouraging non-Rajput nobles to employ Rajputs. Although Mughals and Rajput nobles were allowed to employ only men drawn from their ethnic group, all others had to employ mixed contingents. The salaries were finally fixed after dagh on the basis of the quality of the horses presented.



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On the basis of the ten-twenty-system the average salary of a sawar before dagh under Akbar calculated by a modern historian, Moreland, was Rs. 240/- per annum. The mansabdar was allowed to keep 5 per cent of the total salary of the sawars for his general expenses. The jagir awarded to a mansabdar was, therefore, a total of his zat salary, and the salary allowed to his contingent based on his sawar rank.

The zat salaries were fixed on the basis of whether a noble was in the first, second or third category i.e., had a sawar rank equal to his zat, or half or more than that; or less than half. It might be mentioned that the salaries of the mansabdars and soldiers were calculated in terms of dams, a rupee being considered equal to 40 dams. The value of all jagirs was also calculated in dams. Hence, the revenue assessment for purposes of grant of jagir was called jamadami. The zat salary of a noble of 5000 of the first rank was Rs. 30,000 per month, or Rs. 3,60,000 per annum. If he was in the second category he received Rs. 29,000 p.m. or if in the third category Rs. 28,000. This was carried down to the lowest mansabdar. Thus, a mansabdar of 1000, received Rs. 8100 p.m. if he was in the second, and Rs. 8000 p.m. if in the third category.

Thus, although the salaries of the sawars were paid for separately, a noble was rewarded in his zat salary if he maintained a larger contingent. The nobles had to make annual presents to the Emperor who sometimes returned to them more than they gave. The nobles also had to incur the cost of establishment for collecting land-revenue from their jagirs. Moreland estimated that the cost of collection from the jagirs did not exceed one-fourth of the salary.

Even then the salaries were extremely handsome on any account, and attracted able men far and wide. According to the historian Badayuni, "Scarcely a day passes away on which qualified and zealous men are not appointed to mansabs or promoted to higher dignities. Many Arabians and Persians also came from distant countries in the army, whereby they obtain the object of their desires." It is difficult to estimate the number of mansabdars in service at any one time under Akbar. The figures given by Abul Fazl in the 40th year, includes all the nobles, dead or alive, who served during the last forty-years. Moreover, both he and Nizamuddin Ahmad list only those who held mansabs of 500 or above. Du Jarric who wrote in the early years of jahangir's reign, gives a list of 2941 mansabdars from 10 to 5000. Although both Man Singh and Aziz Koka held ranks of 7,000, Du Jarric's list appears reasonable. Of these 150 or 5.1 per cent held ranks of 2500 or above.

It were these 150 individuals who held all the important civil or military posts in the empire. It was a kind of a carefully selected, personalized bureaucracy which was wholly dependent on the ruler, and whose skill, dedication and organising ability were vital for the proper functioning of the empire. It has been argued that the empire would have been more stable if Akbar had paid the nobles in cash. This argument is based on ignoring the complex social realities of the time. The task of collecting land revenue in a situation in which the local population was armed and headed by landed elites, the zamindars, who often had close clan and caste bonds with the cultivating community, bristled with difficulty. By allotting jagirs to the nobles, they were given a vested interest in collecting the land revenue due to the state. Although it opened the door for local oppression, it could be dealt with more easily than the state dealing directly with a mass of recalcitrant peasants. Akbar did take the area from Lahore to Allahabad under khalisa or direct administration for some time in 1576. But it was mainly to acquire more accurate information about the actual state of cultivation. Hence, the allotment of jagirs to the nobles was resumed after a lapse of a few years. It should also be mentioned that control over land was a matter of social prestige, and a security for payment. As a noble later wrote to his son, "service has its foundation in a jagir, an employee without a jagir might as well be out of employment."

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## THE ARMY

The Mughal army consisted of cavalry, infantry, artillery, elephants and camels. There was no navy in the modern sense of the word but there was a flotilla of boats which was under an amir-ul-bahr (Lord of the sea or Admiral). There has been a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the strength and efficiency of the Mughal army. The success of the Mughal armies during Akbar's reign was not based on luck alone, though luck certainly played a part, but on the quality of its leadership and the confidence it could inspire. But above all it was based on a skilful combination of cavalry, artillery and the elephant corp, with the infantry playing a supporting role. The cavalry was considered, according to Monserrate, "... in every way to flower of the army", and the emperor spared no expense in order to maintain an efficient and well equipped force of cavalry. The dagh system was the main means of ensuring this. Apart from employing choice horses from Iraq, Iran and Arabia, the cavalrymen were protected by iron-helmets and other defensive armours, and their horses had their necks, chests and backs fully covered. The sawars were armed with swords, lances and bows.

The state did not pay for the horses or the armour of a trooper. The trooper had to purchase his own horse, and bring it to the muster before he was granted his pay. This understandably caused a lot of harassment and was the basis of corruption. Hence, a rule was made that on appointment, a mansabdar was granted an ad hoc pay which was called barawardi for his contingent. This was adjusted when the full pay was granted to the sawars after the muster. But this itself became a means of corruption: nobles delayed the muster, and continued to keep a nominal force, and drew the barawardi salaries for the full contingent. In some cases, the state directly employed soldiers and sent them to high mansabdars. Such troopers were called dakhili.

In addition to the above, there was a separate category of people who were called ahadi or gentlemen troopers. These were individuals who were allowed five horses or more and were paid handsomely. They had a separate muster-master or diwan. The ahadis could be appointed anywhere in the army, or served as messengers. On some occasions, they could even be appointed with a mansabdar. The artillery had developed rapidly in India after the advent of Babur. Apart from siege guns there were heavy guns mounted on forts. These siege guns were not easily maneuverable, and sometimes elephants and thousands of bullocks were used to transport them. Though often considered symbols of prestige they could hardly be used in battles being slow in firing. Their efficacy against forts was also doubtful, as the siege of Chittor showed. Mining under the fort-walls by use of gun-powder was, therefore, resorted to.

In addition to the heavy artillery, there were several types of light artillery. If carried on the back of a man, they were called narnal; if carried on backs of elephants gajal, if on backs of camels shutrnal. These were really light swivel-guns. The camels were trained to lie down when the gun mounted on its back was fired.

We do not know anything at this time about field-guns, or guns on wheeled-carriages (arraba) which were used at Panipat and Khanua. Guns on wheeled-carriages may have already been in existence before these battles.

Akbar made great efforts to improve the casting and easy transportability of guns. Thus, he invented a gun which could be taken to pieces and put together again when required. Wheeled carriages for guns were improved. We are told that of an invention whereby 17 guns could be joined together in such a way that they could be fired with one match. Irfan Habib thinks that the guns were placed close together, and were fired not simultaneously but one after another by the effect of the heat. Akbar had great interest in the manufacture of hand-muskets also which he improved. These match-locks could be of three feet to two yards in length. A device was invented whereby the barrels of the hand-guns could be bored and cleaned by means of a machine drawn by an ox.

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Under Akbar, thousands of elephants were used for war purposes. They were carefully graded and armed. Apart from carrying materials of war, and for carrying royalty and important nobles, the elephants, combined with cavalry, formed a kind of a battering ram or a protective shield. But they tended to be helpless when surrounded by hostile cavalry. The infantry, though numerous, consisted of both fighting and non-fighting classes. The fighting men were mainly matchlock-men, called *banduqchis*. These had a separate organization, with clerks, a treasurer and a *darogha*. They were subdivided into various classes, their salaries ranging from 110 dams to 300 dams per month. The *dakhili* soldiers recruited and directly paid for by the central government and handed over to high *mansabdars* were foot-soldiers, and matchlock-men. A quarter of the fighting force consisted of bearers of match-locks, carpenters, blacksmiths, water-carriers and pioneers who cleared the way.

There were also runners for carrying messages, *palki*-bearers, wrestlers, slaves etc. who may be called *ancillaries*. Their services were necessary for maintaining the efficiency of the army, but they are often confused with the fighting forces, leading to inflation of its numbers. The palace-guards and spies were in addition to these.

There is no easy way to assess the strength of Akbar's army. According to Monserrate writing in 1581. "There are forty-five thousand cavalry, five thousand elephants, and many thousands infantry, paid directly from the royal treasury." The strength of the cavalry maintained by the *mansabdars* cannot be assessed because in the early part, a *mansab* did not indicate the number of *sawars* actually maintained. Later, when the *sawar* rank was instituted, the *sawar* ranks of only a few have been given. All that we can say is that the number of *sawars* maintained by the *mansabdars* would not have been less than those maintained centrally. Thus, the cavalry force, both central and that provided by the nobles could not have been less than 100,000. We have no idea of the strength of the infantry and the artillery.

# UNIT-XX

## AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

### RELATIONS WITH THE ULAMA AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Two aspects of Akbar's religious policy need to be distinguished— his state policies, and his own personal ideas and beliefs. While no water-tight distinction can be made between the two, it should be realized that personal ideas and beliefs did not always determine state policies.

Akbar's state policy in the field of religion was in a large measure determined by the Turko-Mughal traditions. The movement of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement, spearheaded by the bhakti saints and liberal sufis, also influenced it, as also Akbar's deeply inquisitive mind, and his abiding interest in sufism. Chingiz, according to his biographer, Juwaini, "eschewed bigotry and preference of one faith to another, placing some over others." Timur also followed this policy so that in his dominions, and in the dominion of his successors, there was no persecution of Shias, and even Christians and heathens found a place in his government and in his armed forces. This eclectic policy was fully reflected in the policies of Babur and Humayun, as we have noted earlier. In fact, Humayun's brother, Kamran, who was an orthodox Sunni, used to make fun of Humayun's eclecticism. Babur did not hesitate to wear the Shi-ite kula (cap) at Samarqand when it suited him. Humayun sought shelter at the court of Shah Tahmasp, and there were many Shiites in his nobility. It was due to this broad tradition of liberalism that Abdul Latif who was considered a sunni in Iran and a shia in India, was chosen by Humayun as one of the tutors of young Akbar.

We have seen how during the fifteenth century, the processes of Hindu-Muslim rapprochement or coming together had moved in the intellectual and cultural fields as well as in the political sphere. Kabir, Nanak and many other bhakti saints had laid emphasis on the one true god who could be apprehended within their hearts by constantly dwelling on Him and repeating His name. They opened their doors to all, irrespective of their faiths, rejecting differences based on scriptural authority and traditions. Many of the sufis, specially the Chishtis of the doab and the Kubrawiyas of Bihar, made no difference between peoples based on faiths, their khanqahs being open to all, irrespective of religious beliefs. Abdul Qaddus Gangohi's work, giving sufi allegorised meaning for such words as gopi, murli, Krishna, etc. shows that Hindi bhakti songs were used widely in the sama (musical gatherings) of some of the sufi saints.

Politically, in many of the provincial kingdoms, such as Gujarat, Malwa and Kashmir we find Hindus being given appointments not only at the local but at the central level. Under the Lodis, some Hindu rajas were raised to the position of amirs. The rise of Hemu to a premier position after the death of Islam Shah was a reflection of this process. Of course, examples of intolerance and breaking of temples are also found during this period. All these factors were parts of Akbar's cultural legacy, and influenced both his thinking and his state policies.

### THE EARLY PHASE (1556-73)

Almost immediately after assuming charge of the government, Akbar demonstrated his broadmindedness when in 1563 he remitted pilgrim-tax which amounted to crores on the Hindus at Mathura and other sacred places. Earlier, he had forbidden the enslavement of the wives and children of rebellious villagers. He also married Rajput princesses without first converting them to Islam, and even allowed them to continue their own religious worship within the palaces. Likewise, Birbal who had joined Akbar soon after his accession, and enjoyed great favour with him, was not prevented from carrying with him and worshipping idols while he accompanied Akbar. Although Akbar was under the influence of the orthodox ulama at the time, his state policy not only reflected the liberal traditions of his predecessors, but was a clear recognition of the need to conciliate and win over the Hindus.



It was this context that in 1564, steps were taken by Akbar to abolish jizyah. Abul Fazl makes it clear that this step was taken despite "much chatter on the part of the ignorant", i.e. the ulama.

He justifies it on the ground that the Hindus were equally loyal, having "bound up the waist of devotion and service, and exert themselves for the advancement of the dominion". Abul Fazl also makes it clear that the levying of jizyah was not only based on a desire for profit on the part of the ulama but contempt for and a wish to destroy their opponents, i.e. the Hindus.

In some modern works it has been suggested that in order to emphasize Akbar's liberalism, Abul Fazl has deliberately pushed back the abolition of jizyah to 1564, whereas Badayuni places it in 1579. Badayuni says that in 1575-76, Akbar ordered Shaikh Abdun Nabi and Makhdum-ul-Mulk to examine the matter and decide the amounts of jizyah to be levied on Hindus. "They issued farmans in all directions; but these orders quickly disappeared, like a reflection on the water." Thus, attempts to undo the order of 1564 failed.

In his private conduct, during this period Akbar behaved like an orthodox Muslim. He scrupulously observed daily prayers, and even cleaned the mosque with his own hands. He also sent delegations to haj, and once a sum of six lakhs of rupees were sent for distribution among the needy and the poor in Hijaz. During this period, Akbar was deeply devoted to Abdullah Sultanpuri and Shaikh Abdun Nabi. Abdullah Sultanpuri was a bigot who had received the title of Shaikh-ul-Islam from Sher Shah. He was responsible for the persecution of the Mahdawis and execution of their leaders under Islam Shah. He had managed to regain his influence after the downfall of Bairam Khan, and received the title of Makhadum-ul-Mulk. Abdun Nabi came from a highly respected family and was held in high esteem as a scholar, though later it was found that his knowledge was shallow. Akbar made him sadr at the recommendations of his wazir, Muzaffar Khan. Akbar used to listen to his lectures on hadis (Traditions of the Prophet), and on one or two occasions, even put his shoes in order so that he could wear them. Abdun Nabi was so orthodox that he had opposed his own father for advocating sama. He would not admit anyone to his sermons who wore a ring, silk clothes, or robes of a pink or saffron colour. Once he reprimanded Akbar in open court for putting on a robe of saffron colour, and was almost on the point of hitting him with a stick!

Thus, while Akbar pursued a broad, liberal religious state policy, this was a period when the orthodox ulama ruled the roost at the court. Abdun Nabi was given full freedom to give revenue-free grants to his favourites with a free hand. According to Badayuni, no previous sadr could give even a tenth of what Abdun Nabi gave away. Abdun Nabi also used his position to persecute dissenters. Thus, two prominent personages, Mirza Isfahani who had been Akbar's Ambassador at Kashmir, and Mir Yaqub Kashmiri who was the Kashmiri Ambassador at the Mughal court were executed in 1569 for Shiite beliefs and anti-sunni acts at Srinagar. The remains of Murtaza Shirazi were exhumed from the vicinity of Amir Khusrau's tomb at Delhi. It was argued that a renowned sunni saint would be uncomfortable at being so close to a 'heretic', i.e. shi-ite! Mahdawism was also persecuted, and even Shaikh Mubarak, the scholarly father of Abul Fazl, was hounded for his alleged Mahdawi beliefs till Akbar intervened to put a stop to it.

## THE SECOND PHASE (1573-80)-THE IBADAT KHANA DEBATES

This was a phase of intense discussions and introspection on the part of Akbar which led to a radical change in his religious views, and deeply affected state politics in the third and final phase (1581-1605). His successive victories against the Uzbek nobles, and his victories in Malwa, Rajasthan and Gujarat strengthened Akbar's belief that he was the chosen instrument of God for unifying India under his command. According to Badayuni, "The empire had grown from day to day; everything turned out well, and no opponent was left in the whole world. His Majesty had thus leisure to come into nearer contact with ascetics and the disciples of the Muinnyyah sect, and passed much of his time in discussing the word of God (Quran), and the word of the Prophet (the hadis or traditions). Questions of sufism, scientific inquiries into philosophy and law, were the order of the day."

Apart from an intensely enquiring mind, Akbar had, as a child, developed a taste for the masnavis of the liberal sufi thinkers, Maulana Rum, and Hafiz. As a ruler, he visited, apart from the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti, tombs of many other famous sufi saints.

### The Ibadat Khana Debates

This was the background to the building of the Ibadat Khana, or the Hall of Prayers at Fatehpur Sikri in 1575. This was a large rectangular building built around the cell of a sufi saint, Shaikh Abdullah Niyazi, who had migrated to Gujarat. On all sides there were built spacious galleries. It was not far from the Imperial Palace so that Akbar could come and go as he pleased. It was also near the Anup Talao which had been built recently.

The opening of the Ibadat Khana for religious debates was by no means a novelty. Like Jews, Christians and Hindus, the Muslims, too, indulged in public arguments, both to satisfy intellectual curiosity and to establish the superiority of their faith over others. Such discussions had taken place under the Umayyads and Abbasids, and continued under the Ilkhanid Mongols who had just embraced Islam. This tradition had continued under the Timurid, Sultan Husain Baiqara of Herat. Akbar had heard that Sulaiman Karrani, the ruler of Bengal, every night used to offer prayers in the company of some 150 renowned Shaikhs and ulamas, and used to remain in their society till the morning, listening to commentaries and exhortations.

At first, the Ibadat Khana debates were open only to Muslims. We are told that after completing all the state business, each Thursday night Akbar would repair to the Ibadat Khana. When the number of participants was large, they gathered in the courtyard of the Anup Talao. For informal discussions, scholars were admitted by the Emperor to his bed-room where he listened to their discussions with rapt attention.

At first only sufi shaikhs, ulama, learned men and a few of the Emperor's favourite companions and attendants were admitted. They were divided into four sections, and Akbar moved from group to group, but the most lively discussion was in the group of theologians. One of the issues which came up for discussions was how many wives the ruler could marry legally. Different interpretations were given which upset Akbar. Although Akbar had exhorted the assembly that his sole object was "to ascertain the Truth and discover the reality," it was soon clear that the ulama had other objectives. They wanted to establish their superiority over the others, and tried to browbeat their opponents into submission. In the process, they lost their self control and would have come to blows but for the presence of the Emperor.

The discussions in the Ibadat Khana were not new or startling. However, after a mystical experience in 1578, Akbar opened the doors of debate to Hindus belonging to various sects, Jains, Christians and Zoroastrians. This led to further confusion. Even questions on which the Muslims were united, such as finality of the Quranic revelation, the Prophethood of Muhammad, resurrection, the conception of the unity of God began to be raised, to the horror of the pious or orthodox sections. A modern historian, R.P. Tripathi, says, "Instead of bringing credit, the Ibadat Khana brought growing discredit." Akbar himself became convinced of the futility of these debates, and closed the Ibadat Khana practically in 1581, but finally in 1582.

It is not clear what precisely Akbar had hoped to achieve from the debates in the Ibadat Khana. If the purpose was to persuade the leaders of different sects and faiths to abjure their differences, and to arrive at commonly accepted truths, such an expectation was not likely to be fulfilled because these were the very sections which had a vested interest in preserving the differences. Also, each was convinced of the superiority of his views, and engaged in debate to defeat the others, and to win the Emperor to his side rather than to try to arrive at a common understanding.

If Akbar's object was to himself arrive at an understanding of the fundamentals of all religion, he could have done so by means of private discussions, a method to which he resorted to even while the Ibadat Khana debates were taking place. Thus, he met Purushottam and Devi, the latter being suspended on a

cot near his bed-room, from which he discoursed with Akbar. Likewise, others such as Shaikh Tajuddin, and Mulla Muhammad of Yazd were drawn up on a cot to discourse with the Emperor. Such discussions continued even after the Ibadat Khana was closed. Perhaps, Akbar had no clear idea of what he wanted from the Ibadat Khana debates. But once he had started the process, he was increasingly drawn into controversies of which he had little concept or desire to engage himself in. As he remarked, "I wish I had not heard such differences of opinion from teachers of traditional subjects, nor confounded by different interpretations of the Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet."

However, it would be wrong to dismiss the Ibadat Khana debates as meaningless or harmful. They had two important consequences: first, they convinced Akbar that all religions had elements of truth, and that all of them led to the same Supreme Reality. This was an important phase in the development of Akbar's own religious ideas, and led to the evolution of the concept of sulh-i-kul or peace between all religions. Secondly, the debates publicly demonstrated the narrowness of views, bigotry and arrogance of the court ulemas, and led to a breach between them and Akbar. Needless to say, Abul Fazl, and others belonging to his line of thinking, strove their utmost to expose the ulama in order to attain this end.

### THE MAHZAR-BREACH WITH ORTHODOX ULAMA

The Mahzar or attested statement signed by seven leading ulama, including Shaikh Abdun Nabi and Abdullah Sultanpuri, and including Shaikh Mubarak, father of Abul Fazl, issued in 1579, has led to a good deal of controversy. Vincent Smith was of the opinion that, copying the examples of the Pope, Akbar had conferred upon himself "the attributes of infallibility." Some others thought that it was meant to free Akbar from the allegiance of the Ottoman Khalifa, and the Shia rulers of Iran. Some historians in Pakistan have dubbed it as "a dishonest document," because it permitted Akbar to interpret laws whereas he was hardly literate. Hence, a careful study of the document is necessary.

In the first place, the document declared that Akbar was "the Sultan of Islam, the asylum of mankind, the commander of the faithful, the shadow of God over worlds." These are the attributes of the khalifa of the age. There was no opposition in declaring Akbar as the khalifa of the age because the Timurids had never accepted any outside authority as khalifa. Hence, the question of countering Ottoman or Iranian claims hardly arises because such claims of allegiance over India were never made (except in the south in the case of the Shah of Iran).

Second, it was argued, citing Quran and some Hadis a few of them being spurious, that as a just and wise ruler Akbar not only had the right to claim the allegiance of everyone, but that his position was higher than a mujtahid (interpreter of holy laws) in the eyes of God; third, should "a religious question arise in future, and the opinions of the mujtahids be at variance" the Emperor could adopt any one of them "for the welfare of mankind and proper functioning of the administrative affairs of the world." Lastly, it was argued that Akbar himself could issue any decree which did not go against the nas i.e. explicit decree of Quran, and the hadis and is "calculated to benefit humanity at large." Any opposition to such a decree passed by His Majesty "shall involve divine displeasures in this world and the next." The document was by no means a novelty. Earlier rulers in India, such as Balban and Alauddin Khalji, had claimed the right to enforce such laws as they considered desirable and necessary, whether they were in conformity of the sharia or not. During the debates in the Ibadat Khana, Akbar had been made painfully conscious of the difference of opinion on almost every subject among the theologians. A break between Akbar and the orthodox ulama came about when a controversy arose about the punishment to be awarded to a leading brahman of Mathura who was alleged to have snatched materials collected by the Qazi for the erection of a mosque, and used it for building a temple and was also accused of having abused the Prophet Muhammad, and criticised Islam.

In a commission of enquiry which included Abul Fazl and Birbal, the guilt of the brahman was proved. A section of the ulama wanted the punishment of death while another section argued that since he was a zimmi or protected person, only a heavy fine and the disgrace of being paraded on an ass should be



imposed as punishment. Akbar favoured a lenient interpretation, but left it to Abdun Nabi who had the brahman executed. This widened the gulf between Akbar and Abdun Nabi. It was pointed out that Abdun Nabi had also executed an Afghan and a shi-ite on a similar charge. It was in this context that Shaikh Mubarak, who was a noted scholar, told Akbar: "Your Majesty is the Imam of the age and a mujtahid. What need do you have of the assistance of these ulama in issuing your commands, whether religious or secular?"

It seems that the matter was discussed a number of times with the theologians, and the Mahzar was the outcome. Badayuni says that some signed it willingly, and some, like Abdun Nabi and Abdullah Sultanpuri unwillingly. However, the point to note is that in the document Akbar does not claim to be a mujtahid himself (though Abul Fazl calls him one), but one who as a ruler could choose between different interpretations, or between rulings given by earlier law givers, bearing in mind political existencies and needs of government. Thus, the charge of dishonesty falls to the ground. Also, the document makes it clear that any decision of the ruler would be for the purpose of public good and the administrative needs of the empire. Hence, we may agree with the assessment of S.M. Ikram and S.A. Rashid, two Pakistani historians of repute that, "...studied carefully and dispassionately, it appears to be a major constructive effort, fully in conformity with the Islamic Law and providing a basis for the adjustment of temporal government and the Shariat." However, the authors go on to say. "But the limitations laid down in the Declaration of 1579 were not observed by Akbar, and in practice it became an excuse for the exercise of unrestrained autocracy." This is a matter that we shall discuss in subsequent pages.

The real significance of the Mahzar, it seems, was that "it was the first effective declaration of the principles (of sulh kul) which he (Akbar) had decided to implement firmly". (S.A.A. Rizvi) This made a final breach between him and the orthodox ulama inevitable.

The Document also had international implications. Having brought north India upto Bengal under his effective control, Akbar was now prepared to put forward a claim of equality with powerful West Asian rulers, such as the Ottoman ruler of Turkey, and the Safavids of Iran. And for the purpose he wished to proclaim India as a land of sectarian peace, in contradiction to the Ottomans and the Safavids. Thus, the Document starts with the opening lines, "Hindustan has now become the centre of security and peace, and the land of adl (justice) and beneficence...." It goes on to say that as a result, "a large number of people, especially learned ulama and great lawyers who are guides to salvation and the leaders in the path of knowledge, having left the countries of Arab and Ajam (Iraq and Iran) have turned towards this land and occupied it as their home...."

Apart from emphasizing the concept of justice which was an integral part of the policy of sulh-i-kul, Akbar also reminded the ulama through the Document that the state machinery was meant for the welfare of the people.

## BREACH WITH ORTHODOX ULAMA

A final breach between Akbar and the orthodox ulama was not delayed for long, since it was clear that Akbar would chart his own course. It is wrong to think that the Mahzar was designed to divide the ulama. The ulama were themselves deeply divided, with the two leading figures, Abdullah Sultanpuri and Shaikh Abdun Nabi, being openly ranged against each other. Thus, the orthodox elements dug their own graves. Akbar was disgusted with their shallowness, bigotry and venality. On an enquiry it was found that in order to escape paying zakat, Abdullah Sultanpuri would transfer all his property to his wife during the year, and have it retransferred before the end of the year—a practice which was by no means confined to him, and was practised by others as well.

It was also found that Abdun Nabi's wakil used to take huge bribes before confirming the rent-free grants of the grantees. In 1579, Akbar appointed Abdullah Sultanpuri and Abdun Nabi to lead the parties of haj pilgrims to Mecca, with orders not to return without permission. But their banishment did not pre-



vent the growth of disaffection among the ulama. In 1580, when a section of nobles in Bengal and Bihar, disaffected by the strict enforcement of the branding system, rose in rebellion, and proclaimed Mirza Hakim as king, the ulama joined them. Mulla Muhammad Yazdi, the qazi of Jaunpur, issued a fatwa that rebellion against Akbar was lawful, while the qazi of Bengal held the rebellion to be a divine vengeance for depriving the ulama of their madadd-i-maash grants. After crushing the rebellion both of these were summoned to Agra, and were ordered to be drowned when crossing the Jamuna. Many others were imprisoned or dispersed. A modern historian, S.A.A. Rizvi, says: "This severe action against the ulama and the sufis was dictated by administration necessity and did not emanate from hostility to Islam nor to orthodox Muslims." Hearing of the rebellion against Akbar, Abdullah Sultanpuri and Abdun Nabi who had no left stone unturned to willify Akbar at Mecca, returned to India in 1582, to find that the rebellion had been crushed. Abdullah Sultanpuri who was over seventy died at Ahmadabad. Several boxes of gold ingots were discovered in his family graveyard, and were confiscated. Abdun Nabi was brought to Fatehpur. He was handed over to Todar Mal for checking the amounts given to him for disbursement at Mecca. A little later, a mob burst into his prison and strangled him.

## RE-ORGANISATION OF MADADD-I-MAASH GRANTS

One of the traditional functioning of the state in and outside India had been to support scholars, men engaged in spiritual pursuits, indigents, widows and respectable men without any employment. In India, grants of land for the purpose were called shasan. In the Muslim states in India, they were called milk, madadd-i-maash or sayurghal, and were under the general supervision of the sadr. While non-Muslim were not excluded, the beneficiaries of such grants were generally Muslims. The needs of the non-Muslims were, to some extent, met by the Hindu rajas who continued to control considerable tracts of land.

At the outset, Akbar left the distribution of madadd-i-maash lands in the hands of the sadr. Under the Lodis and the Surs, vast grants of such lands had been made to Afghan and to their supporters, the Indian Shaikhzadas. During Bairam Khan's regency, Shaikh Gadai tried to transfer many of these grants, but with limited results. In 1565, Shaikh Abdun Nabi became the sadr. During his tenure, two significant developments took place. First, the madadd-i-maash grants enjoyed by the Afghans were resumed to the crown lands, and only those claims which were certified by Abdun Nabi were confirmed. This led to great distress and inconvenience to many which is described in detail by Badayuni. But this step added to the income of the crown-lands. Second, those who held grants in different places were ordered to combine them in one place of their own choice. This saved them hardships, and was easier to administer.

During this period, Akbar hardly interfered with Abdun Nabi who wielded full authority in making the grants. According to Badayuni, "he distributed enormous areas of land to the people as madadd-imaash, pensions and religious endowments," on a scale which put to shade all previous grants... "never was there in the reign of any monarch, a sadr-us-sudur so powerful as Shaikh Abdun Nabi..." There were complaints against Abdun Nabi, and after an enquiry, Akbar decided to personally investigate into rent free-grants of those who held more than five hundred bighas of land. His general objective was to reduce such grants, and to force the grantees to engage themselves in productive trade and professions to supplement their income.

To further reduce the power of the sadr, in 1580, when subahs were formed, a sadr was appointed in each subah. To keep control over these sadrs, the empire was divided into six circles, and one supervisor was appointed over each. In 1589, a new rule was made that all rent-free lands should consist one-half of tilled lands and one-half of land capable of cultivation. If the whole was tilled land, one-fourth of the grant was to be resumed. Thus, the grantees of revenue-free land were also to be used to expand cultivation.

At first, revenue-free grants were held only by Muslims, though with some exceptions. Thus, we have seen grants of land being given to the temples of Vrindavan, and the jogis of Jakhbar. After 1575, at the instance of Akbar, grants were made to “the mean, the rebel and even to Hindus.” (Badayuni) After 1580, the number of non-Muslim grantees steadily increased and rent-free grants were granted to Hindus, Jains, Parsis. Even the Jesuits received a grant to build churches. Saints and ascetics who had no worldly desires also began to receive cash grants in increasing numbers. Akbar built two establishments outside Fatehpur Sikri to feed poor Hindus and Muslims. The one for the Hindus was called Dharmapura, and that for the Muslims Khairpura. Later, when jogis began to flock, a third one, called Jogipura, was established.

Thus, the end of the domination of the orthodox ulama opened the doors of the state for a more equitable distribution of its patronage to all sections irrespective of their faiths. The rules of grant were also tightened up further—all grants above 100 bighas of land were to be scrutinized and generally reduced, and a periodic review of grants to be made to weed out the underserving, and to bring in the new.

### THIRD OR FINAL PHASE OF AKBAR'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Akbar's own religious ideas and beliefs crystallized slowly during the last phase. There is a considerable debate about them. For our purposes, we need not concern ourselves unduly about his personal beliefs<sup>1</sup> except in so far as they effected public policies. The crux of Akbar's religious beliefs was his faith in uncompromising monotheism or Tauhid-i-Ilahi, based largely on the Islamic philosopher, Ibn-i-Arabi. Like many of the sufis, Akbar believed that communion with God was possible by turning oneself to Him through meditation. Likewise, he considered slavish imitation (taqlid) of traditional practices to be unnecessary for a true believer.

Akbar had deep faith in God, and believed that for every act, man was responsible to God. He also gave great respect to light (nur) which led to spiritual elevation on the one hand, and was reflected in the Sun and Fire.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the extent to which Akbar was influenced by Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian or Christian beliefs. Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with adopting various Hindu practices, such as worshipping the sun and the fire, repeating one thousand and one names of the sun in Sanskrit, putting a tika on his head, adopting the custom of rakhi etc. Others trace respect of fire to the Zoroastrians. Banning slaughter of animals on certain days is traced to Jain influence. He was attracted to the theory of transmigration, but rejected its Hindu form of going from one body to another.

However, the point is not so much to try and trace from where an idea or concept might have come, because “ideas have no frontiers.” Thus, respect for light is to be found in the thinking of the 11th century philosopher-cum-sufi, Al Ghizali, and also in some Muslim sects such as the Ishraqis and Nuqtawis. The point is how in a certain given situation, old ideas and concepts were revived, or given a new meaning or significance. Akbar's fundamental belief was that all religions had an element of truth, but it was obscured by blind devotion to slavish imitations (taqlid) and ceremonials. Hence, he was not prepared to identify himself with the dogmas and ceremonials of any one religion, though he was prepared to show respect to all religions. Thus, he forbade cow-slaughter, observed Dashera, as also Nau-roz which was an old Central Asian tradition and also a day of celebration for the Parsis. His firm belief, as stated by Abul Fazl in the Ain, was:

“It is my duty to be in good understanding with all men. If they walk in the way of God's will (riza), interference with them would be itself reprehensible; and if otherwise, they are under the malady of ignorance and deserve my compassion.”

Akbar's eclecticism was denounced by orthodox mullahs as "bidat" (apostasy). Thus, Badayuni charges Akbar with "reject(ing) inspiration, prophethood, the miracles of the Prophet and of the saints, and even the whole law (sharia)" so that in course of time "not a trace of Islam was left in his mind." The Christian missionaries, led by Father Monserrate, make the same charge. Monserrate says: "... one does not know what (religious) law he follows., though he is certainly not a Mahometan as his actions show plainly enough...."

Modern historians do not take seriously the charge of Akbar abjuring Islam. The Jesuits had convinced themselves that they would be able to convert Akbar to Christianity. They failed completely to follow the Ibadat Khana debates, hurling vile abuses at Islam, and mistaking Akbar's kindness, and asking Salim to attend some of their discourses for something different. Thus, I.H. Qureshi, a leading historian of Pakistan, says: "He (Akbar) did not ask his followers to abjure Islam as has been wrongly asserted by some historians, but he asked them to abjure the orthodox form of it". However, Qureshi considers this to be even more harmful, calling Akbar's reign "the darkest hour of Islam" in India because it opened the door for the entry of all kinds of extraneous elements, thus endangering the Islamic identity. This, as is known, has always been the basis of "fundamentalism".

What Akbar wanted was an Islam that was flexible enough to take political exigencies into account, and which could "appeal to man's reason." (Abul Fazl) At any time, an attempt to reconcile reason with faith was a difficult task. It was made even more difficult where the theologians had for long been used to a position of superiority over other faiths. As Badayuni candidly says: "If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion, or to a creed like Islam which was comparatively new...." It was in this context that some element raised the slogan of "Islam in danger". In the name of preserving the "identity of Islam," these elements opposed all types of social reforms, and rejected many of the customs and practices which had, in course of time, helped in the process of mutual understanding and adjustment. In fact, what they were agitating against was not the loss of the identity of Islam but Islam's primacy, and their own position of primacy in the state.

## DIN-I-ILAH

The charge that Akbar had renounced Islam is buttressed by the Jesuit fathers at Akbar's court, and by Badayuni, by arguing that Akbar had set up a new religion, called Din-i-Ilahi, which was compounded of many existing religions, Hinduism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism etc., and that Akbar wanted to set himself up as its head. According to Monserrate, "he (Akbar) has a strong desire to be looked upon, and esteemed as a God, or some great "Prophet", and that he would have people believe that he performs miracles, healing the sick with the water with which he washes his feet."

Modern research does not support the contention that Akbar wanted to establish a new religion. It has been pointed out that Din-i-Ilahi had no priesthood, no rituals or beliefs, no books. In fact, we do not even know when it was established.

According to Bartoli, a priest who had never visited India, Akbar had called a general council in 1582 for the promulgation of the new religion, and that he sent a great Shaikh to proclaim in all quarters that in a short time the (religious) law to be professed throughout the Mughal empire would be sent from the Court. No such orders have ever been found to have been issued.

The first mention of the new religion and its ten virtues are to be found in Muhsin Fani's work, *Da-bistan-i-Mazahib*, written during the latter part of Shah Jahan's reign. The virtues mentioned are of a very general nature, such as liberality and beneficence, loathing of evil, overcoming worldly lusts, purification of the soul by yearning after God etc.

Abul Fazl does not use the word Din-i-Ilahi but *Tauhid-i-Uahi* or Divine monotheism, while Badayuni uses both the terms. Abul Fazl links it with the concept of Akbar being the spiritual guide of the people. This has been discussed in a section in the *Ain* which has been wrongly translated by Blockman as "Ordinances of the Divine Faith." Abul Fazl says there were two tendencies among men, one class of



those who turn to religion (din), and other class to worldly thoughts (duniya). It was necessary to find a common ground between them by taking account the all— encompassing nature of God. However, it was necessary to keep under control “fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men.” Should anyone muster enough courage to openly proclaim his enlightened thoughts, these elements would “at once think of heresy and atheism, and go about with the intention of killing him.” In this situation, he says, “the people will naturally look to their king, on account of the high position he occupies, and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well.” According to Abul Fazl, Akbar was born to do so, but for some time he remained “behind the veil” till he was ready to take up the task. The question is: was the spiritual leadership of Akbar to be of a general nature, or of a more specified nature? Abul Fazl quotes two of the sayings of Akbar: “By guidance is meant indication of the road, not the gathering together of disciples...” “To make a disciple is to instruct him in the service of God, not to make him a personal attendant.”

It seems that these two saying reflect more accurately the spirit of Akbar’s claim to spiritual leadership. The four degrees of faith in His Majesty which are often confused with Din-i-Illahi are first mentioned by Badayuni in 1580. These degrees consisted in readiness to sacrifice to the Emperor property, life, honour and religion. Whoever had sacrificed these things possessed the four degrees, and whoever sacrifices one of these four possessed one degree.

There was nothing new in these degrees. Many sufis had also asked their disciples to make similar sacrifices. The sacrifice of religion was meant giving up traditional and imitative religion so that the principles of sulh-i-kul could be applied without any hindrance. It seems that Akbar was very selective in choosing those who qualified for the four degrees of devotion. Thus, Blochmann who translated the Ain into English, has compiled a list of only 18 nobles who qualified for these degrees. Among these, Birbal was the only Hindu. We are told that in a council called in 1582 for “evolving a new religion”, Akbar invited Man Singh to join. Man Singh replied that if by discipleship was meant willingness to sacrifice one’s life he had already carried his life in his hands. What need was there for further proof? He said, “If, however, the term has another meaning and refers to faith, I certainly am a Hindu. If you order me to do so, I will become a Muslim, but I know not of the existence of any other path (religion) than these two.” We are told that at this point the matter stopped, and the Emperor did not question him any further. Man Singh’s reply indicates that in the minds of the people the four degrees of faith were thought to have some religious significance. But Akbar did not think so, the four degrees of devotion being meant for high dignitaries and for political purposes.

It seems that there was growing concern at the scarcity of high officers of integrity and uprightness who could effectively handle the political and military needs of the expanding empire and an efficient administration. According to a modern historian, S.A.A. Rizvi, “The Four Degrees of Devotion provided the principle ideological force which sought to unify the new Mughal elite around the Mughal throne”. All the courtiers and thousands of loyal officials seem to have considered “the chain of discipleship” as the “noose of every felicity.” We are told that Sunday was fixed as the day of initiation, and that disciples were enrolled in batches of twelve. The novice, with the turban in his hand, placed his head at the feet of the Emperor which was symbolic and meant that the novice had cast aside conceit and selfishness. His Majesty raised him up, and gave him the shast on which was engraved the name of God, and with Akbar’s favourite motto: “Allah-o-Akbar” or God is Great. The members were to greet each other with the formula: Allah-o-Akbar and “Jall Jalalhu”, abstain from meat as far as possible during the month of their birth, and give a sumptuous feast and give alms on their birthday.

It is significant that Akbar lifted “the veil”, and started enrolling disciples around 1580, the time when he was distracted by rebellions in the east which was supported by some of the orthodox ulama. His brother, Mirza Hakim, had also advanced into the Punjab. This was also the time when the Uzbek power in Central Asia had become menacing. In this situation, Akbar wanted absence of sectarian and religious strife in the country, and complete loyalty towards him on the part of the nobility.



A modern scholar, J.F. Richards, says: "Discipleship was an extremely effective means to assimilate a heterogeneous body of nobles and bind them to the throne." Princes and high dignitaries considered themselves to be murids (disciples) of their Emperors even under the successors of Akbar, and claimed to have obtained guidance from the Emperor's angelic heart.

The Tauhid-i-Ilahi was not "a monument of Akbar's folly," as Vincent Smith argued. Although many flatterers and those aspiring for gain joined, Akbar created a tradition of implicit loyalty to the Mughal throne which he left as a legacy to his successors.

Thus, the Tauhid-i-Ilahi was basically a political devise. Akbar was trying to fashion a new state and nobility which neither the Christian Fathers, nor narrow orthodox mullahs such as Badayuni could understand or sympathies with. By projecting the Tauhid-i-Ilahi as a religious devise, and charging Akbar with apostasy, attention has been distracted from the painful emergence of a new polity passed on the principles of liberalism, justice and equal treatment to all faiths.

The question is: was it wise on Akbar's part to use religio-spiritual forms and devices to fulfil his political purposes? By doing so Akbar not only created confusion, but set a precedent which harmed the secular polity later on. It was, therefore, wise on the part of Jahangir to have given up the practice of giving shast or enrolling disciplines, even though some nobles considered it an honour to mention themselves as murid or banda (slaves) of the Emperor.

In this effort to extract as much loyalty from the subjects as possible, Akbar also drew upon the credulity of the people. Thus, Abul Fazl says that Akbar breathed upon the cups of water which people brought before him every day. By this means, "many sick people of broken hopes, whose diseases the not eminent physicians pronounced incurable, have been restored to health." Thus, although Akbar was opposed to miracles, calling them "the product of mental enthusiasm", he was prepared to exploit the credulity of the people when it suited him.

## **SOCIAL REFORMS AND TOWARDS INTEGRATION**

In addition to proclaiming a state based on universal peace and justice, Akbar took steps to create a better understanding of different religions among the subjects. Thus, he set up a translation bureau to translate works in Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek, etc. into Persian. A panel of scholars which included pandits, was appointed for the purpose. The works taken up for translation were both works of fables and legends, such as *Singhasana Battisi*, or poetic drama such as *Nal Daman* (*Nal Damayanti*), or of advice and aphorism such as *Panch Tantra*, as also works of religion, such as the *Atharva Veda*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and *Gita*. A second object of Akbar in getting these works translated into Persian was, as Abul Fazl says in his preface to the *Mahabharata*, to see that "the pillars of blind following" were demolished, and a new era of enquiry and research into religious matters commenced. He thus established a tradition which grew during the seventeenth century. Abul Fazl notes the ignorance among the religious leaders of the two main communities, Hindu and Muslim, of the standard works of the other community. His criticism was not confined to the Muslim ulama but extended to the leaders of the Hindus for their ignorance and lack of discrimination, and of blindly following their faith so that they were held back from the path of religious enquiry.

Apart from Hindu religious works, the Christian Gospels were translated into Persian, perhaps for the first time. Apart from these, works on history, astronomy and mathematics were also taken up for translation. Thus, Kalhan's history of Kashmir *Rajtarangini*, and Bhaskaracharya's work on Mathematics *Lilawati* were translated into Persian.

A number of measures of Akbar which Badayuni denounces as "new and absurd" were really reforms of a moral, social and educational order. Thus, wine was allowed "if used for strengthening the body, as recommended by doctors," prostitution was regulated, and immoral trafficking of women brought under control. Akbar issued an ordinance that no one should have more than one wife, but could marry

if one had no child from the first wife. Widow remarriage was permitted, and the age of marriage was raised to sixteen for boys and fourteen for girls. Marriage between cousins or near relations was also banned. Marriages were to be entered into only on the basis of mutual consent of the parents. He also set up a bureau for the registration of marriages. Sati of Hindu women was prohibited, except with the women's consent.

All these were progressive measures, but we do not know to what extent they were followed in practice. Another measure of Akbar which is to be commended was to ban the sale and purchase of slaves. He also prohibited slavery, but its effects on the royal household, and the household of nobles seems to have been small.

Some of the regulations were based on Akbar's belief in religious freedom to all, and against blind tradition not based on reason. Thus, if a Hindu had been forced to convert to Islam, and wanted to revert to his original religion, he was permitted to do so. No restrictions were placed on the building of Hindu temples, Christian churches or Jewish synagogues. In this light, Badayuni's charge that he converted mosques and prayers rooms into store houses, or banned azan (prayers) except the Friday prayers, and even forbade haj are largely dismissed by historians as reflecting an over-heated imagination. Badayuni says, "Playing with dice, and taking interest was allowed, and so in fact was everything admitted which was not allowed in Islam." Among the things Badayuni objects to was Akbar's shaving his beard, and even putting up a play-house. Akbar did, however, ban circumcision of boys below the age of twelve without their consent, and even regulated the direction in which a body should be buried! Some of his regulations created a feeling of harassment, and were hardly capable of being implemented.

Akbar also revised the educational syllabus, laying more emphasis on moral education, and secular subjects such as mathematics, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, rules of government, logic, history etc. It is typical of Badayuni that he denounces this step as discrimination against Arabic, and against teaching of religious subjects, such as exegesis of Quran, Hadis etc.

Akbar also gave encouragement to artists, poets, painters, musicians etc., making his court the standard bearer of arts and crafts. However, while the state became essentially secular and liberal in matters of religion and state policy, and promoted cultural integration, it presided over a society which was hierarchical in nature and deeply traditional. These were problems which had to be faced and encountered by his successors.

# UNIT-XXI

## THE DECCAN AND THE MUGHALS (UPTO 1657)

### THE DECCANI STATES UPTO 1595

The unity and diversity of India has always posed problems for rulers who considered India to be geographically and culturally one, and tried to bring it under one over-arching political authority. There was a strong sense of regional identity in different parts of India. Such differences were even more marked in the case of India south of the Vindhya. The Vindhya demarcated the south from the north, but did not pose an impassable barrier. In fact, religious leaders, sadhus, travellers etc. had always moved between the two regions. Politically, too, Malwa and Gujarat in the west, and Orissa in the east had interacted politically with the south, and vice versa, as we have seen in the context of the Bahmani and Vijayanagar, and was the case with the Rashtrakutas earlier.

Yet, conquest of distant places in the north, or in the south, put pressures on the political system which hastened its collapse. While the Mughal conquest of north India was accomplished by Akbar in a brief span of twenty-five years, although ground for it had been prepared earlier, in the case of the Deccan the process lasted for almost a hundred years (1596-1687). This protracted process needs to be analysed in the context of the policies and predilections of individual rulers, and necessary interaction between the various political groups and social classes, geographical factors etc.

#### The Deccani States upto 1595

After the disintegration of the powerful Bahmani kingdom towards the end of the fifteenth century, three powerful states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda had come into being. These states constantly fought each other as well as Vijayanagar. However, by chance and good fortune, they combined to crush Vijayanagar at the battle of Bannihatti near Talikota in 1565. After this victory, they resumed their mutual warfare. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapur claimed Sholapur which was a rich and fertile tract.

In 1524, the Ahmadnagar ruler, Burhan, Nizam Shah, and the Bijapur ruler, Ismail Adil Khan, agreed to form an alliance, and to cement it, it was agreed that the sister of Ismail Adil Shah would be married to Burhan Nizam Shah, and that Sholapur would be given to Ahmadnagar in dowry. But after the marriage, Adil Shah refused to hand over Sholapur fort and its fertile five and a half sarkars. This led to further hostilities and bad blood between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, the conquest of Sholapur being considered a matter of honour for both. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur also had the ambition of conquering Bidar and Berar, the two other independent but small states in the Deccan. Bidar was the remaining portion of the old Bahmani kingdom. The Bahmani rulers were under the tutelage of the wazir, Ali Barid, who allowed them linger on till he brought the dynasty to an end, and ascended the throne as an independent ruler. Despite constant invasions from one or another Deccani kingdom, the Baridi dynasty managed to survive till the seventeenth century.

Further to the south-west, Bijapur and Golconda clashed over the possession of Naldurg. At the same time, both of them tried to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the remaining portions of the Vijayanagar kingdom in the Karnataka. Thus, all the leading Deccani states were expansionist states. Their mutual rivalries made it difficult for them to form a lasting united front against an invader from the north.

Following the decline of the Gujarati kingdom, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came to an agreement whereby Ahmadnagar was free to annex Berar, and Bijapur was free to take from Vijayanagar territory equal to that yielded by Berar. Accordingly, Ahmadnagar conquered Berar (1573), but Bijapur could not gain at the expense of Vijayanagar, and felt cheated.

Apart from these rivalries, the Deccani states were also distracted by ethnic strife and sectarian violence. As in the Bahmani sultanate, the nobility was divided between Foreigners, called afaqis or gharibs, and the Deccanis. The Deccanis, in turn, were divided between the Afghans and the Habshis, the latter being drawn from Abyssinia and the Eritrean coast of Africa. Among the afaqis, many were from Khurasan and Iran where, with the rise of the Safavids to power towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, Shiism had become the state religion. Many of the afaqis were, therefore, suspected of leaning towards shi-ism to which members of the Deccani party were bitterly opposed. Yusuf Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, made shi-ism the state doctrine in 1503-4, and, simultaneously ousted the Deccanis from positions of power and influence. When the Deccani party became strong, it restored sunni-ism and persecuted the afaqis and shi-ism.

Ethnic and sectarian conflict was a feature in Ahmadnagar as well. In Golconda the rulers supported shi-ism right from 1503. However, even Golconda could not completely escape from sectarian strife. Another factor which led to a new round of sectarian persecution was the rise of Mahdawism during the period. The claim of Saiyid Muhammad of being the Mahdi or the redeemer of the age was rejected both by the orthodox sunni and shia divines.

Another notable feature was the growing importance of the Marathas in the affairs of the Deccan. Maratha troops were employed as loose auxiliaries or bargirs (usually called bargis) in the Bahmani kingdom. The revenue affairs at the local level were in the hands of the Deccani brahmins. Some of the old Maratha families which rose in the service of the Bahmani rulers and held jagirs from them were the Mores, Nimbalkars, Ghatges, etc. Most of them were powerful zamindars, or deshmukhs as they were called in the Deccan. However, unlike the Rajputs, they were not established rulers over a recognised kingdom. Secondly, they were not the leaders of clans on whose backing and support they could depend. Hence, many of Maratha sardars appear as military adventurers who were prepared to shift their loyalty according to the prevailing wind. During the middle of the sixteenth century, the rulers of the Deccan states embarked upon a definite policy of winning over the Marathas to their side. The Maratha chiefs were accorded service and position in the leading states of the Deccan, especially Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur who ascended the throne in 1555 was the leading advocate of this policy. It is said that he entertained 30,000 Maratha auxiliaries (bargis) in his army, and showed great favour to the Marathas in the revenue system. He is supposed to have introduced Marathi in the revenue accounts at all levels. Apart from increasing his favours to old families such as the Bhonsales who had the family name of Ghorpade, others, such as the Dafles (or Chavans) etc. also rose to prominence in Bijapur as a result of this policy. Maharashtrian brahmins were regularly used for diplomatic negotiations as well. Thus the title of Peshwa was accorded to a brahmin, Kanhoji Narsi, by the ruler of Ahmadnagar.

In Golconda, Sultan Quli Qutb Shah made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, despite his clash with Vijayanagar. His successor, Ibrahim Qutb Shah, was a great patron of Telugu, and often utilized his Hindu officials for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Murahari Rao, for example, rose to a high position in the official hierarchy, and was in every respect the second person in the state.

Thus, the policy of allying with the local landed elements, and with those who had the control or command over fighting groups, can be seen at work in different regions of the country, including the Deccan. Although the Deccani rulers were rarely able to rise above their narrow local concerns, they did evolve a policy in which Hindu-Muslim conflicts were rare, and a sense of pride in regional culture had developed. The important point to note is that all these elements considered the Mughals to be foreigners.



## MUGHAL ADVANCE TOWARDS THE DECCAN

It was logical to expect a Mughal advance towards the Deccan after the consolidation of the empire in north India. The conquest of the Deccan by the Tughlaqs and the improved communications between the north and the south had led to a strengthening of the commercial and cultural relations between the two. After the decline of the Delhi Sultanat, many sufi saints and persons in search of employment had migrated to the court of the Bahmani rulers. Politically also, the north and south were not isolated. The rulers of Gujarat had their eyes on the rich Konkan area, as also on Berar. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, had invaded Ahmadnagar and forced its ruler to read Khutba in his name. Hence, after the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat in the sixties and seventies, the Mughals could hardly have kept themselves aloof from the Deccan.

In 1562, after the Mughal conquest of Malwa, Pir Muhammad Khan had invaded Khandesh, an independent kingdom, located between the Narmada which was considered the boundary of north India, and the river Tapti. This attack was a punishment for its having given shelter to Baz Bahadur, the former ruler of Malwa. But the expedition failed. Two year later, when Akbar came to Malwa to punish its governor Abdullah Khan Uzbek for behaving in an independent manner, the ruler of Khandesh, Mubarak Shah, apprehensive of Akbar's intentions, sent an ambassador to him with splendid presents, and agreed to Akbar's demand for the hand of his daughter in marriage. He also agreed to cede Bijaygarh and Handia which Akbar wanted in order to round off Malwa. However, it does not seem correct to think that as early as 1564, Akbar and his advisors had decided upon a forward policy in the south, and that Malwa was their first objective.

After the conquest of Gujarat, it seems that Akbar was drawn towards the Deccan, and Mir Husain Rizavi was sent as a kind of a roving ambassador to the Deccan to ascertain the conditions there. Another reason for this was that Muhammad Husain Mirza and a number of his associates had found shelter at the Ahmadnagar court. The Mughal ambassador returned in 1576. The ruler of Ahmadnagar sent presents and expressions of goodwill, and expelled Muhammad Hussain Mirza who fled to Khandesh. Akbar sent an expedition to Khandesh because the new ruler, Raja Ali, had been remiss in paying tribute. Although urged by the Nizam Shah to resist, Raja Ali, conscious that the Deccani states had their own selfish motives, and in view of his own vulnerability to Mughal powers not only agreed to pay tribute, but arrested Muhammad Hussain Mirza and sent him to the Mughals.

Thus, Khandesh was the first Deccan state which submitted to the Mughals. Khandesh could have provided a base for operations against the Deccan states, especially as the Mughal ambassador to the Deccan, Mir Muhsin, had reported that there was restlessness and instability among the men of the Deccan. However, deeming the redressal of the situation in Bengal and Bihar to be more important, Akbar deferred the conquest of the Deccan.

From the remarks of Abul Fazl it is clear that the Mughals considered India from the Himalayas upto the borders of the sea to be integrally one, and felt that they had the divine mandate to rule over this entire tract. To highlight this, the Mughal emperors did not use the word "Shah" but only "Khan" for the rulers of the Deccan, and often called them "marzaban", or chiefs. Abul Fazl also argued that as supreme rulers the Mughals had the responsibility to "free the heads of those distressed ones from the heavy burden of tyrants and oppressors." Thus, empire building, which was the object of all medieval rulers, was to be based on the welfare of the subjects. Although Abul Fazl did not say so, the Mughal concept of all-India suzerainty did not imply a desire on their part to wipe out all local principalities or riyasats, and establish direct rule everywhere. The model which Akbar had developed in the north, and one which he apparently tried to extend to the south was that of Rajasthan where local potentates were allowed to rule over their own dominions, provided they accepted "Mughal overlordship, maintained peace (including sectarian peace) and law and order within their borders and in their dealings with their neighbours, and served the Emperor when called upon to do so.

For almost a decade and a half after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat, Akbar watched the situation in the Deccan, and hoped that by diplomatic means the Deccani rulers would be persuaded to accept Mughal over-lordship, mend their public conduct, and maintain internal law and order including sectarian peace. In 1579, Ain-ul-Mulk who had been sent to "guide" Ali Adil Shah, the Bijapuri ruler, returned with rare presents, and a letter expressing sentiments of good-will. But the Bijapur ruler showed no inclination to accept Mughal over-lordship. After the death of Ali Adil Shah in 1580, factional squabbles and sectarian fights erupted once again.

Conditions in Ahmadnagar were no better. The ruler, Murtaza Nizam Shah, was popularly called diwana or madman. His infatuation for a slave boy had led to internal discords, and a faction among the nobles tried unsuccessfully to put Murtaza's brother, Burhan, on the throne. After failing in this attempt, Burhan, after wandering about, reached Akbar's court in 1584. Akbar sent a mission to the Nizam Shah, and made a military demonstration in Berar, but took no further action, perhaps in view of the situation in the north-west. Meanwhile, conditions in Ahmadnagar continued to deteriorate. Mahdawism was made the state religion, and horrible blood-shed took place.

In 1589, Murtaza Nizam Shah died. Akbar now supported the candidature of Burhan Nizam Shah, and hoped that his long stay at the Mughal court would lead to cordial relations between the two, and an end to the ugly sectarian strife in the state which, he feared, might affect Malwa. Burhan was able to ascend the throne at Ahmadnagar with the help of the ruler of Khandesh. But he showed no inclination to accept Mughal suzerainty, as Akbar had hoped. Sectarian strife in the state continued, with shi-ism replacing Mahadawism.

Akbar now embarked upon a diplomatic offensive. In 1591 four missions were sent to the four Deccani rulers. Faizi, the court poet and brother of Abul Fazl, was sent to Khandesh to advise his friend, Murtaza Nizam Shah, to mend his ways. The ruler of Khandesh, Raja Ali, accepted Mughal suzerainty, and sent his daughter in marriage. The other missions came back with presents and letters of goodwill but little else, knowing that Akbar was too busy in the north-west to take any stern action against them. In fact, Burhan Nizam Shah was rude: he sent no presents, and brusquely dismissed the Mughal envoy. This was the background to Mughal intervention in the Deccan in 1595. It has been suggested that an additional reason why Akbar wanted to extend Mughal suzerainty over the Deccan was his growing concern at the activities of the Portuguese. Akbar had come into touch with the Portuguese after the Mughal conquest of Gujarat. The Portuguese had captured Diu in 1530, and later extended their control over Bassein. They were also keen to extend their control over Surat, and on the coastland opposite Goa, including the ports located in the Konkan. There was a lot of resentment among the traders towards the Portuguese for their confiscating any ship not carrying a cartaz, or pass issued by them, and forcing all ships coming to Gujarat to pay customs duty at Diu. The proselytising activities of the Portuguese were also resented. Akbar met the Portuguese at Surat, and wanted to establish friendly relations with them. In 1573, he granted the Portuguese traders at Cambay exemption from paying custom duties on goods imported by them into Cambay, and instructed his officials in Gujarat not to disturb the Portuguese, and not to favour the Malabar pirates against them. In return, the Portuguese agreed to give passes (cartaz) to members of the royal family going to Mecca, and to issue every year a free cartaz to one of the Akbar's ships, and to exempt it from paying customs duty at Diu. But this did not remove the over-all causes of conflict. It was also felt humiliating that even members of the royal family had to obtain a permit from the Portuguese for their activities. This was highlighted when in 1577, the Portuguese seized one of the Akbar's ships though it had a cartaz, and took it to Diu, before better sense prevailed.

In 1580, Akbar appointed an army under Qutbuddin Khan to expel the Portuguese from the ports, making out that this was in order to free pilgrim traffic to Hejaz. The Deccani rulers who had their own complaints against the Portuguese were asked to cooperate. But nothing further happened in the matter. Akbar probably realized that there was little possibility of success against the Portuguese without a strong navy. However, he may have hoped that with wider Mughal control over the Deccan states, he would be able to put greater diplomatic and military pressure on the Portuguese.

## MUGHAL CONQUEST OF BERAR, KHANDESH AND PARTS OF AHMEDNAGAR

The failure of Akbar's diplomatic offensive of 1591 postulated a more active intervention in the Deccan. In 1595, Burhan Nizam Shah died and was succeeded by his son, Ibrahim. Ibrahim Nizam Shah renewed the war with Bijapur over Sholapur, but he was defeated and lost his life in the battle. Various contenders to the throne now arose: Mian Manju, who was the Peshwa and leader of the Deccani party, put forward his own candidate, though he was a mere pretender, not belonging to the Nizam Shahi dynasty. Chand Bibi, sister of Burhan Nizam Shah, who had been married to the Adil Shahi ruler in 1564, supported by the Habshi party favoured the claim of Bahadur, the infant son of the late king, Ibrahim Nizam Shah. For many years after her husband's death in 1580, Chand Bibi had looked after the affairs of Bijapur with the help of able advisors. But due to growing factionalism she had gracefully retired to the court of her brother, Burhan Nizam Shah. Afraid that in the confused situation she would rule over the affairs of Ahmadnagar with the help of the Habshis, Miyan Manju the leader of the Deccani party, appealed to the Mughals for help.

Akbar had already geared himself to invade the Deccan. In 1593, Prince Daniyal had been asked to punish the Nizam Shah, but the campaign had been deferred. Prince Murad was then appointed governor of Gujarat to prepare for the expedition. Hence, he was fully ready when he received the invitation of Miyan Manju. The campaign was led by Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Raja Ali, the ruler of Khandesh, also joined. Due to internal differences among the Nizam Shahi nobles, the Mughals faced no opposition till they reached Ahmadnagar. But on their approach, Miyan Manju felt sorry that he had invited the Mughals, and decided to join hands with Chand Bibi to resist them. Chand Bibi also appealed to Bijapur and Golconda for help. The arrival of a Bijapuri force of seven thousand enabled Chand Bibi to offer a valiant defence: After a close siege of four months, Chand Bibi was forced to an agreement whereby Berar was ceded to the Mughals. The infant, Bahadur Nizam Shah, was acknowledged as the ruler under her Regency, and Mughal suzerainty was accepted. This was in 1596. Mughals accepted this compromise partly because of the presence of a strong Bijapur-Golconda force at the frontier.

Neither side was satisfied with this agreement. The Mughals were keen to get Balaghat which had been a bone of contention between Gujarat and Ahmadnagar. Dissensions among the Nizam Shahi nobles also continued: one group opposed the handing over of Berar to the Mughals, while another group led by the Wakil and Peshwa, Muhammad Khan, opened negotiations with the Mughals. Chand Bibi sent urgent messages to the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda to send reinforcements for her help. The rulers of Bijapur and Golconda responded, because they felt, not without reason, that Berar would give the Mughals a permanent foothold in the Deccan which enlarged upon at any time. Hence, a combined force of Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar, led by a Bijapur commander, Suhail Khan, entered Berar in strength. In a hard fought battle in 1597 at Sonapat, the Mughals defeated a Deccani force three times their number. The Bijapuri and Golconda forces now withdrew, leaving Chand Bibi alone to face the situation. Although Chand Bibi was in favour of observing the treaty of 1596, she could not stop harassing attacks on the Mughals in Berar by her nobles. This resulted in a second Mughal siege of Ahmadnagar. In the absence of help from any quarter, Chand Bibi decided to surrender the fort, and opened negotiations with the Mughals, demanding grant of a mansab and a jagir in Ahmadnagar to Bahadur as a subordinate ruler, with herself remaining his guardian. She was, however, accused of treachery by the faction hostile to her, and was murdered. Thus ended the life of one of the most romantic figures in Deccani politics. The Mughals now assaulted and captured Ahmadnagar. The boyking, Bahadur, was sent to the fortress of Gwalior. Ahmadnagar fort and the areas adjacent to it were surrendered to the Mughals. Balaghat including Daultabad which had been claimed by the Mughals earlier, was also added to the empire, and a Mughal garrison was stationed at Ahmadnagar. This was in 1600.

The fall of Ahmadnagar fort did not resolve Akbar's problems in the Deccan. The Mughals were hardly in a position to go beyond Ahmadnagar fort and its surrounding areas, or to try and seize the remaining territories of the state. Shah Ali, an old man of eighty, who was a son of Murtaza Nizam Shah, had been living in Bijapur for some time along with his son, Ali, under the protection of the Bijapur ruler. In 1595,



at Parenda, a number of Nizam Shahi nobles had raised AH to the throne of Ahmadnagar under the title Murtaza Shah II. With the removal of Bahadur from the scene, the ground was cleared for Murtaza II who already enjoyed the support of Bijapur, of being accepted as the legitimate successor to the Nizam Shahi throne by all sections.

Amid confused fighting, Khan-i-Khanan, who was the Mughal commander in the Deccan, offered a compromise to Malik Ambar who had emerged as the chief man of Murtaza II. He offered to Murtaza II the sarkars of Ausa, Dharwar and parts of Bir on a promise of loyalty. Ambar, after suffering two successive defeats at the hands of the Khan-i-Khanan, finally agreed. "Some territories" were left to him, but these were not specified. According to the Deccani historian, Ferishta the two sides "marked out their respective future boundaries." This was in 1601. Thus, although the capital, Ahmadnagar, and Balaghat fell, the Nizam Shahi ruler continued to rule over the remaining portions of the kingdom, and was recognised by the Mughals.

A little earlier, in 1600, Akbar had advanced into Malwa and then into Khandesh to study the situation on the spot. In Khandesh he learnt that the new ruler of Khandesh, Bahadur, had not shown due respect to Prince Daniyal when he had passed through the territory on his way to Ahmadnagar. Worse, though summoned repeatedly, he did not appear before Akbar. However, the main factor in Akbar's taking action against Bahadur was his desire to secure the fort of Asirgarh in Khandesh which was reputed to be the strongest fort in the Deccan. He was also keen to annex Khandesh, with its capital Burhanpur which was a point of entry into the\* Deccan. Khandesh, was also the hinterland of Surat and the Gujarat sea-ports, the route from Agra to Surat passing through Burhanpur. After a tight siege, and when pestilence had broken out in the fort, the ruler came out and surrendered (1601). He was pensioned off and sent to the Gwalior fort. Khandesh was incorporated into the Mughal empire.

The conquest of Asirgarh and annexation of Khandesh, the ceding of Berar and Balaghat, and Mughal control over Ahmadnagar fort and its surrounding areas were substantial achievements. However, the Mughals were still far from the realization of their objective of their over-lordship being accepted by all the rulers of the Deccan. After the fall of Asirgarh, Akbar again sent envoys to the rulers of Bijapur, Golconda and Bidar to persuade them to "make binding treaties of obedience." None of the rulers agreed to do so. However, the ruler of Bijapur reluctantly agreed to send his daughter to the harem of Prince Daniyal, the Mughal viceroy in the Deccan. Meanwhile, in order to deal with the rebellion of Prince Salim, Akbar had to return to Agra.

Akbar's hope of befriending Bijapur, the most powerful and influential kingdom in the Deccan, could not be realized. The marriage of the Adil Shahi princess with Daniyal took place only in 1604, and shortly after it, Daniyal died due to excessive drinking. Akbar too, died shortly afterwards. Hence, the position in the Deccan remained nebulous, and had to be tackled anew by his successor, Jahangir.

## RISE OF MALIK AMBAR AND MUGHAL ATTEMPT AT CONSOLIDATION

After the fall of Ahmadnagar fort and capture of Bahadur Nizam Shah by the Mughals, the state of Ahmadnagar would have disintegrated and different parts of it would have, in all probability, been swallowed up by the neighbouring states but for the rise of a remarkable man, Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar was an Abyssinian, born at Harare in Ethiopia. We do not know much about his early life and career. It seems that his poor parents sold him at the slave market of Baghdad. In course of time, he was purchased by a merchant who treated him well and brought him to the Deccan which was a land of promise. Malik Ambar rose in the service of Chingiz Khan, the famous and influential minister of Murtaza Nizam Shah. When the Mughals invaded Ahmadnagar, Ambar at first went to Bijapur and Golconda to try his luck there. But he soon came back and enrolled himself in the powerful Habshi (Abyssinian) party which at the time was opposed to Chand Bibi. Just before Chand Bibi's treaty with the Mughals in 1596, Murtaza Nizam Shah II had been proclaimed ruler at Parenda in 1595. Malik Ambar and Raju Dakhani harassed the Mughals in Telengana and Balaghat. We do not know precisely when Malik Ambar became the chief man of Murtaza Nizam Shah II, and began to be called Peshwa—a title which was



common in Ahmadnagar. Ambar gathered around him a large band of disbanded Deccani soldiers, including Afghans and Habshis. He also enlisted in his service a large number of Maratha troopers or bargis.

The Marathas were adept in rapid movements, and in plundering and cutting off the supplies of the enemy troops. Although this guerilla mode of warfare was traditional with the Marathas in the Deccan, the Mughals were not used to it. With the help of the Marathas, Ambar made it difficult for the Mughals to consolidate their position in Berar, Ahmadnagar and Balaghat.

The Mughal commander in the Deccan at the time was Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a shrewd and wily politician and an able soldier. He inflicted a crushing defeat on Ambar in 1601 in Telengana at a place called Nander. However, he decided to make friends with Ambar since he considered it desirable that there should be some stability in the remaining Nizam Shahi kingdom. In turn, Ambar also found it useful to cultivate the friendship of the Khan-i-Khanan since it enabled him to deal with his internal rival, Raju Dakhani. This led to the pact between them in 1601.

The political situation of the Deccan during the next eight to nine years remained extremely complex. Ibrahim Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, was keen to preserve the Nizam Shahi dynasty. The struggle between Ambar and Raju Dakhani continued. Murtaza Nizam Shah tried to play between the two which led to his depositions and death in 1610, despite the efforts of the Adil Shah to persuade Malik Ambar to remain loyal to him.

Following the death of Akbar, and Jahangir's preoccupation with the rebellion of Prince Khusrau, Ambar unleashed a fierce campaign to expel the Mughals from Berar, Balaghat and Ahmadnagar. In 1608, Jahangir appointed Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan to the Deccan again. The Khan-i-Khanan made the impossible promise of not only recovering within two years the areas lost to Malik Ambar but also bringing Bijapur within the imperial dominions. Faced with this threat, Ambar petitioned the Adil Shah for help, arguing that the two kingdoms were one for all intents and purposes. The Adil Shah agreed to Ambar's request of restoring to him the powerful fort of Qandahar so that he could keep his family, stores and provisions there and fight the Mughals with an easy mind. He also appointed a picked army of 10,000 troopers to help Ambar who set apart a jagir worth three lakh huns for their payment. The treaty was cemented by a marriage alliance, the daughter of one of the leading Ethiopian noble of Bijapur marrying Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar.

The marriage was celebrated with great rejoicing (1609), the Adil Shah giving a handsome dowry to the bride, with Rs. 80,000 being spent on fireworks alone.

Fortified with the support of Bijapur, and with the active aid of the Marathas, Ambar soon forced Khan-i-Khanan to retreat to Burhanpur. Thus, by 1610, all the gains in the Deccan made by Akbar were lost. Although Jahangir sent prince Parvez to the Deccan with a large army, he could not meet the challenge posed by Malik Ambar. Even Ahmadnagar was lost, and Parvez had to conclude a disgraceful peace with Ambar.

In 1611, Jahangir sent two armies, one commanded by Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and including Raja Man Singh, and the other by Abdullah Khan. These armies were to attack from two sides, and converge on Daulatabad. However, mutual wranglings and lack of co-ordination led to their failure.

The affairs of Malik Ambar continued to prosper and the Mughals were not able to re-assert themselves as long as Ambar had the solid support of the Marathas and other elements in the Deccan. But in course of time, Malik Ambar became arrogant and alienated many of his allies. The Khan-i-Khanan, who had again been posted as the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan, took advantage of the situation and won over to his side a number of Habshi and Maratha nobles, such as Jagdev Rai, Babaji Kate, Udaji Ram, Maloji and Kanhoji Bhonsle etc. Jahangir himself was well aware of the value of the Marathas, for he observed in his Memoirs that the Marathas "are a hardy lot and are the centre of resistance in that country". With the help of the Maratha sardars, the Khan-i-Khanan inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined forces of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda in 1616. Ibrahim Adil Shah had sent twenty-five thousand troops

under Mulla Muhammad Lari, and- the Qutb Shah five thousand horse. The Mughals occupied the new Nizam Shahi capital, Khirki, and burnt all its buildings before they left. This defeat shook the Deccani alliance against the Mughals.

To complete Khan-i-Khanan's victory, in 1617 Jahangir sent a grand army under his son, prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan), and himself moved to Mandu to support the prince. Faced with this threat, Ambar had no option but to submit. All the territory of Balaghat recently seized by Ambar were restored to the Mughals. The key of Ahmadnagar fort was also delivered. It is significant that in the treaty, Jahangir did not try to enlarge the conquests made by Akbar in the Deccan. This was not due to any military weakness on the part of Jahangir, as has been sometimes imagined, but due to deliberate policy. Apparently, Jahangir did not want to extend Mughal commitments in the Deccan, or become too deeply embroiled in its affairs. Moreover, he was still hopeful that his moderation would enable the Deccani states to settle down, and live in peace with the Mughals. As a part of his policy, Jahangir tried to win over Bijapur to his side, and sent a gracious farman to Adil Shah, calling him 'son' (farzand).

Despite these reverses, Ambar continued to lead the Deccani resistance against the Mughals, and reconquered large portions of Ahmadnagar and Berar. In 1621, Prince Shah Jahan was deputed to lead the Mughal campaign. The combined Deccani forces again suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Mughals. Ambar had to restore all the Mughal territories, and another 14 kos of territory adjoining Ahmadnagar. The Deccani states had to pay an indemnity of rupees fifty lakhs. The credit for these victories was given to prince Shah Jahan. It has been suggested that Jahangir's mild attitude towards the Deccani states was due to the pressure of the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas I. There had been a continuous exchange of embassies between the Deccani states and the Safavid rulers who were keen to keep abreast of the situation in the Deccan.

From a study of the exchange of the letters, it is clear that the Safavid ruler was keen on the preservation of the Deccani states, and for the purpose, appealed to Jahangir to adopt a policy of generosity provided these states behaved as "tribute paying vassals" and did not "deviate from the traditional rules and conditions of loyalty and submission". That the Safavid monarch did not favour a policy of confrontation with the Mughals is clear from the above, as also from his warning to the ruler of Golconda.

The two defeats of the combined Deccani forces, coming one after the other, shattered the united front of the Deccani powers against the Mughals. The old rivalries between the Deccani states now came to the surface. There had been an old standing rivalry between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur over Sholapur and Bidar. The Adil Shah had not only kept Sholapur while helping Ambar, but had occupied the pargana of Shirwal while handing over Qandahar to Ambar. In 1619, the Adil Shah had invaded and captured the kingdom of Bidar.

According to Bijapur historians, Ambar assumed an arrogant attitude and forgot the past favours to him by his benefactor, Ibrahim Adil Shah. He had also alienated many Nizam Shahi nobles by his authoritarian ways, and his harsh treatment of Murtaza Nizam Shah II. Hence, a showdown between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur appeared imminent, and both sides bid for an alliance with the Mughals. After careful consideration, Jahangir decided in favour of Bijapur. Perhaps he felt that an alliance with a restless, ambitious person like Ambar would unnecessarily draw the Mughals into the internal politics of the Deccan states. Also, for the stabilization of the Mughal position in the Deccan, it was necessary to isolate Malik Ambar. In accordance with the agreement, the Adil Shah sent a force of 5000 troops under one of his ministers, Mulla Muhammad Lari, for service with the Mughal governor at Burhanpur. While these developments were taking place, Ambar invaded Golconda and forced the ruler to pay arrears of two years' tribute. He also concluded a defensive-offensive alliance with Golconda. Safe from that quarter, he surprised and routed a Bijapur army at Bidar, and then advanced plundering up to Bijapur. The Adil Shah was forced to take shelter in the fort, and sent urgent summons to Muhammad Lari at Burhanpur. Mahabat Khan, the Mughal governor, deputed Lashkar Khan and a strong Mughal force to accompany Muhammad Lari to Bijapur. We are told that Malik Ambar, asserting his loyalty to

the Imperial throne, asked the Mughal forces to stand aside, and to allow the Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Adil Shah to settle their old standing differences without interference. The Mughals refused since this would have meant breaking their alliance with Bijapur. Ambar surprised the combined forces at Bhaturi near Ahmadnagar (1624). In the first attack, Muhammad Lari died, and the Adil Shahi and Mughal forces disintegrated.

The victory at Bhaturi over the combined Adil Shahi Mughal forces raised the prestige of Malik Ambar to its pinnacle. Since the Mughals were pre-occupied with dealing with Shah Jahan's rebellion, no Mughal response was forthcoming. After his victory, Ambar besieged Ahmadnagar, but finding it too well defended, he again turned to Bijapur, burning and plundering Nauraspur, the new city built in its neighbourhood by Ibrahim Adil Shah. He also recaptured Sholapur. He then over-ran the Mughal territories in the Balaghat, and besieged Burhanpur. Shortly afterwards, Shah Jahan returned from his revolt in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar. Ambar assigned him the responsibility of storming Burhanpur. But Shah Jahan failed.

Jahangir now decided to patch up with his most competent son, Shah Jahan. Around this time Malik Ambar died (1627). According to a contemporary Mughal historian, Muhammad Khan, "in warfare, command, in sound judgement", and in "administration, he (Ambar) had no rival or equal. (He) maintained his exalted position to the end of his life and closed his career in honour".

However, there may be differences of opinion about Ambar's overall role. To most writers, he was the valiant champion of Deccani independence against the Mughals. According to Satish Chandra, in his article on the Deccan Policy of the Mughals, "the valiant fighter for Deccani independence and the upholder of the rights of the Nizam Shahi Dynasty can, with equal justice, be looked upon as a gifted man who utilized a complex political situation to push himself forward. His restless ambition led him into a conflict with Bijapur which was a definite factor in the dissolution of the united front of the Deccan states against the Mughals. Above all, his refusal to accept and honour the settlement of 1600 led to continuous wars which ultimately led to the extinction of the kingdom he had wished to preserve. Perhaps, Ambar's main contribution was to provide training to the Maratha armies and to instill in them a sense of self-confidence so that they could successfully defy even the might of the Mughal empire". Not much is known about the administrative system of Malik Ambar. He is popularly credited with introducing Todar Mal's system of land revenue. According to later Marathi sources. "He (Malik Ambar) got the land of the kingdom measured and settled the rates of revenue payment, the boundaries of the different villages, and (fixed) the measures of cavars and bighas. Since then Malik Ambar's settlement continues in that territory".

Thus, Malik Ambar introduced the zabti system instead of the earlier system of giving land on contract (ijara). According to some documents, the land was measured by chains, and there was a progressive tax on lands newly brought under cultivation, the full rate being paid only in the fifth year. We have no precise idea of the scale of land-revenue demand, but it is generally assumed to have been one-third. Malik Ambar paid close personal attention to the problems of the local deshmukhs and others connected with the cultivation of land. By these means he tried to enforce local law and order, and expand cultivation.

## EXTINCTION OF AHMADNAGAR

Shah Jahan ascended the throne in 1627. Having commanded two expeditions to the Deccan as a prince and spent a considerable period in the Deccan during his rebellion against his father, Shah Jahan had a great deal of experience and personal knowledge of the Deccan and its politics.

After the death of Malik Ambar, and following the confused situation in the last years of Jahangir's reign, the Mughal governor, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, had made a deal, surrendering Balaghat allegedly for a sum of three lakh of huns. Even Burhanpur had been besieged.



Shah Jahan's first concern as a ruler was to recover the territories in the Deccan which had been lost to the Nizam Shahi ruler. For the purpose, he deputed the old and experienced noble, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi. However, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi failed in the enterprise, and was recalled to the court. Shortly afterwards, he rebelled, feeling that he no longer enjoyed the favours he enjoyed under Jahangir. He went and joined the Nizam Shah who deputed him to expel the Mughals from the remaining portions of Berar and Balaghat. Giving asylum to a leading Mughal noble in this manner was a challenge which Shah Jahan could not ignore. It was clear that even after Malik Ambar's death, his policy of refusing to recognise the Mughal position in Berar and Balaghat was being persisted in by the Nizam Shahi ruler. Shah Jahan, therefore, came to the conclusion that there could be no peace for the Mughals in the Deccan as long as Ahmadnagar continued as an independent state. This was a major departure from the policy which had been followed by Akbar and Jahangir. However, Shah Jahan was not keen to extend Mughal territories in the Deccan beyond what was absolutely necessary. He, therefore, wrote to the Bijapur ruler offering to cede to him roughly one-third of the Ahmadnagar state if he would cooperate with the Mughals in the projected campaign against Ahmadnagar. This was a shrewd move on the part of Shah Jahan, aimed at isolating Ahmadnagar diplomatically and militarily. He also sent feelers to the various Maratha sardars to join Mughal service.

At first, Shah Jahan was successful in his overtures. Malik Ambar had defeated and killed Mulla Muhammad Lari, and a number of other Bijapuri nobles during his campaigns. The Adil Shah was also smarting at the humiliation of the burning of Naurasapur and the annexation of Sholapur by Malik Ambar. He, therefore, accepted Shah Jahan's proposal, and posted an army at the Nizam Shahi border to cooperate with the Mughals. Around this time, Jadhav Rao, a prominent Maratha noble who had defected to the side of the Mughals during the reign of Jahangir but had gone back to the service of the Nizam Shah, was treacherously murdered on a charge of conspiring with the Mughals. As a result, Shahji Bhonsale, who was his son-in-law (and the father of Shivaji), defected to the Mughal side along with his relations. Shah Jahan accorded him a mansab of 5000, and gave him jagirs in the Poona region. A number of other prominent Maratha sardars also joined Shah Jahan at this time.

In 1629, Shah Jahan deputed two armies against Ahmadnagar, one to operate in the west in the Balaghat region, and the other in the east to operate in the Telengana region. The Emperor himself moved to Burhanpur to coordinate their movements. Under relentless pressure, large parts of the Ahmadnagar state were brought under Mughal occupation. Parenda, one of the last outposts of the kingdom, was besieged. The Nizam Shah now sent a piteous appeal to the Adil Shah, stating that most of the kingdom was under Mughal occupation, and if Parenda fell it would mean the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty, after which, he warned, would come the turn of Bijapur. A strong group at the Bijapur court had been uneasy at the steady Mughal advance in Ahmadnagar. In fact, the Bijapuri forces at the border had merely watched the situation, taking no active part in the Mughal operations. The Mughals, on their part, had refused to hand over to the Adil Shah the areas allotted to him under the agreement. As a result, the Adil Shah made a somersault, and decided to help the Nizam Shah who agreed to surrender Sholapur to him. This turn in the political situation compelled the Mughals to raise the siege of Parenda, and to retreat. However, the internal situation in Ahmadnagar now turned in favour of the Mughals. Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, had recently been appointed Peshwa by the Nizam Shah in the hope that he would be able to induce Shah Jahan to make peace. Instead, Fath Khan opened secret negotiations with Shah Jahan, and at his instance, murdered Burhan Nizam Shah and put a puppet on the throne at Daulatabad. He also read the khutba and struck the sikka in the name of the Mughal emperor. As a reward, Fath Khan was taken in Mughal service, and the jagir around Poona, previously allotted to Shahji Bhonsale, was transferred to him. As a result, Shahji defected from the Mughal side. These events took place in 1632.

After the surrender of Fath Khan, Shah Jahan appointed Mahabat Khan as Mughal viceroy of the Deccan and himself returned to Agra. Mahabat Khan, faced with the combined opposition of Bijapur and the local Nizam Shahi nobles including Shahji, found himself in a very difficult situation. Parenda surrendered to Bijapur which made a strong bid for the fort of Daulatabad as well by offering a large



sum of money to Fath Khan for surrendering the fort. Elsewhere also, the Mughals found it difficult to hold on to their positions.

It will thus be seen that the Mughals and Bijapur were, in reality, engaged in a contest for dividing between themselves the prostrate body of Ahmadnagar. The Adil Shah sent a large army under Randaula Khan and Murari Pandit for the surrender of Daulatabad and for provisioning its garrison.

Shahji Bhonsale was also enrolled in Bijapur's service to harass the Mughals and to cut off their supplies. But the combined operations of the Bijapuri forces and Shahji were of no avail. Mahabat Khan closely invested Daulatabad and forced the garrison to surrender (1633). The Nizam Shah was sent to prison in Gwalior. This marked the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty. However, even this did not solve the problems facing the Mughals. Following the example of Malik Ambar, Shahji found a Nizam Shahi prince, and raised him up as ruler. The Adil Shah sent a force of 7,000 to 8,000 horsemen to aid Shahji, and induced many of the Nizam Shahi nobles to surrender their forts to Shahji. Many disbanded Nizam Shahi soldiers joined Shahji whose force swelled to 20,000 horses. With these he harassed the Mughals and took control of large portions of the Ahmadnagar state.

### ACCEPTANCE OF MUGHAL SUZERAINTY BY BIJAPUR AND GOLCONDA

Shah Jahan now decided to give personal attention to the problems of the Deccan. He realised that the crux of the situation was the attitude of Bijapur. He, therefore, deputed a large army to invade Bijapur, and also sent feelers to the Adil Shah, offering to revive the earlier accord of dividing the territory of Ahmadnagar between Bijapur and the Mughals.

The policy of the stick and the carrot and the advance of Shah Jahan to the Deccan brought about another change in Bijapur politics. The leaders of the anti-Mughal group, including Murari Pandit, were displaced and killed, and a new treaty or ahdanama was entered into with Shah Jahan. According to this treaty, the Adil Shah agreed to recognise Mughal suzerainty, to pay an indemnity of twenty lakhs of rupees, and not to interfere in the affairs of Golconda which was brought under Mughal protection. Any quarrel between Bijapur and Golconda was, in the future, to be referred to the Mughal emperor for his arbitration. The Adil Shah agreed to cooperate with the Mughals in reducing Shahji to submission and, if he agreed to join Bijapuri service, to depute him in the south, away from the Mughal frontier. In return for these, territory worth about 20 lakh hurts (about eighty lakh rupees) annually belonging to Ahmadnagar was ceded to Bijapur. Shah Jahan also sent to Adil Shah a solemn farman impressed with the mark of the emperor's palm that the terms of this treaty would be "as strong as the battlements of Alexander", and would never be violated.

Shah Jahan completed the settlement of the Deccan by entering into a treaty with Golconda as well. The ruler agreed to include the name of Shah Jahan in the khutba and to exclude the name of the Iranian emperor from it. The Qutb Shah was to be loyal to the emperor. The annual tribute of four lakh hurts which Golconda was previously paying to Bijapur was remitted. Instead, it was required to pay two lakh hurts annually to the Mughal emperor in return for his protection.

The treaties of 1636 with Bijapur and Golconda were statesmanlike. In effect, they enabled Shah Jahan to realise the ultimate objectives of Akbar. The suzerainty of the Mughal emperor was now accepted over the length and breadth of the country. The treaties helped to stabilise the situation in the Deccan, and held out hopes of a stable peace with the Mughals and of limiting further Mughal advance into the Deccan.

### SHAH JAHAN AND THE DECCAN

In the decade following the treaties of 1636, secure from further Mughal attacks from the north, Bijapur and Golconda overran the rich and fertile Karnataka area from the river Krishna to Tanjore and beyond. This area was divided into a number of petty principalities, many of them, such as the Nayaks of Tanjore, Jinji and Madurai owing nominal allegiance to the Rayal, the former ruler of Vijayanagar. A series of campaigns were conducted by Bijapur and Golconda against these states.

For some time, the Mughals welcomed this development. Apart from maintaining a benevolent neutrality, the Mughals helped by diplomatic means in resolving the differences and rivalry between the two Deccan states whenever they threatened to get out of hand. Diplomatic correspondence of the time shows that the Mughal emperor played a definite role in the agreement between Bijapur and Golconda in 1646 whereby the territories and the booty won by their armies in the South were to be divided by them in the proportion of two shares to Bijapur and one to Golconda. Clash between Bijapur and Golconda for control over Jinji and Karnataka led the Qurb Shah to solicit Mughal intervention again. Shah Jahan was asked to send amins to examine everything on the spot, and to enforce an agreement whereby Kamataka could be divided between the two, half and half. The Rayal of Vijayanagar, too, actively solicited and canvassed Mughal intervention in the affairs of the Deccan.

The Mughal attitude of benevolent neutrality towards the Deccan states began to gradually change after 1648. A clear index of this was provided by the Mughal attitude towards the arrest of Shahji Bhonsale by Adil Shah in 1649. By the accord of 1636, both Bijapur and the Mughals had agreed not to seduce each other's servants. Further, it had been specifically stipulated that the Mughals would not accord service to Shahji. If Adil Shah so desired, he could enroll Shahji in his service, but was to employ him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontier. However, in 1649, at the instance of prince Murad Bakhsh, a mansab of 5000/5000 was granted to Shahji, and Shivaji was invited to join "with his father and clansmen". This only makes sense if the Mughals were contemplating intervention in the Deccan, and hence wanted to win over powerful Maratha sardars to their side. The taking into employment of Mir Jumla later on was a continuation of this policy.

The Mughal attitude towards the Deccan states changed rapidly after this, culminating in the invasions of Golconda and Bijapur in 1656 and 1657. The chronic Mughal inability to manage the financial affairs of the Mughal Deccan, as is borne out by the angry exchange of letters between Shah Jahan and prince Aurangzeb when the latter was the Viceroy of the Deccan, and Shah Jahan's refusal to continue to meet the deficit from the treasuries of Malwa and Surat, was another factor in this change of attitude. Earlier, Shah Jahan had tried to force Bijapur to share a part of the booty it had captured from the Rayal of Vijayanagar "as a compensation for Mughal neutrality". The principle of compensation could not be confined to a sharing of treasure: the vast territories gained in the south by Bijapur and Golconda could be attributed to the benevolent neutrality of the Mughals. The situation was ripe for a Mughal demand to the Deccan states for territorial compensation. A dispute about the decline in the exchange rate between the rupee and the hurt, and the consequent obligation of Golconda enhancing the annual tribute in rupees was used as a pretext for war. In the case of Bijapur, the death of Muhammad Adil Shah in 1656, and the resulting confusion in Bijapur, as also arrears in payment of tribute and siding with Golconda in the recent war were used as an excuse to invade it. The Mughal decision to intervene in Golconda and Bijapur in 1656-7 was not a sudden one. As we have seen, events in the preceding decade had gradually prepared the ground for it.

There has been a considerable debate among historians about the aims and objectives of Shah Jahan, Dara and Aurangzeb in these wars. From the outset, Aurangzeb had wanted the annexation of the entire kingdom of Golconda, and had used all kinds of arguments to persuade Shah Jahan to order annexation. However, Shah Jahan's objectives were limited: he wanted to fleece Qutb Shah in the name of compensation. By the treaty, the Mughals also gained Ramgir district which was an added bonus. However, soon a controversy began whether Mir Jumla's jagir in Karnataka belonged to the Mughal emperor or to Qutb Shah. Aurangzeb, arguing that it was equal in wealth to the rest of the Golconda kingdom, had rejected Qutb Shah's offer of fifteen lakhs for being left in possession of Karnataka. He had sternly warned Qutb Shah that "Karnataka belongs to Mir Jumla and is a part of the Deccan. Banish from your mind all thoughts of keeping it...". Accordingly, a Mughal army under Shah Beg Khan, Qazi Muhammad Hashim and Krishna Rao had entered Karnataka. Since Qutb Shah had refused to give up possession, Shah Jahan's objectives, it seems, were still hazy, for he now instructed Aurangzeb to conquer Golconda after settling the affairs of Bijapur. As for Bijapur, Shah Jahan instructed Aurangzeb to annex, if possible, the whole of the kingdom; else to recover the old Ahmadnagar territory, and to spare

the rest for an indemnity of one and a half crores and the recognition of the Emperor's suzerainty, that is, the reading of khutba and sikka in his name.

The final agreements with these states fell short of the demands of full annexation put forward by Aurangzeb and apparently agreed to by Shah Jahan at first. Aurangzeb suspected that the change in the Emperor's attitude was at the instance of his arch rival, Dara. However, there is no conclusive proof about Dara's role in the matter. On balance, it would appear that Shah Jahan's objectives in the Deccan were still limited, and that he got alarmed when Aurangzeb tried to pursue a policy of all-out conquest. By the treaty of 1657, Bijapur was compelled to agree to surrender the Nizam Shahi areas ceded to it by the accord of 1636. This, and the demand on Golconda to cede to the Mughals as part of Mir Jumla's jagir the rich and fertile tract on the Coromondal, which had already become an important centre for the export of textiles and indigo, outstripping Gujarat, signified that the accord of 1636 was dead and buried. It also served notice that the ambitions of the Mughals in the Deccan were boundless. Thus, the conditions were created for a union of hearts between the Mughals and the Deccan states becoming "a psychological impossibility" (J.N. Sarkar).

Shah Jahan's action in once again throwing the Deccan into the melting pot, thus undoing what he had achieved in 1636 after such great efforts, may be considered of doubtful wisdom. By his action he placed on the agenda the outright annexation of the two Deccan states—something which preceding Mughal emperors and he himself had strenuously avoided. Thus, in a manner of speaking, it was Shah Jahan who created the dilemma which Aurangzeb was never able to resolve throughout his long reign—that the treaties of 1636 were dead, yet the outright annexation of the Deccan states! posed more problems than it solved.

The above conclusions call into question Shah Jahan's reputation for political sagacity which, in no small measure, he had earned by his skilful handling of the Deccan crisis earlier. During the later part of his reign, at any rate, Shah Jahan mishandled the Balkh campaign, while successive Qandahar campaigns failed to add to his prestige. But his biggest mistake was to reopen the Deccan question which, to all intents and purposes, he had so carefully settled in 1636.

## CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE DECCANI STATES

Like the Mughals, the Deccani rulers were also great patrons of culture, and followed a broad policy of toleration which helped to promote a composite culture.

Ali Adil Shah (d. 1580) loved to hold discussions with Hindu and Muslim saints and was called a Sufi. He invited Catholic missionaries to his court, even before Akbar had done so. He had an excellent library to which he appointed the well-known Sanskrit scholar, Waman Pandit. Patronage of Sanskrit and Marathi were continued by his successors. His immediate successor, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627), ascended the throne at the age of nine. He was very solicitous of the poor, and had the title of "abla baba", or "Friend of the Poor". He was deeply interested in music, and composed a book called Kitab-i-Nauras in which songs were set to various musical modes or ragas. He built a new capital, Nauraspur, in which a large number of musicians were invited to settle. In his songs, he freely invoked the goddess of music and learning, Saraswati. Due to his broad approach he came to be called "Jagat Guru". He accorded patronage to all, including Hindu saints and temples. This included grants to Pandharpur, the centre of the worship of Vitobha, which became the centre of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. The broad, tolerant policy followed by Ibrahim Adil Shah II was continued under his successors. The important role played by Maratha families in the service of the Ahmadnagar state has already been mentioned.

The Qutb Shahs, too, utilised the services of both Hindus and Muslims for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Under Ibrahim Qutb Shah (d. 1580), Murahari Rao rose to the position of Peshwa in the kingdom, a position which was second only to that of Mir Jumla or wazir. The Nayakwaris, who formed the military-cum-landed elements, had been a power in the kingdom ever since the foundation of the dynasty. From 1672 till its absorption by the Mughals in 1687, the administrative and military affairs of the state were dominated by the brothers, Madanna and Akkhanna.



Golconda was the intellectual resort of literary men. Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580-1611) who was a contemporary of Akbar, was very fond of literature and architecture. The Sultan was not only a great patron of art and literature but was a poet of no mean order. He wrote in Dakhini Urdu, Persian and Telugu and has left an extensive diwan or collection of poems. He was the first to introduce a secular note in poetry. Apart from the praise of God and the Prophet, he wrote about nature, love, and the social life of his times. According to some modern writers, "The Telugu people considered the kingdom of Golconda their own, and called Ibrahim (Qutb Shah) "Malkibharam" out of their respect for him". Later, the Qutb Shahi kings issued bi-lingual grants in Persian and Telugu.

The growth of Urdu in its Dakhini form was a significant development during the period. The successors of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and many others poets and writers of the time adopted Urdu as a literary language. In addition to Persian, these writers drew on Hindi and Telugu for forms, idioms and themes as well as vocabulary. Urdu was patronized at the Bijapuri court also. The poet laureate, Nusrati, who flourished during the middle of the seventeenth century wrote a romantic tale about Prince Manohar, ruler of Kanak Nagar, and Madhu Malati. From the Deccan, Urdu came to north India in the eighteenth century.

Recent research shows that Deccan painting started about 1560, at the same time as Mughal painting. Like the Mughals, the Deccan painters absorbed both Persian painting, and the earlier forms of painting during the Sultanat/Bahmani period, as well as the indigenous traditions of painting. Of all the schools of Deccan painting, Bijapuri painting is considered the best. The great name earned by Bijapuri painting is mainly due to the patronage and personality of Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627). This was the period when the best Dakhani works were produced at all the three Deccan states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda. "Literary evidence clearly shows that Ibrahim Adil Shah was a person of extremely cultured and artistic tastes, a musician and a poet and probably a painter, and that he always took interest to secure the best possible talent to his court" (Jagdish Mittal).

In the field of architecture, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah constructed many buildings, the most famous of which is the Char Minar. Completed in 1591-92, it stood at the centre of the new city of Hyderabad founded by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah. It has four lofty arches, facing the four directions. Its chief beauty are the four minarets which are four-storeyed and are 48 metres high. The double screen of arches has fine carvings. The rulers of Bijapur consistently maintained a high standard and an impeccable taste in architecture. The most impressive Bijapuri buildings of the period are the Ibrahim Rauza and the Gol Gumbaz. The former was a mausoleum for Ibrahim Adil Shah and shows the style at its best. The Gol Gumbaz which was built in 1660 has the largest single dome ever constructed. All its proportions are harmonious, the large dome being balanced by tall, tapering minarets at the corner. It is said that a whisper at one side of the huge main room can be heard clearly at the other end.

It will thus be seen that the Deccani states not only maintained fine standards of communal harmony, but also contributed in the fields of music, literature, painting and architecture.



# UNIT-XXII

## FOREIGN POLICY OF THE MUGHALS

### INTRODUCTION

The existence during the 16th century of three powerful empires in Central and West Asia—the Uzbek, the Safavid and the Ottoman, led to the growth of a definite pattern of diplomatic and political relations between these powers and the Mughals. The normal diplomatic mode was the exchange of missions or embassies. The status of the mission depended largely on the status of the ambassadors, called elchi or safir, specially his proximity to the ruler. The ambassadors have been divided into two classes, the extraordinary and the ordinary. An extraordinary ambassador could be a leading cleric or a high noble, or even somebody related to the royal family. The ambassador invariably carried a letter by his master to the ruler of the host country. The letter often recounted recent victories attained by his master, or important developments, with expressions of friendship or promises of support, or requests for help, or warning etc. The titles used for the host ruler, whether he was to be addressed as an equal, or superior, or inferior, or elder or younger in age were important considerations, and a lot of ingenuity was used in drafting the letters.

The missions led by important persons were grand affairs, consisting sometimes of hundreds of retainers, slaves etc., as well as presents which included products and rarities of the country. Once entering the country to which the mission had been despatched, its expenses and safety became the responsibility of the host country. Giving leave to an ambassador designate, and his meeting with the sovereign of the host country were special occasions, and were duly reported. The presents brought by the ambassador were also carefully examined. Sometimes the leader of the mission had to wait a long time before he was received by the host ruler. Nor was there any fixed time for the mission to return home. Sometimes, the missions were detained for years before given leave to return. In the meanwhile, the leader of the mission kept in constant touch with his own ruler.

Thus, the missions were important means of obtaining information about the conditions prevailing in the country to which the mission had been sent. Reports of the leader of the mission were often supplemented by princes, nobles, even members of the royal family who corresponded with their counter parts. But this would be done only in the case of special circumstances, and with countries considered close.

The return embassy would sometimes include a mission from the recipient country. Thus, while there were no permanent ambassadors, the exchange of embassies led to a flow of information on the basis of which policy could be formulated.

Although the Uzbeks and the Timurids, who began to be called Mughals in India, belonged to the same racial stock and spoke the same language, they came from different tribal groups which had contended for the control of Transoxiana and its neighbouring areas. Better internal cohesion enabled the Uzbeks to push Babur out of Samarqand and Farghana, and to gradually over-run all the Timurid principalities upto Balkh and Badakhshan. The Mughals often declared the intention of reoccupying their homelands, but found few opportunities of translating this into practice. Hence, it is difficult to agree with the contention of a modern historian, Abdul Rahim, that "Babur brought to India the unfulfilled ambition of conquering ancestral lands; and this ambition fired the imagination of all his descendents and loomed large in the course of their foreign policy." As we shall see, the foreign policy of the Mughals was essentially Indo-Centric, and was concerned above all with India's safety and security.

The Uzbeks clashed with the Safavids for the possession of Khurasan (eastern Iran). The Safavids not only claimed Khurasan, but cast covetous eyes on Transoxiana which had been an Iranian province before the rise of the Turks. The Khurasan plateau and Transoxiana controlled the network of roads

leading south to India, east to China, north to Russia, and west to the Ottoman world and the Mediterranean. For this reason it had always been a prize desired by powerful rulers of the area. It was natural for the Safavids and the Mughals to ally against the Uzbek danger especially as there were no frontier disputes between them, with the exception of Qandahar. The Uzbeks tried to exploit the sectarian differences with the Safavid rulers of Iran who had ruthlessly persecuted the Sunnis. Both the Uzbek and the Mughal rulers were Sunnis. But the Mughals were too broad-minded to be swayed by sectarian differences. Annoyed at the alliance of the Mughals with a Shia power, Iran, the Uzbeks occasionally stirred up the fanatic Afghan and Baluchi tribesmen living in the north-west frontier tracts between Peshawar and Kabul.

The most powerful empire in West Asia at the time was that of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman or the Usmanli Turks, so called after the name of their first ruler, Usman (d. 1326), had overrun Asia Minor and eastern Europe. A new phase of Ottoman expansion had begun under Mehmet II who captured Constantinople (1455), and made the eastern Mediterranean a Turkish lake. The Ottomans reached their apogee under Selim the Grim, and Sulaiman the Magnificent. Selim captured Syria and Egypt which led the Sharif of Mecca to cede the overlordship of Mecca and Madina to the Ottoman Sultan. The shadowy Caliph at Cairo granted them the title of "Sultan of Rum", and later they assumed the title of Padshah-i-Islam, and of Khalifa. But the title of Khalifa or Caliph had ceased to be of much meaning by this time, being assumed by any Muslim ruler after a striking success.

Apart from their European ambitions, the Ottomans wanted first, to control the Portuguese who were trying to divert spice and other trade from Egypt and the Levant, and second, to deal with the Safavids who were threatening eastern Anatolia by sending hundreds of preachers there to convert the Turks to Shi-ism. The Ottomans and the Safavids also clashed for control over Baghdad and Basra, and the areas of north Iran, around Erivan and the silk-producing areas.

After a series of clashes, in 1514 Selim defeated the Safavid ruler, Shah Ismail, at Chaldiran, and for some time even occupied the capital, Tabriz. Although the Ottomans were not able to destroy the power of the Safavids, they occupied Baghdad and Basra, and even the Yemen coast in Arabia. They built navies both at Yemen and Basra in order to defeat the Portuguese who were trying to dominate both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in order to control all oriental trade to Europe.

The Ottoman threat from the west made the Persians (Iranis) keen to befriend the Mughals, particularly when they had to face an aggressive Uzbek power in the east. The Mughals refused to be drawn into a tripartite Ottoman-Mughal-Uzbek alliance against the Persians as it would have upset the Asian balance of power, and left them alone to face the might of the Uzbeks. Alliance with Iran was also helpful for promoting trade with Central Asia. If the Mughals had built a strong navy, they might, perhaps, have sought a closer alliance with Turkey which was also a naval power and was engaged in a struggle against the navies of the European powers in the Mediterranean. As it was, the Mughals were chary of a closer relationship with Turkey because they were keen to shore up Iran against Turkey. Also, they resented the claim to superiority made by the Turkish Sultan as successor to the Caliph of Baghdad.

There were some of the factors which shaped the foreign policy of the Mughals. The development of trade was another important factor which is sometimes ignored.

## AKBAR AND THE UZBEKS

In 1511, following the defeat of the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, by the Safavids, Babur had briefly regained Samarqand. Although Babur had to leave the city after the Uzbeks had inflicted a sharp defeat on the Persian monarch, the help extended to him by the Persian monarch established a tradition of friendship between the Mughals and the Safavids. Later, Humayun, too, received help from the Safavid monarch, Shah Tahmasp, when he had sought refuge at his court after being ousted from India by Sher Shah.

The territorial power of the Uzbeks grew rapidly in the seventies under Abdullah Khan Uzbek. In 1572-73, Abdullah Khan Uzbek seized Balkh which, along with Badakhshan, had served as a kind of buffer

between the Mughals and the Uzbeks. Soon after the conquest of Balkh, Abdullah Khan sent an envoy to Akbar. The nature of the proposals sent through the envoy are not revealed, but from later evidence it seems that they were directed against Iran. Akbar received the envoy coldly, and in order to discourage further diplomatic exchanges, merely sent a reply through the envoy. According to Abul Fazl, this was because Akbar was then meditating the conquest of Turan. However, since Afghanistan was then under Mirza Hakim, such as enterprise appears unlikely.

In 1577, Abdullah Khan sent a second embassy to Akbar, proposing to partition Iran. After the death of Shah Tahmasp (1576), Iran was passing through a phase of anarchy and disorder.

Abdullah Uzbek urged that "Akbar should lead an expedition from India to Iran in order that they may with united efforts release Iraq, Khurasan and Fars from the innovators (Shias)". Akbar was not moved by this appeal to sectarian narrowness. A strong Iran was essential to keep the restless Uzbeks in their place. At the same time, Akbar had no desire to get embroiled with the Uzbeks, unless they directly threatened Kabul or the Indian possessions. This was the key to Akbar's foreign policy. Abdullah Uzbek also approached the Ottoman sultan and proposed a tripartite alliance of Sunni powers against Iran. As if in reply to this, Akbar sent a return embassy to Abdullah Uzbek in which it was pointed out that differences in law and religion could not be regarded as sufficient ground for conquest. Regarding difficulties faced by pilgrims to Mecca while traversing Iran, he pointed out that with the conquest of Gujarat, a new route had been opened.

Abdullah Uzbek had suggested to Akbar the recovery of Qandahar which had once been a Timurid possession. Akbar replied that the Persian rulers (i.e. the Mirzas who were ruling Qandahar) had been sending submissive embassies and had been mindful of maintaining security of roads for the merchants—a matter to which Akbar gave prime importance. Akbar grandly declared that if the Mirzas departed from this norm, Mughal armies could take possession of Qandahar without any difficulty. Akbar parried Abdullah's plea for a holy war against the "heretical" Safavids by referring to his wars against infidels in India, and his intended crusade against the firangis (i.e. Portuguese). He also emphasised the old friendship with Iran, and admonished Abdullah Khan Uzbek for making insulting references to the Safavids and said they were Saiyids and sovereigns.

Akbar's growing interest in Central Asian affairs was reflected in his giving refuge at his court to the Timurid prince, Mirza Sulaiman, who had been ousted from Badakhshan by his grandson. Abul Fazl grandiloquently says that the Khyber pass was made fit for wheeled traffic, and that due to fear of the Mughals, the gates of Balkh were usually kept closed! In order to forestall a Mughal invasion of Badakhshan, Abdullah Uzbek fomented trouble among the tribesmen of the north-west frontier through his agent, Jalala, who was a religious fanatic. The situation became so serious that Akbar had to move to Attock. It was during these operations that Akbar lost one of his best friends, Raja Birbal.

In 1583, Abdullah Khan captured Balkh from the Timurid, Shahrukh Mirza, and followed it up by the conquest of Badakhshan in 1585. Both Mirza Sulaiman and his grandson sought refuge at Akbar's court and were given suitable mansabs. Meanwhile, with the death of his half-brother, Mirza Hakim (1585), Akbar annexed Kabul to his dominions. Thus, the Mughal and the Uzbek frontiers ran side by side. In 1586, Abdullah Khan Uzbek sent another embassy which Akbar received while he was at Attack on the river Indus. Akbar's continued presence so near the frontier had made Abdullah Uzbek uneasy. But the real motive of Abdullah Uzbek's embassy, it appears, was to obtain Akbar's neutrality in his projected campaign in Khurasan against the Safavids. He, therefore, revived the earlier proposal for a joint campaign against the Safavid power, and for opening the way for pilgrims to Mecca.

Following the death of Shah Tahmasp (1576), and the political chaos in Persia, the Ottoman Sultan had invaded northern Iran, while the Uzbeks were threatening Herat in Khurasan. Akbar sent a long letter in reply to Abdullah Uzbek's proposal. He disapproved the Turkish action, and proposed to despatch an army to Iran under one of the royal princes to help. This was a thinly veiled treat of intervention to Abdullah Uzbek, although he was asked to cooperate in the work and hope was expressed of their meeting in



Iran. According to some modern scholars, "Akbar's proposal disguised a plan to accommodate rival interests in Persia, even though the suggestion is cast in the form of a proposed to help that country." However, Akbar made no serious preparations to back up his threat of a campaign in Iran. Also, Abdullah Uzbek had invaded Khurasan even before Akbar's letter reached him, and captured most of the areas he claimed. In this situation, it appeared best to Akbar to come to terms with the Uzbek chief. Hence, one of his agents, Hakim Human, was sent to Abdullah Khan Uzbek with a letter and a verbal message. It seems that an arrangement was made defining the Hindukush as the boundary between the two. It implied the Mughals giving up their interest in Badakhshan and Balkh which had been ruled by Timuridprinces till 1585. But it also implied the Uzbeks not claiming Kabul and Qandahar. Though neither party gave up its claims completely, the agreement gave the Mughals a defensible frontier on the Hindukush. Akbar completed his objective of establishing a scientific defensible frontier by acquiring Qandahar in 1595.

Meanwhile, since 1586, Akbar had stayed at Lahore in order to watch the situation. He left for Agra only after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. After the death of Abdullah, the Uzbeks broke up into warring principalities, and ceased to be a threat to the Mughals till a new situation arose towards the end of Jahangir's reign.

### THE QUESTION OF QANDAHAR AND RELATIONS WITH IRAN

The dread of Uzbek power was the most potent factor which brought the Safavids and the Mughals together, despite the Uzbek attempt to raise anti-Shia sentiments against Iran, and the Mughal dislike of the intolerant policies adopted by the Safavid rulers. The only trouble spot between the two was Qandahar the possession of which was claimed by both on strategic and economic grounds, as well as on considerations of sentiment and prestige. Qandahar had been a part of the Timurid empire and had been ruled over by Babur's cousins, the rulers of Herat, till they were ousted by the Uzbeks in 1507. Babur held Qandahar briefly in 1507. But when the Safavids defeated the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, in 1511, and captured Herat and the rest of Khurasan, they laid claim to Qandahar also. For the next decade and a half, however, Qandahar remained in the hands of semi-independent governors who tendered their allegiance to the Mughals or to the Safavids as it suited their convenience.

Strategically, Qandahar was vital for the defence of Kabul. The fort of Qandahar was considered to be one of the strongest forts in the region, and was well provided with water. Situated at the junction of roads leading to Kabul and Herat, Qandahar dominated the whole southern Afghanistan, and occupied a position of immense strategic importance. A modern writer has observed, "The Kabul-Ghazni-Qandahar line represented a strategic and logical frontier; beyond Kabul and Khaibar, there was no natural line of defence. Moreover, the possession of Qandahar made it easier to control the Afghan and Baluch tribes." After the conquest of Sindh and Baluchistan by Akbar, the strategic and economic importance of Qandahar for the Mughals increased. Qandahar was a rich and fertile province and was the hub of the movement of men and goods between India and Central Asia. The trade from Central Asia to Multan via Qandahar, and then down the river Indus to the sea steadily gained in importance, because the roads across Iran were frequently disturbed due to wars and internal commotions. Akbar wanted to promote trade on this route, and pointed out to Abdullah Uzbek that it was an alternative route for pilgrims and the goods traffic to Mecca. Taking all these factors into account, it would appear that Qandahar was not as important to the Persians as to the Mughals. For Iran, Qandahar was "more of an outpost, an important one no doubt, rather than a vital bastion in a defence system".

In the early phase, however, the dispute over Qandahar was not allowed to affect good relations between the two countries. Qandahar came under Babur's control in 1522 when the Uzbeks were threatening Khurasan once again. No serious objection to the Mughal conquest of Qandahar was raised by the Persians in view of this situation. However, when Humayun sought shelter at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the Iranian monarch agreed to help him provided he transferred Qandahar to Iran after its conquest from his half-brother, Kamran. Humayun had little choice but to agree. But after its conquest, Humayun found excuses to keep it under his control. In fact, Qandahar was his base of operations against Kamran at Kabul.



Shah Tahmasp captured Qandahar taking advantage of the confusion following Humayun's death. Akbar made no effort to regain it till the Uzbeks under Abdullah Uzbek posed a renewed threat to Iran and to the Mughals. The Mughal conquest of Qandahar (1595) was not a part of an agreement between Akbar and the Uzbeks to partition the Persian empire as we have argued. It was more to establish a viable defensive line in the north-west against a possible Uzbek invasion, since Khurasan had passed under Uzbek control by that time, and Qandahar was cut off from Persia. In fact, the Uzbeks had been trying to get hold of Qandahar. They had already occupied Zamindawar near Qandahar, and attempted to seduce the Mirzas who were in possession of Qandahar. Akbar had deputed Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan for the conquest of Qandahar as early as 1591, but had also told him to use the golden key rather than the sword. After the Mirzas surrendered Qandahar to the Mughals, the Mughals also ousted the Uzbeks from Zamindawar and Garmsir.

Relations between Iran and the Mughals continued to be cordial despite the Mughal conquest of Qandahar by Akbar. For the Persians, the Mughal control of Qandahar was a lesser evil since its passing into the hands of the Uzbeks would have made their position in Khurasan more firm. Thus, Shah Abbas raised no objection to Akbar's facile explanation that he had acted at Qandahar "as the Mirzas there showed slackness in assisting the sublime dynasty (Safavids).... (and)) did not at all show marks of concord and unanimity."

The 1598, following the death of Abdullah Uzbek, Shah Abbas recovered Khurasan. In a letter to Akbar announcing his great victory, the Shah observed that all the lost parts of his empire had been recovered, except Qandahar, and he hoped that Akbar would not mind returning the fort to him. In the confusion following prince Salim's revolt, and Shah Abbas's stronger position in Iran, the Persians made two abortive attempts at Qandahar. This was followed by a year's siege of Qandahar following Akbar's death, but the siege was lifted following the arrival of Mughal reinforcements. As a modern historian, Riazul Islam, observes, these attempts "should be regarded as manifestations of a steadfast policy of recovering Qandahar." However, Shah Abbas realized that time was not yet ripe for such an attempt. He was also keen to maintain good relations with Jahangir. He repudiated the attack on Qandahar, and sent a series of lavish embassies to Jahangir. In 1611, he sent an embassy to condole the death of Akbar, and congratulate his "brother" Jahangir, accompanied with presents of Gilan horses, carpets, silks and other commodities of Persia. The Shah also sent a letter which Jahangir says, "expressed the greatest friendship and omitted no point of regard and concord." Jahangir sent a return embassy under Khan Alam, a Chaghtai Mughal whose family had served under the Timurids since the time of Timur. He was accompanied by about 1200 people, including a bodyguard and 200 followers and a large number of Indian animals and their keepers. When he reached Qazvin, all the big nobles went outside the city to receive him. The Shah showed special favours to him, embraced him and called him "brother".

While both the monarchs tried to impress each other by lavish displays, the embassies also promoted trade between the two countries, so much so that Jahangir appointed a person close to him, Muhammed Hussain Chalabi, as a royal trade commissioner. Due to the good relations between the two countries, and security of life and property, a large number of traders, who were called Multanis and many of whom were Hindus and Jains, settled in the major cities of Iran such as Yezd, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran, Gilan etc. While their exact numbers cannot be determined, estimates of the Indian traders living in the capital city, Isfahan, vary between one thousand and twelve thousand. According to an English traveller, Fryer, the Hindus had a temple and a priest where they worshipped their idols and celebrated their festivals. The Iranian ruler had granted them religious toleration so that they could publicly conduct their religious rituals and ceremonies.

Shah Abbas also consolidated the old friendship between the Safavids and the Deccani rulers, so much so that some of the Decanri rulers included the name of the Safavid monarch in the khutba. The Mughals did not like it and took steps against it. However, Safavid interests in the Deccan remained limited, and did not become a basis of misunderstanding with the Mughals.

Was the goodwill displayed by the Safavid monarch only a pretence, designed to lull Jahangir into a false sense of security? It would be uncharitable to think so. Perhaps neither fully understood the depth of sentiment on the other side regarding Qandahar. In 1620, the Persian envoy, Zambil Beg, raised the question of Qandahar with Jahangir, but Jahangir gave no attention to it. Subsequent envoys also raised the question, but without success. Jahangir did not anticipate that on account of his close friendship with him. Shah Abbas would actually attack Qandahar. Jahangir forgot that between nations, friendship is not a substitute for the defence of what may be considered the vital interests of a nation. According to Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri, when the Persians attacked in 1622, there were only 3000 Mughal troops in the fort.<sup>1</sup> The force was small, but could have held out for a considerable period under an able and energetic commander.

Although Shah Abbas tried to erase the bitterness over the loss of Qandahar by sending a lavish embassy to Jahangir, and offered facile explanations which were accepted by Jahangir formally, the cordiality which had marked the Mughal relations with Iran came to an end, and an era of diplomatic preparations aimed at Iran now began. Far-reaching changes had taken place in Central Asian politics after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. The Uzbek empire had disintegrated due to internecine tribal feuds, and Persia had taken advantage of the situation to recover Khurasan. But it suffered a defeat near Balkh when it tried to advance further. The Uzbek power was still considerable, and not to be trifled with.

After some time, Imam Quli emerged as the independent ruler of Bukhara and Balkh. Although the Uzbeks were no longer in a position to challenge Shah Abbas for the control of Khurasan, they were not averse to making marauding raids into Afghanistan and on Kabul. The Persian capture of Qandahar (1622) made the Uzbeks uneasy. Shortly after the capture of Qandahar, Shah Abbas turned towards the west and recaptured Baghdad from the Turks. Hence, the earlier idea of an alliance of the three Sunni powers—the Uzbeks, the Mughals and the Ottomans against Iran was revived and a series of embassies were exchanged between Jahangir and the Uzbeks for finalising an accord. These efforts continued under Shah Jahan after the death of Jahangir. In 1627, the Uzbek leader, Imam Quli, grandiloquently thanked Jahangir for the help given by Akbar to Abdullah Khan Uzbek in Khurasan. But for fear of Shah Abbas, he had also kept the Persian ruler informed of the Mughal intrigues against Persia. There were also a series of Uzbek attacks on Kabul, both before and after the accession of Shah Jahan. In the diplomatic exchanges between Shah Jahan and Imam Quli, much emphasis was laid on Sunni solidarity against Shi-ite Persia. As a result of these diplomatic exchanges, some understanding of a common front against Persia was arrived at between Shah Jahan and the two Khans, Imam Quli and his brother, Nazr Muhammad. In 1636, Shah Jahan even wrote to the Ottoman Sultan, Murad IV, of his resolve to recover Qandahar, and proposed a three sided attack on Persia from India, Turan and Turkey. However, the Uzbeks could not be counted upon for any help against Persia. The Ottomans were too far away to be effective. Moreover, they took a superior attitude which was not acceptable to the Mughals. Hence, Shah Jahan took recourse to diplomacy. After being free of Deccan affairs, Shah Jahan induced Ali Mardan Khan, the Persian governor of Qandahar, to defect to the side of the Mughals (1638). Ali Mardan's defection was due to the blood-thirsty nature of the new Persian ruler, Shah Shafi, who had succeeded Shah Abbas in 1629. However, it may be noted that as in the case of Shah Abbas during the reign of Jahangir, Shah Jahan continued to send cordial embassies to the Persian Shah, expressing the hope that recent events would not cloud mutual relations. He even offered to pay to the Iranian Shah every year a sum equal to the revenues of Qandahar! But the question was not of money, and Shah Shafi was determined to recover the fort. In 1639, he made a pact with the Ottomans, with Baghdad as the price, and soon ordered elaborate preparations for an expedition to Qandahar. To counter this threat, Shah Jahan moved to Kabul, and entrusted Dara with a large park of artillery to defend Qandahar. But to Dara's good fortune, although after two years preparation Shah Shafi had moved out in 1642 for the conquest of Qandahar, he fell ill on the way and died. Persia was plunged into chaos again, and for the time being, the threat from the side of Persia ended, leaving Shah Jahan to pursue other ambitions.

## SHAH JAHAN'S BALKH CAMPAIGN

The Balkh campaign of Shah Jahan (1646) is often considered to be the high water mark of Mughal foreign policy. But its failure is also portrayed sometimes as the beginning of Mughal military decline. The expedition should however, be seen in the context of Mughal relations with Turan after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek (1598), and their over-all foreign policy.

As we have seen, after some confusion following the death of Abdullah Uzbek (1598), Imam Quli who belonged to a different branch than the Shaibanids, was proclaimed the ruler of Balkh and Bukhara (1611). However, in a fit of generosity which he regretted later, Imam Quli assigned Balkh and Badakhshan to his younger brother, Nazr Muhammad, and kept Bukhara under his own control. In course of time, Nazr Muhammad became virtually an independent ruler of these two territories. This division of the Uzbek Khanate suited the Mughals, although for a long time, after Nazr Muhammad's accession, there was hardly any diplomatic contact between the Uzbeks and the Mughals. Mughal relations with Iran were very cordial during this time. But we see no attempt on the part of Jahangir to try to fulfil the oft declared objective of recovering his homelands.

As the Safavid power grew, the Uzbeks became apprehensive of Persian intentions. In 1621, Imam Quli's mother sent an embassy to Nur Jahan with a letter of good-will and some rare products of Central Asia as a gift. Nur Jahan sent a return embassy with some presents. This led to the formal exchange of embassies between Imam Quli and Jahangir.

After the Persian conquest of Qandahar (1622), and confusion in the Mughal empire following the rebellion of Shah Jahan and the failing health of Jahangir, the Uzbeks changed their attitude towards the Mughals. Imam Quli sent an embassy to the Persian Shah to befriend him. Simultaneously, Nazr Muhammad resumed attempts to capture Kabul. Yalingtosh, a leading commander of Nazr Muhammad, raided Kabul, but suffered a sharp defeat at the hands of the Mughals who had a strong artillery at their command. Thereafter, Yalingtosh tried to create disaffection among the Hazaras and the Afghans in the north-west of Afghanistan. He himself marched on Ghazni. Both the attempts failed. Convinced that Kabul was too well defended, the Uzbeks changed their stand again. They sent professions of friendship which were intended as an apology for Yalingtosh's conduct. In fact, Imam Quli proposed a joint expedition against Persia in Khurasan so that it could be divided between the two parties. Apparently, it was not a serious proposal, but more to emphasise good relations between the two. Anyhow, Jahangir did not take the proposal seriously. Shortly afterwards, he died.

In 1628, following the death of Jahangir, Nazr Muhammad led a third attack on Kabul. He occupied the city and invested the fort. However, the Mughals rushed reinforcements, and when the Mughal forces reached near, Nazr Muhammad beat a hasty retreat. As a retaliation, the Mughals occupied Bamiyan. Simultaneously, Shah Jahan sent an envoy to Imam Quli to reaffirm friendship, thus isolating Nazr Muhammad.

While good relations with Imam Quli continued, Nazr Muhammad sent an embassy only in 1633, belatedly congratulating Shah Jahan for his accession. During the next six years, there was a frequent exchange of envoys between the two courts and, as we have noted, the idea of a tripartite, Uzbek-Mughal-Ottoman pact against the Shi-ite Safavids was sought to be revived. But Shah Jahan had little confidence in Uzbek promises. Nor was he prepared to depart from a friendly pro-Iran policy. Acting alone, in 1638, he recovered Qandahar by winning over Murshid Quli Khan, thus gaining the services of a competent general and engineer.

In 1639, Imam Quli became blind. Nazr Muhammad considered it a good opportunity to bring the entire Uzbek state under his control. After some fighting, Imam Quli was forced to flee and to take refuge in Iran. From Iran he proceeded to Mecca. Thus, the Uzbek Khanate was united under Nazr Muhammad. Nazr Muhammad proved to be an ambitious and despotic ruler. He tried to tone up the administration by strict means, and resumed the rent-free lands of many religious divines. He also embarked on an expansionist policy, and tried to conquer Khwarizm.



While he was busy in the Khwarizm campaign, a rebellion broke out at Tashkent. His son, Abdul Aziz, was sent to deal with the rebels, but he joined them, and was proclaimed ruler at Bukhara. Nazr Muhammad retreated to Balkh, his last stronghold. But he was threatened there also by his son. Nazr Muhammad now appealed to Shah Jahan for help. This was in 1645. Shah Jahan accepted the appeal with alacrity. He moved from Lahore to Kabul, and deputed a large army under prince Murad to help Nazr Muhammad. The army which consisted of 50,000 horse and 10,000 footmen including musketeers, rocketeers and gunners, and a contingent of Rajputs, left Kabul in the middle of 1646. Shah Jahan had carefully instructed prince Murad to treat Nazr Muhammad with great consideration and to restore Balkh to him if he behaved with modesty and submission. Further, if Nazr Muhammad expressed a desire to regain Samarqand and Bukhara, the prince was to do everything to help him. Obviously, Shah Jahan wanted a friendly ruler at Balkh and Bukhara who would look to the Mughals for help and support. But Murad's impetuosity ruined the plan. He marched on Balkh without waiting for instructions from Nazr Muhammad, ordered his men to enter the fort of Balkh in which Nazr Muhammad was residing, and curtly asked him to wait on him personally. Uncertain of the prince's intentions, Nazr Muhammad fled. The Mughals were forced to occupy Balkh, and hold it in the face of a sullen and hostile population. Nor was an alternative to Nazr Muhammad easily available. Abdul Aziz, son of Nazr Muhammad, raised the Uzbek tribes against the Mughals in Trans-Oxiana, and mustered an army of 120,000 men across the river Oxus. Meanwhile, prince Murad, who had been pining for home, asked permission to return. According to the contemporary historian, Lahori, "many of the amirs and mansabdars who were with the prince concurred in this unreasonable desire. Natural love of home, a preference for the ways and customs of Hindustan, a dislike of the people and manners of Balkh, and the rigours of the climate, all conduced to this desire". Shah Jahan was exceedingly angry and punished Murad by depriving him for some time of his mansab and his jagir of Multan. The wazir, Sadullah Khan, was sent to Balkh to deal with administrative affairs. But even he could not change the attitude of the Mughal and Rajput nobles. To deal with the military situation, Shah Jahan deputed Aurangzeb along with Amir-ul-Umara Ali Mardan Khan.

Aurangzeb made no effort to cross the Oxus, or even to defend it against the forces of Abdul Aziz massed on the other side of the river. The river Oxus was not a defensible line since it was easily fordable around Balkh. Hence, Aurangzeb placed strong pickets at strategic points, and kept the main forces, including the artillery, under him so that it could march quickly to any threatened point. Thus, the Mughals were well positioned. Abdul Aziz crossed the Oxus, and moved towards Balkh, but found himself face to face with a strong army under Aurangzeb. In a running battle, unable to face the Mughals artillery, the Uzbeks were routed outside the gates of Balkh (1647). The Uzbek forces just melted away, leaving Abdul Aziz with hardly any army.

The victory at Balkh and the dispersal of the Uzbek forces was a wonderful opportunity for Shah Jahan to invade Samarqand and Bukhara, if he had so desired. Earlier, in a letter to Shah Abbas II, Shah Jahan had said that the victory at Balkh was a prelude to the conquest of Samarqand and Bukhara, and the Shah had also been requested to allow Nazr Muhammad to proceed to Mecca so that he no longer remained a thorn in the side of the Mughals at Balkh. In an effort to persuade prince Murad to stay on at Balkh, Shah Jahan had also promised to appoint him viceroy of Samarqand and Bukhara. But it seems that in the face of the hostile attitude of the local population, the difficulty of dealing with roving Uzbek bands, and the reluctance of the Mughal and Rajput noble to stay on at Balkh, Shah Jahan reverted to his earlier policy of seeking a friendly ruler at Balkh. Both Abdul Aziz from Bukhara, and Nazr Muhammad who had stayed on in Persia, now made overtures to Shah Jahan for the restoration of the kingdom. After careful consideration, Shah Jahan decided in favour of Nazr Muhammad. But Nazr Muhammad was first asked to make an apology and humble submission to prince Aurangzeb. This was a mistake since the proud Uzbek ruler was unlikely to demean himself in this way, particularly when he knew that it was impossible for the Mughals to hold on to Balkh for any length of time. After waiting vainly for Nazr Muhammad to appear personally, the Mughals left Balkh in October 1647 since winter was fast approaching and there were no supplies in Balkh. The retreat nearly turned into a rout with hostile bands of Uzbeks hovering around. Though the Mughals suffered grievous losses, the firmness of Aurangzeb prevented a disaster.



The Balkh campaign of Shah Jahan has led to considerable controversy among modern historians. From the foregoing account, it should be clear that Shah Jahan was not attempting to fix the Mughal frontier on the so-called “scientific line”, the Amu Darya (the Oxus). The Amu Darya, as we have seen, was hardly a defensible line. Although Shah Jahan toyed with the idea of invading Samarqand and Bukhara, and recovering the Mughal “homelands”, it was never made a serious enterprise. Nor was the Balkh campaign motivated by a desire for additional territory. Although the area around Balkh Was productive, Badakhshan was mountainous with narrow defiles which were difficult to protect. Nor did the two have sufficient revenue - yielding resources to attract the Mughals. According to Lahori, the resources of Badakhshan were not sufficient for the salary of even one Mughal grandee!

Contemporary Mughal historians have sought to justify Shah Jahan’s Balkh campaign on the ground of the danger posed to Kabul and Ghazni by the Uzbeks earlier, and to punish Nazr Muhammad for his “audacity” in attacking Imperial territories i.e. Kabul. It was also argued that Shah Jahan was motivated by the desire of protecting the people of Balkh and Badakhshan from the nomadic tribe of Almans who had plundered the territory on behalf of Abdul Aziz. Elsewhere the Uzbeks are called tyrants and sinners who had desecrated the places of worship.

However, none of these arguments appear convincing. A modern historian, Riazul Islam, accuses Shah Jahan of following an “adventurist” policy since it was “inspired by a morbid obsession with the restoration of Timurid power in Central Asia almost a century and a half after its extinction”. From a careful study, it would appear that basically Shah Jahan was actuated by a policy of defending the Kabul-Qandahar line which could be threatened by a united and powerful Uzbeks Khanate. The Civil War among the Uzbeks was a wonderful opportunity for the Mughals to keep the Uzbeks divided by propping up Nzar Muhammad against his son. In addition, the Mughals hoped to gain, as a by product, Badakhshan, “not very important in itself, but not to be scorned either”. Thus, Shah Jahan’s policy was based on real politik. The easy success of Mughal arms made him toy with the idea of annexing Balkh also, but harsh reality soon made him revert to the original plan.

The Balkh campaign was a success in the military sense: the Mughals conquered Balkh, and defeated Uzbek attempts to oust them. This was the first significant victory of Indian arms in the region, and Shah Jahan had reason to celebrate it. However, it was beyond the strength of the Mughals to maintain their influence at Balkh for any length of time. Politically also, it was difficult to do so in the face of sullen Persian hostility and an unfriendly local population.

Despite this, the Balkh campaign cannot be written off as a failure. The division among the Uzbeks ensured the safety of Kabul, and India remained safe from foreign invasion for almost a hundred years till the rise of Nadir Shah.

## MUGHAL-PERSIAN RELATIONS -THE LAST PHASE

The setback in Balkh led to a revival of Uzbek hostility in the Kabul region and Afghan tribal unrest in the Khyber-Ghazni area. It also emboldened the Persians to attack and conquer Qandahar (1649). This was a big blow to Shah Jahan’s pride and he launched three major campaigns, one by one, under princes of blood to try and recover Qandahar. The first attack was launched by Aurangzeb, the hero of Balkh, with an army of 50,000. Though the Mughals defeated the Persians outside the fort, they could not conquer it in the face of determined Persian opposition.

A second attempt led by Aurangzeb three years later also failed. The most grandiloquent effort was made the following year (1653) under Dara, the favourite son of Shah Jahan. Dara had made many boastful claims, but he was unable to starve the fort into surrender with the help of his large army, and an attempt at capturing it with the help of two of the biggest guns in the empire which had been towed to Qandahar was also of no avail.

The failure of the Mughals at Qandahar did not as much reflect the weakness of Mughal artillery, as has been asserted by some historians. It rather showed the inherent strength of Qandahar for held by a determined commander, and the ineffectiveness of medieval artillery against strong forts. (This was also the Mughal experience in the Deccan). Also the Mughals found it difficult to maintain themselves at Qandahar because the Shah had followed a scorched - earth policy, and the Mughals had to draw their supplies from Lahore. In any case, the Mughals could not continue the siege during winter. It may be argued that Shah Jahan's attachment to Qandahar or what Shah Abbas II said, "a mass of rocks", was more sentimental than realistic. With the growing enfeeblement of both the Uzbeks and the Safavids, Qandahar no longer had the same strategic importance as it had earlier. It was not so much the loss of Qandahar as the failure of the repeated Mughal efforts which affected Mughal prestige. But even this should not be unduly exaggerated, for the Mughal empire remained outwardly at the height of its power and prestige during Aurangzeb's reign. Even the proud Ottoman Sultan sent an embassy to Aurangzeb in 1680 to seek his support.

After his accession, Aurangzeb decided not to continue the futile contest over Qandahar, and quietly resumed diplomatic relations with Iran. However, in 1664, Shah Abbas II, the ruler of Iran, insulted the Mughal envoy, made disparaging remarks against Aurangzeb, and even threatened an invasion. The causes of this are not clear. It seems that Shah Abbas II was of an unstable character. There was a flurry of Mughal activity in the Punjab and Kabul. But before any action could take place, Shah Abbas II died. His successors were non-entities, and all Persian danger to the Indian frontier disappeared till a new ruler, Nadir Shah, came to power more than fifty years later.

It will thus be seen that on the whole; the Mughals succeeded in maintaining a scientific frontier in the north-west, based on the Hindukush on the one side, and the Kabul-Ghazni line on the other, with Qandahar as its outer bastion. Thus, their basic foreign policy was based on the defence of India. The defence of this frontier-line was further buttressed by diplomatic means. Friendship with Persia was its keynote, despite temporary setback over the question of Qandahar. The oft-proclaimed desire of recovering the Mughal homelands was really used as a diplomatic ploy, for it was never seriously pursued. The military and diplomatic means adopted by the Mughals were remarkably successful in giving India security from foreign invasions till the disintegration of the Mughal empire.

Secondly, the Mughals insisted on relations of equality with leading Asian nations of the time, both with the Safavids, who claimed a special position by virtue of their relationship with the Prophet, and with the Ottoman sultans who had assumed the title of Padshah-i-Islam and claimed to be the successors of the Caliph of Baghdad.

Thirdly, the Mughals used their foreign policy to promote India's commercial interests. Kabul and Qandahar were the twin gateways of India's trade with Central Asia. Large numbers of Indian traders settled down in different cities in Iran to cater to the growing trade. Using Iran as a base, Indian traders expanded their activities to Russia, settling down at Baku, Astrakhan on the river Volga, and at Kiev. They also made incursions into the Central Asian markets, settling down at Samarqand and Bukhara which traded both with Iran and Russia.

It has been argued that "as often as not, foreign relations were determined by the whims, passions and prejudices of the reigning monarch". (Riazul Islam). While personal factors have always played an important role in policy formulations, more so in an authoritarian state, the review of Mughal foreign policy carried out above, suggests that what can be called "national interests" actuated the policies of many of the sovereigns, and that these policies often lasted long after the original impulse.

## UNIT-XXIII

# INDIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

### JAHANGIR'S ACCESSION - HIS EARLY DIFFICULTIES

It has been customary to divide the seventeenth century into two, the first half being dominated by Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1627-58), and the second half being under Aurangzeb (1658-1707). The first half is generally considered a period of internal peace, economic development and cultural growth, and the second half as one of growing conflict in various spheres— political, economic and religious, and of cultural stagnation and economic decline. While not accepting all these assumptions, for purposes of convenience we have adhered to the existing division of the seventeenth century into two almost equal halves for the study of political developments. Economics, social and cultural development will however, be taken up separately and will include the seventeenth century as an integrated entity.

After the death of Akbar in 1605, Salim, who was his eldest son, succeeded to the throne, and assumed the title of Jahangir. Two of his younger brothers, Murad and Daniyal, had died earlier on account of drunkenness, but Salim's accession was not without controversy. Although a favourite of his father who doted on him, Salim had disappointed him by his lackadaisical attitude during the campaign against Mewar to which he had been appointed. Earlier, he had refused to go to Transoxiana or to the Deccan. Akbar was also unhappy at his hard drinking which was the besetting sin of the Timurids. He had occasion to pull Salim up for this and the type of company he kept. In 1599, when Akbar was in the Deccan, Salim was instigated by his companions to go to Agra to seize the treasury. But better sense prevailed. Crossing the Jamuna, Salim set himself up at Allahabad. He appointed governors at Kalpi, Jaunpur and Bihar, and seized the treasury of Bihar which contained thirty lakhs of rupees.

Akbar hastened back to Agra. Eager not to break with his favourite son, Akbar allotted Bengal and Qrissa to him. But Salim refused to leave Allahabad, and even began to issue coins in his name. He was also responsible for the killing of Abul Fazl by the Bundela chief, Bir Singh Deo Bundela when he was returning to Agra from the Deccan at Akbar's behest. Although Akbar was very angry and upset, and ordered a relentless pursuit and punishment of Bir Singh Deo, the latter retreated into the jungles and evaded arrest. Meanwhile, Akbar's mother, Gulbadan Begum, softened Akbar's wrath, and a patch up between the father and son was effected. However, in 1603, Salim returned to Allahabad, and resumed his old ways.

This was the background to the attempt made by two of Akbar's leading nobles, Raja Man Singh and Khan-i-Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, to supersede Salim by his son, Khusrau. Man Singh was Khusrau's maternal uncle, and Aziz Koka's daughter had been married to Khusrau. Khusrau had been favoured by Akbar when Salim had been in disgrace. Moreover, Khusrau was cultured and refined, and did not have Salim's blemishes of character. However, it seems that neither Man Singh nor Aziz Koka were very serious about the proposal, because they called a meeting of nobles to consider it while Akbar was on his death bed. As might have been expected, the proposal was turned down. It was argued that the succession of a son in the life time of his father was "contrary to the laws and customs of Chaghtai Tartars, and shall never be."

Thereafter, the scheme which did not have the backing of Akbar, was dropped. However, we are told that to thwart this conspiracy, Shaikh Farid Bukhari called the Saiyids of Barha and other supporters of Salim, to back his claim, and also extracted from him a general promise to defend Islam. There are strong reasons to doubt that any such promise was made, or sought to be extracted. Nor does it seem correct to give a religious colouring to the event, because jahangir refused to take any action



subsequently against Khusrau, or against Man Singh or Aziz Koka. However, it made him wary about the old Akbar Shahi nobles. Khusrau was also kept in a state of semi-confinement.

The matter would have ended, but Khusrau could not forget his dream of independence, and six months later, he escaped from Agra with a small body of 350 men. On the way to Lahore, he was joined by some Badakhshanis, and by Afghans and Indians so that his forces swelled to 12,000 by the time he reached Lahore. However, the governor of Lahore, Dilawar Khan, refused to allow him to enter the town. Jahangir hastened in pursuit after him. Jahangir was still uncertain of the loyalty of the Akbar Shahi nobles and the Rajputs since, as he says in the Tuzuk, some of "these short sighted ones" imagined that "by making Khusrau a tool they might conduct the affairs of state through him". Jahangir was relieved that Khusrau did not proceed towards Bengal where his maternal uncle, Man Singh, was the governor. Jahangir was suspicious of Badakhshanis whose temperament, according to him, was "seditious and turbulent". He says that many of the Aimaqs or Turkish tribals attached to the royal army were in league with Khusrau. He was also uncertain of the loyalty of the Rajputs, calling Man Singh "an old wolf". Moreover, Rai Rayan, the ruler of Bikaner who had been close to Akbar, had deserted the royal standards on the way to Lahore on the basis of an astrologer's prediction that Jahangir's reign would be very brief.

This may explain the harshness of Jahangir after he defeated Khusrau in a light skirmish at Bhairawal, and captured him shortly afterwards while he was trying to flee to Afghanistan. A double row of gibbets was created at Lahore over which Khusrau's followers were crucified. Abur Rahim, son of Bairam Khan, was tortured brutally but pardoned. Itimad-ud-Daulah, father of Nur Jahan, was imprisoned and released on a payment of a fine of two lakhs, while his eldest son, Muhammad Sharif, was executed. Shaikh Nizam of Thanesar who had blessed Khusrau was banished to Mecca. Guru Arjun who had succeeded in 1581 and was responsible for the construction of the Harmandir (Golden Temple) at Amritsar, was fined on a charge of blessing Khusrau by putting a tika on his forehead and giving him some financial help. The Guru was executed for refusing to pay the fine.

Shortly afterwards, when Jahangir was at Kabul, a conspiracy was unearthed by his younger son, Khurram, that Khusrau was plotting the assassination of Jahangir. Jahangir ordered Khusrau to be blinded so that he could no longer be a claimant to the throne. The future trials and tribulations of Khusrau need not detain us further, except to note that he remained a subject of intrigue till his unnatural death in 1620. During this period that there was at least one uprising in his favour.

The rebellion of Khusrau had made Jahangir suspicious and often ill tempered, though that was not his normal character. It led him to try and promote those who had been closely associated with him, and whom he could trust. Thus, he gave the post of Wazir, and the title of Amir-ul-Umara to Shaikh Farid Bukhari, son of Kliwaja Abdus Samad, the famous painter, who had been sent by Akbar to Salim to pacify him but had, instead, joined him. He had no special qualifications for the post, and was looked down upon by the grandees. Jahangir promoted Mirza Ghiyas Beg to the post of Joint Wazir, with the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah.

## TERRITORIAL CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

While establishing his position on the throne, Jahangir was faced with the problem of consolidating the empire bequeathed to him by Akbar. This involved paying attention to the long continuing dispute with the Rana of Mewar, and the problem created in the Deccan by Malik Ambar. In Bengal, the Afghan menace had yet to be dealt with fully.

We have already seen how after considerable effort and display of political flexibility, in 1615 Jahangir was able to settle the contentious dispute with Mewar. This enabled him to further consolidate the alliance with the Rajputs. By 1620, he had also been able to shatter the efforts of Malik Ambar to lead a united front of Deccan states against the Mughals, and to dispute Mughal control over the territories ceded to them by the treaty of 1600 with Ahmadnagar. As has been explained elsewhere, Jahangir's



decision not to extend Mughal possessions in the Deccan beyond this limit was not on account of military weakness but was deliberate policy.

The settlement of Mewar, and containing Malik Ambar were substantial achievements, though historians have generally been chary of giving due credit to Jahangir for these successes. A third achievement of Jahangir was the consolidation of Mughal position in Bengal. Although Akbar had broken the back of the power of the Afghans in this region, Afghan chiefs were still powerful in various parts of east Bengal. They had the support of many Hindu rajas of the region, such as the rajas of Jessore, Kamrup (western Assam), Cachar, Tippera, etc. Towards the end of his reign, Akbar had recalled Raja Man Singh, the governor of Bengal, to the court, and during his absence the Afghan chief, Usman Khan and others found an opportunity to raise a rebellion. Jahangir sent back Man Singh for some time but the situation continued to worsen. In 1608, Jahangir posted to Bengal Islam Khan, his close associate, and the grandson of Shaikh Salim Chishti, the patron saint of the Mughals. Islam Khan, though young and inexperienced, handled the situation with great energy and foresight. He won over many of the zamindars including the raja of Jessore to his side and fixed his headquarters at Dacca, which was strategically located. He first directed his efforts to the conquest of Sonargaon which was under the control of Musa Khan and his confederates who were called the Barah (twelve) Bhuiyan. After three years of campaigning, Sonargaon was captured. Soon afterwards, Musa Khan surrendered and he was sent to the court as a prisoner. The turn of Usman Khan came next, and he was defeated in a fierce battle. The back of the Afghan resistance was now broken and the other rebels soon surrendered. The principalities of Jessore, Sylhet, Cachar and Kamrup were annexed. Thus Mughal power was firmly entrenched in east Bengal up to the seacoast. To keep the area under full control, the provincial capital was transferred from Rajmahal to Dacca which began to develop rapidly. An attack was launched on the Ahom ruler of Assam, but it failed ignominiously.

Like Akbar, Jahangir realised that conquest could be lasting not on the basis of force but by securing the goodwill of the people. He, therefore, treated the defeated Afghan chiefs and their followers with consideration and sympathy. After some time, many of the rajas and zamindars of Bengal detained at the court were released and allowed to return to Bengal. Even Musa Khan was released and his estates were restored. Thus, after a long spell, peace and prosperity returned to Bengal. To cap the process, the Afghans also now began to be inducted into the Mughal nobility in larger numbers and promoted to high positions. The leading Afghan noble under Jahangir was Khan-i-Jahan Lodi who was placed in charge of the Mughal operations in the Deccan, and enjoyed high favour with Jahangir.

The fort of Kangra in modern Himachal was considered one of the strongest forts of the area. Mughal control over the mountainous tracts had been steadily expanding, and many hill rajas, such as the ruler of Kumaon, had accepted Mughal suzerainty and agreed to pay tribute. However, it was felt that the various other rajas of the region would not submit unless the raja of Kangra who was proud of his mountain fastness was humbled. A campaign in 1615 led by Murtaza Khan, the governor of Punjab, failed. However, in 1620, Raja Bikramajit Baghela was sent to reduce the fort. The fort surrendered after a short siege. A Mughal commander to the fort, and a faujdar was appointed to control the area. In 1622, the ailing Jahangir, while visiting the mountains to avoid the heat of the plains, visited Kangra. In order to emphasize that Kangra fort would now be an Islamic stronghold, Jahangir had the khutba read inside the fort and, after slaughtering a bullock, ordered a lofty mosque to be built.

The determination of keeping hold of the fort of Kangra had the result of the submission of the Raja of Chamba who was the greatest of all the rajas of the region and, according to Jahangir, his country was "the asylum of all the zamindars (rajas) of the region" and that "uptil now he had not obeyed any king nor sent offerings."

## NUR JAHAN, AND THE NUR JAHAN 'JUNTA'

Mehrunnisa, later entitled Nur Jahan after her marriage with Jahangir in 1611, was the grand-daughter of Khwaja Muhammad Sharif Tehrani who served as a high financial official in the Safavid administration under Shah Tahmasp. After his death, the family fell on bad days and his son, Khwaja Ghiyas Beg (the future Itimad-ud-Daula) decided to migrate to India. He was robbed on the way and in 1577 at Qandahar, a second daughter, Mehrunnisa, was born to him. The leader of the caravan took pity on Ghiyas Beg's condition, and took him to Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. He was taken into service, and rose by his diligence to the post of diwan of Kabul in 1595. Subsequently, he was appointed diwan bayutat to look after the karkhanas.

Recognizing the merit of Ghiyas Beg, in 1605 Jahangir made him diwan of half of the dominions, gave him the title of Itimad-ud-Daulah, and raised his mansab to 1500. However, when Khusrau's plot to kill Jahangir was unearthed, Itimad-ud-Daula and his elder son, Sharif, were implicated. Itimad-ud-Daula, who had already lost his post of diwan was imprisoned and released after paying a fine. However, two years later (1609), Itimad was restored to his previous position.

Meanwhile, Mehrunnisa had been married at the age of seventeen to an Iranian adventurer, Ali Quli Istajlu, who had been a table attendant of Shah Ismail II (1576-78). On the death of his patron, Ali Quli had fled and, in course of time, joined Khan-i-Khanan Abdur Rahim who was besieging Thatta. Subsequently, he joined prince Salim in the Mewar campaign and, on account of his courage and bravery, received from him the title of Sher Afghan, a title which was by no means uncommon. The rest of Sher Afghan's life and death followed by Mehrunnisa's exile at Agra, and marriage with Jahangir are too well known to be repeated in detail. Sher Afghan had fallen out with Salim shortly after he (Salim) rebelled against Akbar. On his accession, Jahangir excused him along with all those who had sided against him. However, he posted Sher Afghan to Burdhan in East Bengal which was still unsettled, unhealthy, and full of Afghan sedition. Accused of negligence and of colluding with the Afghan rebels, he was ordered to be transferred. It was the attempt of the new governor, Qutbuddin Khan, a foster-brother of Jahangir, to effect this order which led to a fracas in which both he and Sher Afghan were killed. The account of later chroniclers that Sher Afghan was killed on account of a conspiracy on the part of Jahangir who was in love with Mehrunnisa is not accepted by serious historians.

For four years, Mehrunnisa stayed at Agra, attending Salima Sultana Begum. She married Jahangir in 1611 when Jahangir chanced to meet her at the Meena Bazar, and fell in love with her. Mehrunnisa was at that time a ripe thirty-five, but was distinguished by her vivacity, the charm of her conversation, her learning and her undoubted good looks. Jahangir named her Nur Mahal, then Nur Jahan, and finally Badshah Begum. But she is known in history as Nur Jahan.

There has been a lot of controversy about the role of Nur Jahan, and its impact on court politics during the remaining sixteen years of Jahangir's life. According to Mutammed Khan who wrote in the early years of Shah Jahan's reign, Nur Jahan's father, Itimad-ud-Daula, and brother, Asaf Khan, "were by stages raised to such a position that the control of all important affairs of the empire passed into their hands, and her relations and connections were exalted by favours of all kind." He goes on to say, "there did not remain a single one amongst the slaves, proteges or relations of that family who was not granted a satisfactory mansab and jagir". He concludes that "the lady's relations held in their jagirs the choicest parts of the great expanse of Hindustan".

It has been pointed out that while Itimad-ud-Daula and Asaf Khan benefited from Nur Jahan's marriage connection to the emperor, they did not owe their position primarily to her. As Jahangir says in his Memoirs, "on the basis of seniority in service, extent of sincerity and experience in the affairs of government, I exalted Itimad-ud-Daula to the high post of Wizarat of the Dominion". At the time of his appointment in 1611, he held the rank of 1500 only, but within a year he was raised to the rank of 4000 zat, 1000 sawar.

His son, Asaf Khan, who was also considered to be very learned, sagacious and hardworking, continued to hold the post of Mir Bakhshi. His position was further strengthened by the marriage of his daughter, Arjumand Bano, with Khurram, the future Shah Jahan.

A modern historian, Dr. Beni Prasad, put forward the theory that a "junta" consisting of Nur Jahan, her father Itimad-ud-Daula, her brother Asaf Khan, and Prince Khurram became dominant at the Mughal court shortly after the marriage of Nur Jahan with Jahangir, and remained so till 1620. He argues that the "junta" consolidated its power by filling most of the vacancies in the imperial service with its own creatures to an extent that "its favour was the sole passport to honour and rank". This naturally roused the jealousy and hostility of other nobles. In consequence, the Court, according to him, was split into two factions during this period, the adherents of the Nur Jahan 'junta', and the rival party whose candidate for the throne was Khusrav.

Dr. Beni Prasad also ascribes the rebellion of Shah Jahan in 1622 and the breaking up of the 'junta' in 1620 to Nur Jahan's machinations. Hungry for power, Nur Jahan realised that Shah Jahan (Khurram) with his dominant nature, would relegate her to the background if he were to succeed to the throne. She therefore decided to supersede him by a more reliant instrument, his brother Shahriyar, whose marriage was arranged with her daughter, Ladli Begum born from her first husband, Sher Afghan. "The guiding thread of the last seven years of Jahangir's reign is supplied by Nur Jahan's attempt to clear the path for her candidate." (Beni Prasad)

Beni Prasad's theory of the Nur Jahan 'junta' has been trenchantly criticized. A modern historian, Nurul Hasan, points out that the main rise of Itimad-ud-Daula and his family, took place after 1616. Also that during this period there were many families members of which held high mansabs. The families of Khani-Azam Mirza Aziz Koka, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Abdullah Khan Firuz Jung were examples of this, despite the fact that some of them were hostile to the so-called Nur Jahan 'junta', or were not connected with it. Mahabat Khan has been cited as an example of one whose personal mansab of 4000/3500 was not raised after 1612 due to the opposition of the 'junta'. However, in 1614, Mahabat Khan received an additional jagir worth three crore dams, and was given a du-aspa sih aspa rank of 3500 in 1615 which had to be curtailed later on when he did not bring to the muster the required contingent. There is evidence to show that Mahabat Khan remained high in Jahangir's favour despite not receiving any increments in his mansab. There were many other nobles apart from Mahabat Khan who continued to enjoy Jahangir's favour, despite lack of support from the "junta". Thus, Nurul Hasan argues that "promotions were fairly well spread out and it would not be correct to assume that the sole passport to promotion was the favour of the 'junta'."

Regarding the alliance of Nur Jahan with Khurram, it has been pointed out that there is no contemporary evidence of such a factional alliance between 1611 and 1620. This allegation has been made on the testimony- of European sources, notably on the statements of Sir Thomas Roe who was the Ambassador of England at Jahangir's court. Not conversant with Persian, the Europeans relied mainly on rumours that were circulating. But even they speak of an estrangement between Nur Jahan and Khurram after 1616.

There was, in fact, no coincidence of interests between Nur Jahan and Khurram (Shah Jahan). Nur Jahan's main interest was the protection and preservation of Jahangir's position. Shah Jahan was an aspirant for the throne and, as such, his interests and those of Jahangir could diverge also. Khurram did not owe his position to the support and backing of Nur Jahan. Jahangir had first tried out Parwez in the Mewar and Deccan campaigns. Khurram rose in his estimation due to the failure of Parwez, and Khurram's success in the Mewar campaign. Hence, he was the natural choice for leading the Mughal campaign in the Deccan. After his success against Malik Ambar in 1618, his mansab was raised to the unprecedented figure of 30,000 zat and sawar. He was styled Shah Jahan, and was accorded a chair near the throne in the darbar. As early as 1608, Khurram had been given the jagir of Hisar-Firuz sometimes considered the domain reserved for the crown prince. By 1618, Khurram's position had become almost unassailable.



In 1620, Shah Jahan (Khurram) was again posted to the Deccan. This time he insisted on taking the imprisoned prince Khusrau with him. The betrothal of Shahriyar with Ladli Begum took place at about the same time, indicating mutual suspicion between Shah Jahan and the court circles. In fact, it is said that Itimad-ud-Daula had a hand in this marriage.

Thus, direct evidence of a factional alliance between Shah Jahan and Nur Jahan is of an extremely dubious nature. Nurul Hasan was of the opinion that "there were many factions among the nobles that intrigued against each other, but no single group succeeded in ousting the others from positions of power or importance."

We may thus set aside the theory of a 'junta'. But we still need to analyse the precise power and role of Nur Jahan. Nur Jahan was the constant companion of Jahangir, including the hunt, since she was a sure shot. She completely dominated the harem, and introduced many new designs of dresses, while her mother was credited with the discovery of attar of rose. The precise role of Nur Jahan in public affairs needs careful study. We are told that sometimes she sat in the jharoka window, and dictated orders to officers, and received important messengers. Sometimes farmans were issued in her name. Coins were struck in her name, both in the dam and dirham, and even on silver rupees. On the coins, the legend "Badshah Begum", indicating her official title is mentioned. This has confused some observers to think that she was the sovereign in all but name. Although Nur Jahan became a channel for seeking royal favours, it does not seem that during the period 1611 to 1622, she entered into active politics. Even Beni Prasad argues that during the period, all the principles of Jahangir's foreign and domestic policy, all his institutions of government were maintained. Nur Jahan and her associates closely studied Jahangir's temperament and sought to manage rather than rule him. Jahangir continued to take keen interest in affairs of state, as is evident from his Memoirs. It was only after 1622, when Jahangir's health had begun to fail, when the chosen crown prince Shah Jahan was in open rebellion, the able Itimad-ud-Daula was no more, and ambitious nobles such as Mahabat Khan tried to make the emperor their puppet that Nur Jahan had to involve herself in active politics. Hence, Beni Prasad's charge that during this period (1622-27) Nur Jahan's rule plunged the country into blood and strife appears to be misplaced. After 1622, she had to cope with an extremely difficult situation. Her basic effort was to save the life and dignity of her husband. This she did successfully, and retired gracefully into the harem once a new successor to the throne had been chosen.

In a recent study of the Nur Jahan family, Irfan Habib has underlined the important positions held by Itimad-ud-Daula and his family. Thus, between 1611 and 1622, Itimad-ud-Daula, in addition to the post of Wazir, was appointed governor of Lahore, and his son, Asaf Khan, served as Wakil for some time. At the time of Itimad-ud-Daula's death in 1621, in addition to Lahore and Kashmir, three provinces, Bengal, Orissa and Awadh were under the members of his extended family. Itimad-ud-Daula's death did not signify any decline in his family's position. Asaf Khan was wakil for most of the time, and the post of Mir Bakshi was held by Iradat Khan, a relation of Nur Jahan. In addition, members of the family held governorships of seven provinces—Lahore, Kashmir, Multan, Thatta, Agra, Gujarat and Orissa.

This lends substance to Mutammad Khan's charge of the great rise of Nur Jahan's family. However, as Irfan Habib points out, it does not mean that the entire Mughal nobility came to be divided into two groups: the proteges and supporters of Nur Jahan's family, and the older nobility, indignant at the riches and presumption of the upstarts. Even during the time when Mahabat Khan held supreme power, no effort was made to take away any of the governorships from the possession of the family. It has been suggested that the family of Nur Jahan formed the core of the Persian (Khaurasani) element in the Mughal nobility, and that its rise represented the pre-dominance of this section in the nobility. However, there is little evidence that the Persian nobles as a class rallied together under the banner of Nur Jahan. The Mughal nobility remained heterogeneous in character, and political factors cut across family feuds and inter-sectional rivalries.



## THE REBELLIONS OF SHAH JAHAN

By 1621, Jahangir was at the height of his power. The various disturbed regions—Mewar, Bengal and the Deccan had been brought largely under control. Relations with the Shah of Iran were extremely cordial, and there appeared to be no cloud on the horizon. Jahangir was only fifty-one years old, and a long era of peace and prosperity appeared to lie ahead. But two developments completely transformed the picture—the Persian threat to Qandahar, and the worsening health of Jahangir which unleashed the latent struggle for succession among his sons. The death of the capable wazir, Itimad-ud-Daula, early in 1622 led to jockeying of power among the nobles. All these factors pitch-forked Nur Jahan into the political arena.

Khurram (Shah Jahan) was the most competent and capable of Jahangir's sons, and by 1619 had been marked out as the heir apparent. But it seems that it was being felt that Shah Jahan was becoming too powerful. Hence, in the same year, Khusrau was released from jail, and the mansab of Parwez, the younger brother of Shah Jahan, raised to 20,000. Shah Jahan's demand that Khusrau be handed over to him before he would move to the Deccan was not liked since he had made such demands earlier. But his demand had to be acceded to. As we have seen, as a check on Shah Jahan's ambition, Ladli Begum, daughter of Nur Jahan from her first husband, Sher Afghan, was betrothed to prince Shahriyar. Shah Jahan's rejoinder was to get Khusrau strangled at Burhanpur (Feb. 1621), and put out that he had died of cholera.

The next stage in the drama came with the siege of Qandahar by the Safavid, Shah Abbas in 1622. Jahangir sent urgent summons to Shah Jahan who was then in the Deccan to lead the campaign to relieve Qandahar. Shah Jahan was afraid that the campaign against Qandahar would be long and difficult, and that intrigues would be hatched against him when he was away from the court. Hence, he put forward a number of demands—that he should be allowed to stay at Mandu with his family for the duration of the rains, that when he went to Qandahar he should have full command over the army and control of the Punjab, and that the fort of Ranthambhor should be assigned to him for safeguarding his family. The demands were not by themselves unreasonable, but Jahangir was vexed that the delay would mean the Persians consolidating their position at Qandahar. A way could have been found if Jahangir had accepted the suggestion of Khan-i-Jahan Lodi, the governor of Multan, to immediately lead an army for the relief of Qandahar. That Shah Jahan's attitude was not straightforward is borne out by his sending his agent, Zahid Beg, with presents to the Shah of Iran, wishing him good luck in his Qandahar enterprise. Shah Jahan had also arranged for a plentiful supply of money from the rulers of Deccan and the zamindars of Gondwana for his stay at Mandu.

Ascerbetic exchange of letters between Jahangir and Shah Jahan worsened the situation. Jahangir asked Shah Jahan to send to court the royal officers and forces—especially the Saiyids of Barha and Bukhara, the Shaikhzadas, the Afghans and Rajputs if he proposed to come after the rains. Sazawals or high level messengers were appointed to induce the commanders to return to Lahore where Jahangir was staying. Also, Shahriyar was appointed to lead the army to Qandahar. Jahangir passed orders that Shah Jahan's jagirs in Hissar and the Doab should pay for the salaries of these soldiers, and Shah Jahan was asked to choose jagirs of equal value in the Deccan, Gujarat, Malwa or Khandesh, wherever he wished.

A brush with Shah Jahan's men at Dholpur with Shahriyar's men to whom this jagir had been transferred, led to further bitterness. However, Jahangir was not convinced till that time that Shah Jahan meditated rebellion. Hence, orders were passed that the subahs of Gujarat, Malwa, the Deccan and Khandesh should be handed over to Shah Jahan and that he might set up his habitation anywhere he liked and "employ himself in the administration of these regions".

In his defiance of the Emperor, Shah Jahan was supported by most of the great amirs posted in the Deccan, Gujarat and Malwa. He also had the support of powerful nobles such as Abdur Rahim Khan-i-

Khanan and his son, and other noted military leaders including Rana Karan of Mewar, and Raja Bikramjit Baghela, the victor of Kangra. In the imperial camp, he could count on Asaf Khan, the wazir, and Abdullah Khan Firoz Jung. Above all, he had the seasoned soldiers of the Deccan campaign at his disposal.

Convinced of his superiority, and banking on the illness of Jahangir and the inability of Nur Jahan to bring together sufficient forces to meet him, Shah Jahan moved out of Mandu, and decided to make a sudden attack on Agra which contained the remaining hoards collected by Akbar. However, Nur Jahan had taken energetic action. Parvez was asked to hurry with his forces from Bihar, the Rajput rulers of Amber, Marwar, Kota and Bundi were summoned to the support of the throne, and the veteran military leader, Mahabat Khan, was summoned from Kabul to lead the imperialists. Asaf Khan was sent off to Agra, ostensibly to bring the hoarded treasures to Lahore. Jahangir himself, despite his frail health, moved from Lahore to Delhi.

In the battle at Bilochpur near Agra (March, 1623), Shah Jahan was decisively defeated, despite the defection of Abdullah Khan Firoz Jung from the imperialist side. Shah Jahan now became a fugitive, and more and more nobles and commanders deserted him. Shah Jahan no longer had any hope of success, but he kept the empire distracted for the next three years, moving from one place to another. First he sought shelter with the ruler of Golconda who entertained him for some time only on the promise of his going to Orissa. Entering Orissa, Shah Jahan took the governor of the area by surprise. It was clear that he and other senior officers of the region had no heart in offering stout opposition to the prince. Soon, not only Orissa, but Bengal and Bihar came under Shah Jahan's control. Mahabat Khan was pressed into service again to meet the threat. He met Shah Jahan at Jhusi, opposite Allahabad. The rapidly recruited raw troops of Shah Jahan could not meet the battle hardened, numerically superior forces of Mahabat Khan. Shah Jahan suffered a sharp defeat and retreated into the Deccan. He found shelter with Malik Ambar who was busy against the Mughals in Ahmadnagar and Berar. Ambar assigned to Shah Jahan the task of ousting the Mughals from Burhanpur. But the commandant of the fort defended it strongly and Shah Jahan failed twice. Desperate and humbled, Shah Jahan now wrote beseeching letters, seeking Jahangir's pardon. Jahangir had no desire to drive his most competent son to desperation. Hence, Shah Jahan was pardoned. He was asked to send two of his sons, Dara and Aurangzeb, as hostages. Balaghat was assigned to him as his jagir. This was early in 1626.

Shah Jahan's rebellion kept the empire distracted for four years. It resulted in the loss of Qandahar, and emboldened the Decannis to recover all the territories surrendered to the Mughals by Malik Ambar in 1620. It also pointed to a basic weakness of the system—a successful prince tended to become a rival focus of power, particularly when it was felt that the monarch was not able or willing to wield the supreme power himself. Shah Jahan's constant charge was that following Jahangir's failing health, all effective power had slipped into the hands of Nur Jahan Begum—a charge which is difficult to accept since Shah Jahan's father-in-law, Asaf Khan, was the imperial diwan. Also, though in poor health, Jahangir was still mentally alert and no decisions could be taken without his concurrence. Perhaps, much of the prejudice against Nur Jahan, and the charge of meddling in imperial affairs leading to disaffection and rebellion, reflected the deep seated anti-feminist bias of many contemporary historians which has often been repeated uncritically by a number of modern historians.

### MAHABAT KHAN'S COUP DE MAIN

Struggle between the members of the royal family was an opportunity for ambitious nobles to augment their power, position and privileges. It was also an occasion when the old struggle for power between the monarchy and the nobles could re-surface. The danger of such a development was demonstrated by Mahabat Khan who had taken a leading role in the struggle against Shah Jahan. His powers and position and close association with Prince Parvez were considered a potential threat by some sections. To begin with, Mahabat Khan was appointed governor of Bengal, with Khan-i-Jahan Lodi replacing him as guardian of Parvez. Mahabat Khan was asked to render accounts, and to surrender the war elephants

captured by him. A strong group of ahadis was sent to bring him to the court. Mahabat Khan came with a trusted body of Rajputs and seized the emperor at an opportune moment when the royal camp was crossing the river Jhelum on its way to Kabul. Nur Jahan, who had not been apprehended, escaped across the river but an assault against Mahabat Khan failed ignominiously. Nur Jahan now tried other ways. She surrendered herself to Mahabat Khan in order to be close to Jahangir. Within six months, taking advantage of the mistakes committed by Mahabat Khan who was a soldier but not a diplomat or an administrator, and due to the growing unpopularity of his Rajput soldiers, Nur Jahan was able to wean away most of the nobles from Mahabat Khan's side. Realising his precarious position, Mahabat Khan abandoned Jahangir and fled from the court. Sometime later, he joined Shah Jahan who was biding his time.

The defeat of Mahabat Khan was the greatest victory attained by Nur Jahan, and it was due, in no small measure, to her cool courage and sagacity. However, Nur Jahan's triumph was short lived, for in less than a year's time, Jahangir breathed his last, not far from Lahore (1627). The wily and shrewd Asaf Khan who had been appointed wakil by Jahangir, and who had been carefully preparing the ground for the succession of his son-in-law, Shah Jahan, now came into the open. Supported by the diwan, the chief nobles and the army, he made Nur Jahan a virtual prisoner and sent an urgent summons to Shah Jahan in the Deccan.

Shah Jahan reached Agra and was enthroned amidst great rejoicing. Earlier, at his instance, all his rivals including his imprisoned brother, cousins, etc. were done to death. This precedent and the earlier precedent of a son rebelling against his father, which was begun by Jahangir and was followed by Shah Jahan, was to lead to bitter consequences for the Mughal dynasty. Shah Jahan himself was to reap the bitter fruits of what he had sown. As for Nur Jahan, after attaining the throne, Shah Jahan fixed a settlement upon her. She lived a retired life till her death eighteen years later.

## JAHANGIR AS A RULER

The political achievements of Jahangir, and his role in consolidating the polity bequeathed to him by Akbar is generally underestimated by historians, and the role of Nur Jahan as a loyal and trusted consort distorted. Jahangir's political flexibility which enabled him bring to an end the long drawn out war with Mewar, his generosity in dealing with the Afghan and important zamindar rebels of Bengal which enabled Bengal to embark upon a long process of renewed development and growth, and his policy of consolidating the gains of Akbar in the Deccan yielded results leading to a growing Mughal alliance with Bijapur and the frustration of a policy of confrontation with the Mughals.

Jahangir broadened the Mughal polity by bringing other Rajput rulers more or less on par with the Kachhawas. Thus, early in his reign, Rai Rayan Rai Singh of Bikaner; Raja Sur Singh of Jodhpur (and following his death, his son Raja Gaj Singh), and Rao Karan of Mewar were all granted mansabs of 5000. Raja Man Singh held the personal rank of 7000/7000, but after his death in 1614-15, his son Bhao Singh was granted the title of Mirza Raja and the rank of 4000 which was soon raised to 5000. He also started inducting Afghans, such as Khan-i-Jahan Lodi to high positions, and made a beginning of enrolling into the imperial service a number of leading Maratha sardars, such as Kheloji, Maloji, Udaiji Ram etc.

In the sphere of religion, which shall be reviewed separately, he more or less continued Akbar's liberal policy, much to the disappointment of orthodox elements which had wanted the restoration of Islam to a position of hegemony.

Jahangir was an aesthete, and all his works, whether in the field of architecture, or painting or gardening showed the highest standards. He thus made the Mughal court, and the emperor personally, the arbiter of standards. He was ably assisted in this field by Nur Jahan who had herself a very refined cultural taste. The cultural role of the Mughal emperor was another device which linked the ruling elites more closely than ever to the throne. The concept of adl or justice to which a great deal of popularity became attached by use of the bells, also brought the monarchy closer to the masses.



Like Babur, Jahangir was also very fond of the flora and fauna of the country which he describes with the practised eye of an expert. After describing some of the flowers of Kashmir, he says "The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves," and adds "I saw several sorts of red roses; one is specially sweat-scented, and another is a flower of the colour of sandal (light yellow) and with an exceedingly delicate scent". He also mentions black tulips. He asked the court painter Mansur, to paint some of these flowers. Jahangir gives a long list of birds, including those not found in Kashmir. The failures of Jahangir took place after 1621 when his health had begun to fail. This was compounded by the rebellion of Shah Jahan, and growing factiousness in the nobility.

## STATE AND RELIGION IN THE FIRST HALF OF 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

The liberal character of the state instituted by Akbar was maintained during the first half of the 17th century, though with a few lapses under Jahangir, and with some modifications by Shah Jahan. At the outset of Jahangir's reign, there was an expectation in orthodox circles that Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul and religious eclecticism would be abandoned, and the supremacy of the sharia restored. The hopes of the orthodox sections were raised by some actions of Jahangir immediately after his accession. Thus, he had asked the ulama and the learned men of Islam to collect distinctive appellations of God which were easy to remember so that he might repeat them while using his rosary.

On Fridays he associated with learned and pious men and dervishes and saints. At the Ramzan Id which followed his first accession, he went to the Idgah, and several lacs of dams were distributed in charity. However, there was nothing unusual in these actions, and the orthodox elements were soon disabused of their expectations. Neither by temperament nor by training was Jahangir orthodox. Apart from his own fondness of drinking which he sometimes carried to excess—he tells us that by the time of his accession he had reduced his intake of wine from twenty cups of double distilled spirit (brandy) to five, and that, too, only at night. Jahangir felt free to invite his nobles and others to join him in wine drinking. When he visited the grave of Babur at Kabul he found a basin which could contain two Hindustani maunds of wine. Jahangir ordered another such a basin to be built, and every day he ordered to fill both the basins with wine and gave it to the servants who were present there. There was an accompaniment of dance and music. There are frequent references in his Memoirs to such parties to which nobles were invited.

In the Ordinances which Jahangir issued at the time of his accession, for two days in a week, Thursday, the day of his accession, and Sunday, the day of Akbar's birthday and because "it was dedicated to the Sun and also the day on which creation began" (according to the Christians), there was to be no killing or slaughter of animals for food. Shortly, afterwards, in what were called the Ain-i-Jahangiri or Jahangiri rules, forcible conversion to Islam was forbidden.

Jahangir's attitude towards Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul, and of giving respect and freedom to all religions is manifest from his Memoirs. Praising Akbar, he says:

"The professors of various faiths had room in the broad expanse of his innumerable sway. This was different from the practice of other realms, for in Persia there is room for Shias only, and in Turkey, India and Turan there is room for Sunnis only." He goes on to say how in his dominions "which on all sides was limited only by the salt sea", "there was room for the professors of opposite religions, and for beliefs, good and bad, and the road to altercation was closed. Sunnis and Shias met in one mosque, and the Europeans (Firangi) and Jews in one church, and observed their own forms of worship".

Not only did Jahangir follow Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul, he continued Akbar's policy of enrolling murids (disciples) and giving each of them a token, or shast, and shabi or likeness of the emperor. At the time of initiation, the disciples were advised to avoid sectarian quarrels, and to follow the rule of universal peace with regard to religion. They were also advised not to kill any living creature with their own hands, honour the luminaries (Sun, light etc.) which are manifestations of God, and to dwell constantly on God. However, the devise of discipleship which was meant to bind the nobles closely with the Emperor seems to have fallen into disuse after some time.



Jahangir also continued to celebrate the various Hindu festivals, Diwali, Holi, Dashera, Rakhi, Shivratri etc. at his court. Jahangir himself participated in them, as also many of the nobles. We are told that during the celebration of Diwali, Jahangir himself took part in a bout of gambling that continued for three nights.

Jahangir also banned cow slaughter in the Punjab, and perhaps extended it to Gujarat. Nauroz, which was an old Central Asian festival as also the festival of the Parsis, was celebrated for nineteen days with music and festivity. The Christians, too, were allowed to celebrate Easter, Christmas and other festivals. These practices were a public declaration of a policy of religious freedom to all. They also provided opportunity for greater social interaction between the ruler and his officials with people of various religious persuasions.

The position regarding religious freedom is set out clearly in one of the early drafts of the Tuzuk where Jahangir says, "I ordered that with this exception (prohibition of forcible sati), they (the Hindus) may follow whatever is their prescribed custom, and none should exercise force or compulsion or oppression over anyone."

There was no ban on the Hindus building new temples. Apart from Bir Singh Deo Bundela building a magnificent temple at Mathura, a large number of new temples were built at Banaras. The Christians too, were given land and permission to build churches.

Jahangir continued Akbar's policy of giving gifts and grants to brahmins and temples. In his first Regnal year (1605-06), when marching against Khusrau, he distributed large sums of money to faqirs and brahmins. Documents in the possession of the Vrindavan temples of the Chaitanya sect show how Jahangir went on adding grants to the temples and their votaries. Thus, between 1612-15, he made at least five grants to the followers of Chaitanya at Vrindavan.

In 1621, when going to Kangra, Jahangir went via Haridwar which, he noted, was "one of the established place of worship of the Hindus where brahmins and recluses retire in lovely places to worship God in their own way". He gave gifts in cash and in kind to many of them.

Despite his liberalism, there were occasions when Jahangir displayed a narrow spirit, perhaps out of a desire to please the orthodox clerical elements who were powerful, or out of a desire to be seen by them as an orthodox Muslim ruler. Thus, he declared the war against Mewar to be a jihad, although there was little reason for doing so. During the campaign, many Hindu temples were destroyed which, again, was uncalled for because Jahangir had instructed Khurram to treat the Rana as a friend if he was prepared to submit. Again, in 1621, the Kangra campaign was declared a jihad, even though it was commanded by a Hindu, Raja Bikramajit! As we have noted, in the presence of theologians a bullock was slaughtered in the fort and a mosque ordered to be erected. From Kangra, Jahangir went to the Durga temple at Jwalamukhi. He found that apart from "infidels whose custom is the worship of idols, crowds on crowds of the people of Islam, traversing long distances, bring their offerings, and pray to the black (stone) image". No attempt was made to put a stop to this practice. Earlier, while visiting Pushkar, Jahangir was shocked to find that the Hindus worshipped Vishnu in the form of a varaha (boar). He ordered the image to be broken noting that the Hindu theory of incarnation in ten forms was not acceptable to him since God could not be limited in this way. However, none of the other temples dedicated to Vishnu were harmed. At Ajmer, Jahangir granted in madadd-i-maash the entire village of Pushkar to the brahmins of that place.

In 1617, Jahangir issued an order in Gujarat that all Jain temples be closed and the Jain saints expelled from the empire because of moral reasons: wives and daughters of the devotees visited the Jain saints at the temples where they lived. But this order does not seem to have been implemented because we have inscriptional evidence from Gujarat supported by Jain sources that during the period when the order was issued, Jahangir continued to have good relations with Jain saints and also gave liberal grants for the construction of Jain temples.

There has been a good deal of controversy about Jahangir's attitude towards the Sikhs, and his dealings with the Sikh Guru Arjun. In his Memoirs, Jahangir notes that at Gobindwal on the river Beas, Guru Arjun "posing as a religious guide and instructor" had enrolled as his followers a large number of Hindus and Muslims, that "They called him Guru, and from all sides came to him and expressed their absolute faith in him." He goes on to say that this had continued for three or four generations. Denouncing the followers of the Guru as "fools and fraud-believers," Jahangir declares that "Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam." This statement occurs almost immediately after Jahangir's accession, and in the context of Khusrau's rebellion. It is not clear when precisely Jahangir had contemplated taking action against the Sikhs. If it was during Akbar's reign, it is well known that Akbar had favoured Guru Angad and Guru Ramdas, and given them a grant of five hundred bighas of land and a pond around which the Harmandir and the city of Amritsar grew. If after accession, the period had to be very brief because Khusrau rebelled barely six months after his accession. Thus, this again appears to be an attempt on Jahangir's part of trying to please the orthodox sections.

It is clear that Jahangir took no action against the Sikhs as such, but only against Guru Arjun on a charge that he had blessed Khusrau by putting a tika on his head, and by giving him some money. According to Jahangir's lights, this was treason. He, therefore, summoned him, handed over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtaza Khan who was like a kotwal, confiscated the Guru's property and commanded that he should be put to death.

It has been argued on the basis of Jesuit and other evidence, including Sikh traditions, that Jahangir had not ordered the Guru's execution but only imposed a heavy fine on him which he refused to pay, and that it was due to the tortures inflicted on him to realize the fine that he died. However, this does not exonerate Jahangir from the charge of awarding excessive punishment to a highly respected saint for an inadvertent mistake. His action in imprisoning the Guru's son and successor, Guru Hargovind, five years later for realizing the arrears of the fine, and keeping him in prison for two years, appears even less defensible.

It has been pointed out that Jahangir punished not only the Sikh Guru for token support to Khusrau but a sufi, Shaikh Nizam Thanessari, who had accompanied Khusrau for some distance. However, he was only banished to Mecca, and his road expenses paid.

Like Akbar, Jahangir was always eager to visit and to discourse with dervishes, saints and religious thinkers of various kinds, and to make grants to them. In 1613, Jahangir had started the custom that deserving people and dervishes were brought before him every night so that, after personal enquiry into their condition, land or gold or clothes were bestowed on them. There is no reason to believe that these were confined to Muslims.

Jahangir continued Akbar's practice of inviting religious divines for personal discussions. It seems that Jahangir's main area of religious interest was monotheism. It was this which made him seek the company of Mian Mir, the famous Qadri sufi of Lahore and a friend of Guru Arjun. Jahangir was also devoted to Muinuddin Chishti, the patron saint of the Mughals. In 1613, when he visited Ajmer, he walked on foot for a kos before entering the shrine. He was hostile to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who denounced wahdat-al-wajud or monotheism. As Jahangir says, he kept him for some time in "the prison of correction until the heat of his temperament and the confusion in his brain were somewhat quenched, and the excitement of the people should also subside". The greatest satisfaction Jahangir found was among votaries of Vedant which he calls "the science of tasawwuf". In this search, he met Jadrup Gosain at Ujjain in the eleventh year of his reign (1616). During the next three years, he met Jadrup seven times. Jadrup lived in a hole on the side of a hill which had been dug out and a door made. Hearing of his reputation, Jahangir wanted to call him to Agra, but did not do so on account of the trouble it would cause him. Jahangir went one-eighth of a kos or two and a half furlong on foot to see him. Jadrup made a great impression on Jahangir by his knowledge and simplicity. Jahangir says "he (Jadrup) had thoroughly mastered the science of Vedanta", and

“God Almighty has given him unusual grace, a lofty understanding, an exalted nature and sharp intellectual power”. He was free from the attachment of the world, so that “putting behind him the world and all that was in it, he sits content in solitude and without want”. Subsequently, Jadrup shifted to Mathura where Jahangir visited him twice. When Hakim Beg, brother-in-law of Nur Jahan, who held charge of Mathura, ill-treated, Jadrup, Jahangir dismissed him from service.

We do not know much about Jahangir’s personal religious beliefs. He remained within the framework of Islam, but had a good knowledge of other religions, especially Hinduism and Christianity. Though continuing to follow many Hindu practices which had become common in India, he specifically rejected idol-worship and, as we have seen, the theory of incarnation.

Jahangir had a very exalted opinion of kingly duties. Echoing Abul Fazl, he says that the just creator bestows sovereignty on him whom he considers fit for this glorious and exalted duty. It was therefore futile for the seditious and the short-sighted to try and deprive crown and dominion from one chosen by God the Crown-cherisher.

For Jahangir, the state was not only to be a liberal institution but to be marked by benevolence and justice. The benevolent aspect was emphasized by Jahangir in the Twelve Edicts issued by him after his accession. Thus, road and river cesses imposed by the jagirdars for their own profit were abolished; the local officials were not to open the bales of merchants on the roads without informing them and obtaining their permission; if anyone, whether unbeliever or a Muslim should die, his property and effects should be left to his heirs, and if they had no heirs, to utilise the proceeds for building mosques, sarais, repair of broken bridges, and digging of tanks and wells, i.e. works of public benefit. To improve facilities for the merchants, jagirdars and officials of the khalisa were asked to build sarais. Local officials were also told not to take possession of any person’s house; and not to take forcible possession of the raiyat’s lands to cultivate them on their own account. Hospitals were to be founded in great cities, and doctors appointed, the expenditure to be met from the khalisa establishment. Jahangir also repeated Akbar’s orders forbidding the cutting off the nose or ears of anyone as a punishment. Jahangir’s chain of justice is too well known to be repeated here. Only one instance of Jahangir’s emphasis on justice irrespective of one’s position may be mentioned. A widow complained that Muqarrab Khan, governor of Gujarat, had taken her daughter by force at Cambay, and kept her in his own house, and when she enquired about the girl, said that she had died by an unavoidable death. After an enquiry, one of his attendants was found guilty for the outrage. He was put to death, the mansab of Muqarrab Khan reduced by half, and he was made to make an allowance to the widow. However, despite his benevolence, the Mughal emperor remained a despot. Thus, Jahangir had no compunction in summarily executing a groom, and stringing two kahars (water carriers) whose sudden appearance had enabled a nilgai which Jahangir was hunting to get away.

Liberalism and autocratic benevolence were underpinned by a policy of cultural pluralism, enabling people of all religions and regions to contribute. These included not only architecture and gardening, but music, painting, literature etc. The work of making Persian translations of Hindu religious works, such as Ramayana, continued. Court patronage was also given to Hindi poets. The new spirit was reflected in the Hindi poems of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan in which verses on niti or polity was taken up, along with a strong lyrical sense of devotion to God in his various incarnations, especially Krishna.

## SHAHJAHAN’S RELIGIOUS POLICY

There has been a controversy whether Shah Jahan continued the liberal policies of Akbar with some change in form, or whether he was “orthodox in his leanings as well as his beliefs and he took some measures to show that orthodoxy was back in power”. (I.H. Qureshi). Thus, he exempted the theologians from sijda or zaminbos, the former implying prostration before the ruler, and the latter putting both the hands on the ground and touching them to the forehead. It might be mentioned that Jahangir had also exempted the high theologians from sijda. Shah Jahan banned mixed marriages between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir which had implied that Muslim girls embraced the religion of their Hindu husbands, and vice versa. Earlier, Jahangir had also banned this practice, but was unable to stop it.



Perhaps, the most significant step taken by Shah Jahan was that in the Sixth Regnal year (1633), he ordered that no temple whose foundation had been laid in Jahangir's time but had not been completed would be allowed to be completed. Accordingly, 76 temples begun at Banaras were destroyed. Temples and churches were also destroyed during wars. Thus, during the Bundela rebellion, Bir Singh Deo's temple at Orchha was destroyed and a mosque built in its place. Christian churches at Hugli were destroyed during the clash with the Portuguese there. However, it does not seem that Shah Jahan tried to implement seriously the policy of not allowing new temples to be built. Thus, in 1629, he granted land to Shantidas, the leading Jain jeweller and banker at Ahmadabad, to build a resting place (poshala) for Jain saints. Shantidas also built a beautiful Jain temple near Ahmadabad to which no objection was made. In 1654, when Aurangzeb was governor of Gujarat, he converted this temple into a mosque by building a mihrab (niche) for prayer inside it. This was part of Aurangzeb's policy of breaking newly built temples in Gujarat. However, on a complain from Shantidas, and a ruling from the noted scholar Mulla Abdul Hakim that Aurangzeb had flagrantly violated the sharia by usurping Shantidas's property, and that, in consequence, the mosque had no sanctity, Shah Jahan ordered the mihrab to be blocked up, and the temple restored to Shantidas. The imperial farman also commanded that any material taken from the temple should be restored and compensation paid for any material lost.

Likewise the magnificent temple built at Mathura by Bir Singh Deo Bundela during the reign of Jahangir was not interfered with.

That Shah Jahan's ban on new temples was only a token is conceded by I.H. Qureshi, a leading historian in Pakistan, saying that the measure was "more an assertion of a principle than an effective measure... (it) was more an effective declaration that Islam would again be treated as the dominant religion than an attempt at the suppression of Hinduism."

It has been argued that the building of many magnificent mosques, including the Jama Masjid at Delhi, and the Taj Mahal at Agra which was supposed to replicate the Muslim idea of Paradise, also demonstrate Shah Jahan's new emphasis on the power and majesty of Islam. The building of such mosques was not unusual. That broad tolerance continued was also evident from his confirmation of the grants given to the Vaishnava temples at Vrindavan. Even more significant was his order that the timegong at the temple may be permitted to be sounded since "a large number of God worshipping Hindu mendicants are engaged in divine worship according to their own religion and custom". This was an affirmation of Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul. Shah Jahan came into conflict with the Sikh Guru Hargovind culminating in a furious battle at Kartarpur (1631), after which the Guru retreated to the Kashmir hills. We shall discuss Mughal relations with the Sikhs separately.

The Muslim orthodox sections rallied under Shaikh Abdul Haq of Delhi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who was hailed as Mujaddid or renovator during the second millenium of Islam. Both of them were profound scholars of Muslim jurisprudence, theology etc., and laid great emphasis on the strict implementation of the sharia. The point to note here is that both of them had a political agenda which they tried to implement by winning over the leading nobles to their side by writing letters to them. They also enrolled students in their seminaries. From an analysis of their letters, it would appear that their main demands were:

- (i) the humiliation of the Hindus which implied breaking of temples, having no social intercourse with them and denying them public service, and if that was inescapable, not to trust them;
- (ii) revival of the jizyah which was the mark of the superiority of the Muslims, and was meant to humiliate the kafirs, and
- (iii) exclusion of all practices which were bidat i.e. not strictly within the ambit of the sharia, whether they applied to culture (ban on music and painting), morality (ban on wine etc.) or social practices (tuladan, jharoka darshan etc.)



Like Jahangir, Shah Jahan also rejected almost all these demands. Even the ban on construction of new temples was not implemented strictly, as Aurangzeb found when he was governor of Gujarat. The liberal elements came together under the slogan of wahdat-al-wajud or monism. The Chisti saints, and the Qadiri saint Mian Mir of Lahore, who was backed and supported by Dara and Jahanara, led this trend. Shah Jahan did not join either of these trends, even though some contemporary historians gave him the title of mujaddid or renovator of Islam. Nor did the nobles, as a whole, join either the liberal or the orthodox group, remaining eclectic in their approach.

We may conclude that Shah Jahan tried to effect a compromise. While formally declaring the state to be an Islamic one, showing respect to the sharia, and observing its injunctions in his personal life, he did not reject any of the liberal measures of Akbar, such as jharoka darshan, weighing himself for gifts {tula dan), etc. Like all compromises, Shah Jahan's compromise was based not on principle but on expediency. As such, it satisfied no party, and the orthodox elements, feeling themselves to be stronger than before, continued the demand of a state based on a strict implementation of the sharia.

## SHAHJAHAN-CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

After his accession in 1627, Shah Jahan embarked on a vigorous policy of expansion and consolidation in order to overcome the distractions caused by his own rebellion and the failing health of Jahangir. The first matter to engage his attention was the Deccan where all the gains made under Jahangir upto 1621 had been lost. We have already discussed Shah Jahan's Deccan policy, leading to the treaties of 1636 with Bijapur and Golconda, and the renewed conflict with them towards the end of his reign.

As a result of Mughal expansion in the Deccan, the Mughal position in Bundelkhand and Gondwana in modern Central India was strengthened. The most powerful ruler in the area was Bir Singh Deo Bundela. In 1628-29, an army had been sent against Jujhar Singh, son of Bir Singh Deo Bundela (d. 1627) who had been a favourite of Jahangir. With the fall of the powerful fort of Irij, Jujhar Singh surrendered. He paid rupees fifteen lakhs and forty elephants as indemnity. His original rank of 4000/4000 Was restored, though some of his jagirs were confiscated. He was required to serve in the Deccan with 2000 horses, and 2000 infantry.

By 1634, Jujhar Singh returned, leaving his son to deputise for him in the Deccan. He embarked upon a career of conquest at the expense of the Gonds of the Gondwana region. He attacked Prem Narayan, the Gond ruler of Chauragarh. Prem Narayan had to vacate his fort after the Mughals refused to respond to his plea for help. He was treacherously attacked and killed by Jujhar Singh, violating his own promise of safe conduct. Jujhar Singh seized all the hoarded wealth of the Gond ruler. Prem Narayan's son appealed to Mahabat Khan in Malwa. Negotiations now began between Shah Jahan and Jujhar Singh. Shah Jahan's main attempt was to get as much as possible from the hoard of Prem Narayan, and compensation for the territory gained by the Bundela ruler.

Thus, Jujhar Singh was at first asked to surrender the territories he had conquered in Gondwana. Once Mughal military preparations were complete, Shah Jahan demanded sarkar Biyanwan in place of Chauragarh, and a fine of thirty lakhs. After the Mughal campaign, and the killing of Jujhar Singh by the Gonds while he was in flight, a portion of the Orchha kingdom was granted to Raja Debi Singh whose family had been superseded by Jahangir earlier while giving tika to Bir Singh Deo. To exclude for all times the claims of Jujhar Singh's family to the gaddi, his sons and grandsons were converted to Islam. Thus, Shah Jahan's Bundela policy was basically one of imperial aggrandizement. In order to present it as a victory of Islam, the magnificent temple built at Orchha by Bir Singh Deo was demolished, and a mosque erected at its place.

Shah Jahan also took action against Rana Raj Singh of Mewar for refortifying Chittor. We shall discuss the significance of this move in the context of Aurangzeb's later breach with the Rajputs. The growing power of the Mughal state was also reflected in operations against a number of other zamindars who were wealthy, but had so far paid only formal respect to Mughal power. Thus, Kipa of Chanda, called the

chief zamindar of Gondwana, was made to pay eight lakhs; the Ujjainiya zamindar near Buxar; the zamindar of Ratanpur in modern Jharkhand, the zamindar of Palamau etc. were subdued and fleeced.

Shah Jahan also forced the rajas of Kumaon and of Garhwal to accept Mughal overlordship (1654, 1656), an earlier Mughal attempt to capture Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal, having failed.

Jagat Singh, son of Raja Basu of Mau Nurpur in the Punjab hills near Chamba, had been a favourite of Jahangir, both father and son having performed useful service, and been appointed faujdar of Kangra. They incurred Shah Jahan's displeasure. However, unlike Bundelkhand, it did not attract imperial rapacity. Hence, after some hard fighting and after destroying a number of his forts, Jagat Singh was restored to his imperial mansab. The overall lesson was that in the new set up, even zamindars who had served the Mughal emperor earlier, would have to be more submissive.

More significant was the Mughal attempt to bring under control the Baltistan area in Kashmir, then known as Greater Tibet (Ladakh being called the Little Tibet). In 1634, and again in 1637, imperial forces attacked its ruler, Abdal, penetrated upto his capital, Skardu, and forced him to submit, and pay an indemnity of ten lakhs. That the Mughals could operate in these difficult and remote areas showed the high degree of devotion to service which had been instilled into the Mughal commanders and troops by this time. The operation was obviously aimed at bringing more closely under Imperial control the trade route to Yarkand, Khotan etc.

Shah Jahan's attempt to bring the coastal areas of East Bengal seem to have some economic overtones also. Although the Mughals had, under Jahangir, captured Jessore and Bakla, the two coastal districts, they had not been able to revive trade and agriculture of the area due to the piratical activities of the Portuguese and the Arakanese. Apart from carrying on trade, the Portuguese raided the coastal towns and villages, took captives, sold them and converted many to Christianity.

The main Portuguese centre was at Hugli and there had been many complaints against them. This was the background to Shah Jahan's attack on Hugli in 1632. The Portuguese fought well, but were no match for the Mughal army. With the fall of Hugli, the coastal area upto the sea was freed of pirates. The Mughal treatment of the captured Portuguese prisoners was very cruel and can hardly be justified. They were given the choice of Islam or imprisonment, and many of them languished in jail for long periods on their refusal to convert.

Attempts were also made by Shah Jahan to strengthen the Mughal hold on Sindh, and the lower Indus. For the purpose, campaigns were launched against the tribals who preyed on trade, and imperial thanas were set up.

Apart from these military activities, the power, wealth and majesty of the Mughal state was sought to be demonstrated by the Peacock Throne (takht-i-taus), the building of the Taj Mahal at Agra, and the foundation of a new Imperial capital at Delhi. The Peacock Throne struck all the visitors of the time, many of whom have described it. We are told by the contemporary historian, Lahori, that out of the existing jewels in the Imperial jewel house, selected jewels worth eighty-six lakhs of rupees, and pure gold of one lakh tolas, then worth fourteen lakhs of rupees, were handed over to the superintendent of the goldsmith's department. The outside of the canopy was to be of enamel work, with occasional gems, the inside was to be thickly set with rubies, garnets and other jewels and it was to be supported by twelve emerald columns. On top of each pillar there were to be two peacocks thick set with gems, and between each two peacocks a tree with rubies and diamonds, emeralds and pearls.

The throne, which was three yards in length, two and a half in breadth, and five in height took seven years to complete, and Shah Jahan sat upon it for the first time in 1635.

The Taj Mahal, built in memory of Mumtaz Mahal, the favourite consort of Shah Jahan, who died in childbirth in 1630, was built over twelve years at a cost of rupees fifty lakhs which was a big sum for those days. The new city of Delhi, called Shahjahanabad, which was commenced in 1638 took almost ten

years to complete and cost rupees sixty lakhs. A modern historian, Shirin Moosvi, has calculated that all the buildings and gardens of Shah Jahan, including renovations carried out in the Lahore and Agra forts, and the mausoleum of Jahangir, cost a little over Rs. 289 lakhs over a period of 28 years. The annual cost works out at Rs. 1,03,391/-. According to a recent estimate, 82.9 per cent of the Imperial income was assigned as jagirs. Of the remaining 17 per cent, Shah Jahan had fixed, according to the official historian, Qazwini, the khalisa or imperial establishment at 60 crore dams (Rs. 150 lakhs) annually. Out of this, the annual expenditure varied from Rs. 100 to Rs. 120 lakhs. Thus, the annual cost of building amounts to 10.33 per cent of the annual khalisa expenditure, or 6.45 per cent of the annual khalisa income as reported by Qazwini. We may thus conclude:

“The cost of building construction represented a significant share of expenditure from the khalisa under Shahjahan. It does not, however, seem to have been so excessive as to set a heavy drain on imperial finance, or to interfere with military expenditure”.



## UNIT-XXIV

# AURANGZEB-RELIGIOUS POLICIES, NORTH INDIA AND THE RAJPUTS

### WAR OF SUCCESSION

Shah Jahan was fortunate in having four sons, all born of his cherished wife, Mumtaz Mahal, who grew up to be capable, hard working and free of the Mughal vice of drunkenness. They were given administrative responsibilities and high mansabs as they grew up. Shuja, the second eldest was appointed governor of Bengal in 1637, and kept good control over that turbulent province for the next two decades. The youngest, Murad, was appointed governor of Gujarat to which Malwa was added later on. Aurangzeb was appointed viceroy of the Deccan in 1636 at the young age of eighteen, and held it for the next six years. He was appointed viceroy of the Deccan again in 1652. The eldest, Dara, was appointed governor of Allahabad and then of Lahore. But he was his father's favourite, and most of the time he remained with him at the court. This led to resentment against him by the other three brothers who gradually came together in a kind of a coalition which turned against Dara. Thus, in 1652, Shuja betrothed his daughter to Aurangzeb's eldest son, Sultan Muhammad, and Aurangzeb promised, his daughter to Shuja's son. Murad also became friendly with Aurangzeb.

The very capacity of the princes made the problem of succession more difficult, and threatened to make it long and bloody. There was no clear tradition of succession among the Muslims. While the consent of the people had been asserted at the beginning, the right of nomination of a successor by a successful ruler had come slowly to prevail, and even accepted by some political thinkers. However, no special rights had been given to the eldest born. The Timurid tradition of partitioning had not been accepted in India, though it kept on raising its head. In the ultimate resort, connections among the powerful military leaders, and military strength and capacity had become the real arbiters.

There were no clear traditions of succession among the Hindus either. Right from the time of the Buddha when Ajatshatru had displaced and imprisoned his father, and later during Ashoka Maurya's struggle against his brothers succession had been dependent on military strength. This had also been the tradition of the Rashtrakutas, and later of the Rajputs. Thus, Sanga had to wage a bitter struggle with his brothers before he could assert his claim to the gaddi.

Shah Jahan who had been residing in the new city of Shahjahanabad or Delhi which he had recently constructed, was taken ill with stranguary in September 1657. For some time, his life was despaired of, but he rallied and gradually recovered his strength under the loving care of Dara. Meanwhile, all kinds of rumours had gained currency. It was said that Shah Jahan had already died, and Dara was concealing the reality to serve his own purposes. In December 1657, Shah Jahan was well enough to slowly make his way to Agra. Meanwhile, the princes, Shuja in Bengal, Murad in Gujarat and Aurangzeb in the Deccan had either been persuaded that these rumours were true, or pretended to believe them, and made preparations for the inevitable war of succession.

Shah Jahan had long considered Dara as his rightful successor. As early as 1654, he had been given the title of Sultan Buland Iqbal, given a golden chair next to the throne, and his mansab raised progressively till in 1658 he received the unprecedented rank of 60,000 zat, 40,000 sawar (of which 30,000 were du-aspa sihaspa). Dara was also nominated as his successor (wali ahd), and the nobles were asked to obey him as their future sovereign. But these actions, far from ensuring a smooth succession as Shah Jahan had hoped, convinced the other princes of Shah Jahan's partiality to Dara. It thus strengthened their resolve of making a bid for the throne.



The conflict between Dara, his father's favourite, and Aurangzeb, the most energetic of Shah Jahan's sons, was heightened by Aurangzeb's suspicion that Dara had consistently used his influence with Shah-Jahan to try to humiliate and thwart him. Thus, when Aurangzeb was transferred to the Deccan from Multan and Sindh after the failure of his two campaigns against Qandahar, his jagirs were also transferred to the Deccan which was less productive so that Aurangzeb suffered a big loss. The Deccan was also a chronically deficit area. In consequence, the expenses of its government had to be made up by cash subsidies from Malwa and Gujarat. Shah jahan's constant refrain was-that the deficit should be met by expanding and improving cultivation. Aurangzeb tried to do so with the help of Murshid Quli Khan who was the diwan of the Deccan. But Shah jahan was impatient, and unfairly accused Aurangzeb of negligence and incompetence. He accused him of appropriating the most productive villages in the jagirs allotted to the nobles posted, there. Matters reached such a pitch that Shah Jahan even accused Aurangzeb of keeping for himself most of the mangoes from one of Shah jahan's favourite mango tree at Burhanpur!

In order to meet his financial difficulties, Aurangzeb tried to persuade Shah Jahan to permit attacking Golconda and Bijapur, both for getting a part of the treasures they had gathered during their campaigns in the Karnataka, and to gain more territory. Aurangzeb felt cheated when Shah Jahan entered into "a compromise with Bijapur and Golconda, whereas Aurangzeb felt he was on the verge of total victory. In both cases. he accused Dara of intervention, and of having been bribed by the Deccani fillers. However, Shah Jahan was in full control at the time, and there is no reason to believe that he acted primarily at Dara's instance.

The character and outlook of Dara and Aurangzeb were very dissimilar. Dara constantly associated with liberal sufi and Bhakti saints, and was deeply interested in the question of monotheism. He had studied the testaments, and the Vedas, and was convinced that the Vedas supplemented the Quran in the understanding of monotheism. On the other hand, Aurangzeb was devoted to the study of the Quran and the hagiological literature, and was strict the observance of the various religious rituals. Dara called Aurangzeb a hypocrite', and Aurangzeb called Dara a heretic'. But it would be wrong to think that the difference of outlook between the two led to a division of the nobility into two camps liberal and orthodox. The nobles acted on the basis of their personal contacts, interests etc. On their part, the princes tried to win over the influential nobles and rajas to their side by establishing personal linkages and holding out favours to them. Thus, Aurangzeb had been in contact with Jai Singh at least since 1636. In a letter to Jai Singh dated 1647 Aurangzeb acknowledges the Raja's allegiance to him, though outwardly inclined towards Shuja.

On hearing the military preparations of Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb, and their decision to march to Agra, on the ostensible pretext of visiting their father and freeing him from the control of the 'heretical' Dara, Shah Jahan, at the instance of Dara, sent an army to the east, led by Dara's eldest son Sulaima Shikoh and aided by Mirza Raja Jai Singh, to deal with Shuja who had crowned himself. Another army was sent to Malwa under Raja Jaswant Singh to persuade Murad who was advancing from Gujarat after crowning himself to turn back. However, on arrival at Dharmat in Malwa, Jaswant Singh found that the forces of Murad and Aurangzeb had joined. Jaswant Singh had no clear instructions how to deal with this situation. The two princes asked him to stand aside and let them proceed to Agra. Although for a mere noble to fight princes of blood was against etiquette, and the combined forces of the two princes were superior, Jaswant considered retreat to be dishonourable. The victory of Aurangzeb at Dharmat (15 April 1658) emboldened his supporters and raised his prestige, while it dispirited Dara and his supporters.

Meanwhile, Dara made a serious mistake. Over confident of the strength of his position, he had assigned for the eastern campaign some of his best troops. Thus, he denuded the capital, Agra. Led by Sulaiman Shikoh, the army moved to the east and gave a good account of itself. It surprised and defeated Shuja near Banaras (February 1658). It then decided to pursue him into Bihar - as if the issue at Agra had been already decided. After the defeat of Jaswant Singh at Dharmat, express letters were sent to these forces

to hurry back to Agra. After patching up a hurried treaty (7 May 1658), Sulaiman Shikoh started his march to Agra from his camp near Monghyr in eastern Bihar. But it was hardly likely that he could return to Agra in time for the likely conflict with Aurangzeb.

After Dharmat, Dara made frantic efforts to seek allies. He sent repeated letters to Jaswant Singh who had retired to Jodhpur. The Rana of Udaipur was also approached. Jaswant Singh moved out tardily to Pushkar near Ajmer. After raising an army with the money provided by Dara, he waited there for the Rana to join him. But the Rana had already been won over by Aurangzeb. Thus, Dara failed to win over even the important Rajput rajas to his side.

The battle of Samugarh (29 May 1658) was basically a battle of good generalship, the sides being almost equally matched in numbers (about 50,000 to 60,000 on each side). In the field, Dara was no match for Aurangzeb. The Hada Rajputs and the Saiyids of Barha upon whom Dara largely depended could not make up for the weakness of the rest of the hastily recruited army. Aurangzeb's troops were battle hardened and well led.

Not only was Dara no match for Aurangzeb as a general, he had become arrogant and too self-confident of himself. Thus, he failed to win over the nobles in general to his side. Nor was he prepared to heed to the advice of others more capable than him. It was a fatal error on his part to confront Aurangzeb himself on the field of battle while Shah Jahan was still the reigning sovereign, and had been advised that he should himself meet Aurangzeb on the field of battle if he refused to recant.

The war between Aurangzeb and Dara was not between religious orthodoxy on the one hand, and liberalism on the other. Both Muslims and Hindu nobles were equally divided in their support to the two rivals. We have already seen the attitude of the leading Rajput rajas. Similarly, Shiah were almost equally divided between Aurangzeb and Dara. A recent study shows that among nobles of 1000 zat rank and above, upto the battles of Samugarh, 27 Iranis supported Aurangzeb, and 23 of them sided with Dara. In this conflict, as in so many others, the attitude of the nobles depended upon their personal interests and their association with individual princes.

There is little reason to accept the widespread belief that like the nobles, members of the royal family were also divided in their support to the various contending princes, princess Jahanara being partisan of Dara, Raushanara a supporter of Aurangzeb, and Gauharara a spy for Murad. Contemporary correspondence including letters of Aurangzeb show that though Jahanara was close to Dara in his religious quest and shared his eclectic outlook, she did not close her doors to her other brothers. Since she was considered to be close to Shah Jahan, the various princes, including Aurangzeb, wrote to her, seeking her support and intermission with the Emperor on their behalf, and on many occasions, she helped them.

After the defeat and flight of Dara, Shah Jahan was besieged in the fort of Agra Aurangzeb forced Shah Jahan into surrender by seizing the source of water supply to the fort. Shah Jahan was confined to the female apartments in the fort and strictly supervised, though he was not ill-treated.

There he lived for eight long years, lovingly nursed by his favourite daughter Jahanara, who voluntarily chose to live within the fort. She re-emerged into public life after Shah Jahan's death and was accorded great honour by Aurangzeb who visited her regularly, and restored her to the position of the first lady of the realm. He also raised her annual pension from twelve lakh rupees to seventeen lakhs. According to the terms of Aurangzeb's agreement with Murad, the kingdom was to be partitioned between the two, with Murad ruling Punjab, Kabul, Kashmir and Sindh. But Aurangzeb had no intention of sharing the empire. Hence, he treacherously imprisoned Murad and sent him to the Gwalior jail. He was killed two years later.

After losing the battle at Samugarh, Dara had fled to Lahore and was planning to retain control of its surrounding areas. But Aurangzeb soon arrived in the neighbourhood, leading a strong army. Dara's courage failed him. He abandoned Lahore without a fight and fled to Sindh. Thus, he virtually sealed his fate. Although the civil war was dragged on for more than two years, its outcome was hardly in doubt. Dara's move from Sindh into Gujarat and then into Ajmer on an invitation from Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, and the subsequent treachery of the latter are too well known. The battle of Deorai near Ajmer (March 1659) was the last major battle Dara fought against Aurangzeb. Dara might well have escaped into Iran, but he wanted to try his luck again in Afghanistan. On the way, in the Bolan Pass, a treacherous Afghan chief made him a prisoner and handed him over to his dreaded enemy. A panel of jurists decreed that Dara could not be suffered to live "out of necessity to protect the faith and Holy law, and also for reasons of state, (and) as a destroyer of the public peace." This is typical of the manner in which Aurangzeb used religion as a cloak for his political motives. Two years after Dara's execution, his son, Sulaiman Shikoh, who had sought shelter with the ruler of Garhwal was handed over by him to Aurangzeb on an imminent threat of invasion. He soon suffered the same fate as his father.

Earlier, Aurangzeb had defeated Shuja at Khajwah near Allahabad (December 1658). Further campaigning against him was entrusted to Mir Jumla who steadily exerted pressure till Shuja was hounded out of India into Arakan (April 1660). Soon afterwards, he and his family met a dishonourable death at the hands of the Arakanese on a charge of fomenting rebellion.

The civil war which kept the empire distracted for more than two years showed that neither nomination by the ruler, nor plans of division of the empire were likely to be accepted by the contenders for the throne. Military force became the only arbiter for succession and the civil wars became steadily more destructive. After being seated securely on the throne, Aurangzeb tried to mitigate, to some extent, the effects of the harsh Mughal custom of war unto death between brothers. At the instance of Jahanara Begum, Sipahr Shikoh, son of Dara, was released from prison in 1671, given a mansab and married to a daughter of Aurangzeb. Murad's son, Izzat Bakhsh, was also released, given a mansab and married to another daughter of Aurangzeb. Earlier, in 1669, Dara's daughter, Jani Begum, who had been looked after by Jahanara as her own daughter, was married to Aurangzeb's third son, Muhammad Azam. There were many other marriages between Aurangzeb's family and the children and grandchildren of his defeated brothers. Thus, in the third generation, the families of Aurangzeb and his defeated brothers became one.

### RELIGIOUS POLICY: FIRST PHASE (1658-79)

Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years. During his long reign, the Mughal empire reached its territorial climax. At its height, it stretched from Kashmir in the north to Jinji in the south, and from the Hindukush in the west to Chittagong in the east. Aurangzeb proved to be a hardworking ruler, and never spared himself or his subordinates in the tasks of government. His letters show the close attention he paid to all affairs of state. He was a strict disciplinarian who did not spare his own sons. In 1686, he imprisoned prince Muazzam on a charge of intriguing with the ruler of Golconda, and kept him in prison for 12 long years. His other sons also had to face his wrath on various occasions. Such was the awe of Aurangzeb that even late in his life, when Muazzam was governor of Kabul, he trembled every time he received a letter from his father who was then in south India. Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb did not like ostentation. His personal life was marked by simplicity. As a pious Muslim, he copied the Quarn and even stitched caps which were sold. But we can hardly accept the account of some contemporary writers that he met his personal expenses by these means. Aurangzeb had a number of wives and mistresses, including the slave girl, Hira Bai (later entitled Zainabadi Mahal) whom he met and married in 1652. Udaipuri Mahal, his favourite, was a Georgian slave girl who had previously belonged to Dara's haram. All of them were maintained in an appropriate style.



Aurangzeb himself was a learned man. Apart from memorizing the Quran after his accession, he was well read in the hadis and Muslim jurisprudence. He was fond of the works of the orthodox Imam Ghazali, as also of Sadi and the liberal sufis, Hafiz and Maulana Rum.

Historians are deeply divided about Aurangzeb's achievements as a ruler. According to some, he reversed Akbar's policy of religious toleration and thus undermined the loyalty of the Hindus to the empire, in turn, leading to popular uprisings which sapped the vitality of the empire. His suspicious nature and his insistence on strictly following the injunctions of the sharia and refusing to give drastic punishments added to his problems so that in the words of Khafi Khan, "all his enterprises were long drawn" and ended in failure. Some modern historians think that Aurangzeb has been unjustly maligned, that the Hindus had become disloyal and too powerful due to the laxity of Aurangzeb's predecessors, so that Aurangzeb had no option but to adopt harsh methods and to try to rally the Muslims on whose support in the long run the empire had to rest. In the recent writings on Aurangzeb, efforts have been made to assess Aurangzeb's political and religious policies in the context of social, economic and institutional developments. There is little doubt about his being orthodox in his beliefs. He was not interested in philosophical debates or in mysticism - though he did occasionally visit Sufi saints for their blessings, and did not debar his sons from dabbling in Sufism. It would be wrong, however, to see Aurangzeb's religious policy in a rigid framework, based on his personal religious beliefs. As a ruler, Aurangzeb had to contend with many political, economic, social and administrative problems. While keen to ensure that the state did not violate the sharia, he could not forget the political reality that any policy which meant the complete alienation of the numerous and powerful Hindu nobles, rajas and zamindars would be unworkable.

For purposes of analysis, Aurangzeb's religious policies can be divided into two broad phases, the first lasting upto 1679, and the second from 1679 to his death in 1707. These two broad phases are divisible into several sub-phases.

A number of moral and religious regulations were issued by Aurangzeb shortly after his accession. He banned sijda or prostration before the ruler, something which the clerics had maintained was reserved for God. Aurangzeb also forbade the kalma being inscribed on coins - since coins could be trampled underfoot or be defiled while passing from hand to hand. He discontinued the festival of Nauroz as it was considered a Zoroastrian practice and was favoured by the Safavid rulers of Iran. Muhtasibs were appointed in all the provinces. These officials were asked to see that people lived their lives in accordance with the sharia. Thus, it was the business of these officials to see that wine and intoxicants such as bhang were not consumed in public places. They were also responsible for regulating the houses of ill repute, gambling dens, etc. and for checking weights and measures. In other words, they were responsible for ensuring that things forbidden by the sharia and the zawabits (secular decrees) were, as far as possible, not flouted openly. However, if the Italian traveller, Manucci, who lived in India for a long time, is to be believed, all these regulations were flouted openly. In appointing muhtasibs, Aurangzeb emphasised that the state was also responsible for the moral welfare of the citizens. But the officials were instructed not to interfere in the private lives of citizens.

In the eleventh year of his reign (1669), Aurangzeb took a number of measures which have been called puritanical, but many of which were of an economic and social character, or against superstitious beliefs. Thus, he forbade singing in the court, the official musicians being pensioned off. Instrumental music and naubat (the royal band) were, however, continued. Singing also continued to be patronized by the ladies in the haram, and by individual nobles. It is of some interest to note that the largest number of Persian works on classical Indian music were written in Aurangzeb's reign, and that Aurangzeb himself was proficient in playing the veena. Thus, the jibe of Aurangzeb to the protesting musicians that they should bury the bier of music they were carrying deep under the earth "so that no echo of it may rise again" was only an angry remark.



Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of jharoka darshana or showing himself to the public from the balcony, since he considered it a superstitious practice and against Islam. Similarly, he forbade the ceremony of weighing the emperor against gold and silver and other articles on his birthdays. This practice which was apparently started during Akbar's reign had become widespread and was a burden on the smaller nobles. But the weight of social opinion was too much. Aurangzeb had to permit this ceremony for his sons when they recovered from illness. He forbade astrologers to prepare almanacs. But the order was flouted by everybody, including members of the royal family. Many other regulations of a similar nature, some of a moral character and some to instill a sense of austerity, and some to ban practices considered against the Islamic spirit, were issued. Thus, the practice of the Emperor putting a tika or saffron paste on the forehead of a new raja was stopped. Public display of Holi and Muharram processions were also stopped. The courtiers were also asked not to wear silk gowns, or gowns of mixed silk and cotton. The throne room was to be furnished in a cheap and simple style; clerks were to use porcelain ink-stands instead of silver ones; the gold railings in the diwan-i-aam were replaced by those of lapis lazuli set on gold. Even the official department of history writing was discontinued as a measure of economy.

Although displaying a puritanical frame of mind, these measures were prompted, in part, by a financial crisis which Aurangzeb faced around this time. Following the set back caused by the civil war, for a succession of years after 1660, there was scanty rainfall and crop failure in one province after another. After his accession, Aurangzeb had forbidden rahdari or transit duty and a large number of cesses, rural and urban, considered illegal. Although many of these cesses had been prohibited by earlier rulers, they had continued to be collected by the jagirdars, and sometimes even in the khalisa or reserved domains. We do not know how seriously these prohibitions were implemented, but we are told that in the khalisa areas alone, rahdari had yielded 25 lakhs of rupees a year. Another tax was pandari or ground rent for stalls in the bazar in the capital and other towns. Another vexatious tax which was abolished in 1666 was the octroi duty on tobacco.

According to the Maasir-i-Alamgiri, the semi-official history of Aurangzeb, in the thirteenth year, it was reported that expenses had exceeded income during the preceding twelve years. Some of the measures of economy adopted by Aurangzeb were "the retrenchment of many items in the expenditure of the Emperor, the princes and the Begums".

It seems that Aurangzeb was keen to promote trade among the Muslims who depended almost exclusively on state support. In 1665, he reduced the duty on import of goods by Muslim traders from five per cent to two and a half per cent, and two years later abolished it altogether. But he had to reimpose it when he found that Muslim traders were abusing it by presenting goods of Hindu traders as theirs! However, it was kept at two and a half per cent for the Muslims.

Similarly, in 1671 he passed orders that karoris of all crown-lands should be Muslims and all governors and local officials were asked to dismiss their accountants diwan) and clerks (peshkars) and replace them by Muslims. But this led to an uproar among the nobles, since sufficient competent Muslims were not available. According to Khafi Khan, the measure was, therefore, withdrawn, a fact which many historians fail to notice. However, these again showed a narrow and limited outlook on the part of Aurangzeb, particularly on social and economic issues.

## HINDU TEMPLES

We may now turn our attention to some of the other measures of Aurangzeb which may be called discriminatory and show a sense of bigotry towards people professing other religions. The most important were Aurangzeb's attitude towards temples, and the levying of jizyah.

At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb reiterated the position of the sharia regarding temples, synagogues, churches, etc. that "long standing temple should not be demolished but no new temples allowed to be built." Further, old places of worship could be repaired "since buildings cannot last for ever". This position is clearly spelt out in a number of extant farmans he issued to the brahmanas of Banaras, Vrindavan, etc.

Aurangzeb's order regarding temples was not a new one. It reaffirmed the position which had existed during the Sultanat period and which had been reiterated by Shah Jahan early in his reign. In practice, it left wide latitude to the local officials as to the interpretation of the words "long standing". The private opinion and sentiment of the ruler in the matter was also bound to weigh with the officials. For example, after the rise of the liberal-minded Dara as Shah Jahan's favourite, few temples had been demolished in pursuance of his order regarding new temples. Aurangzeb, as governor of Gujarat, ordered a number of new temples in Gujarat to be destroyed, which often meant merely defacing the images and bricking up the temples. At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb found that the images in these temples had been restored and idol worship had been resumed. Aurangzeb, therefore, ordered again in 1665 that these temples be destroyed. The famous temple of Somnath which he had ordered to be destroyed earlier in his reign was apparently one of the temples mentioned above.

Aurangzeb's order regarding ban on new temples did not, apparently lead to a large-scale destruction of temples at the outset of the reign. As Aurangzeb encountered political opposition from a number of quarters, such as the Marathas, Jats, etc., he seems to have adopted a new stance. In case of conflict with local elements, he now considered it legitimate to destroy even long standing Hindu temples as a measure of punishment and as a warning. Further, he began to look upon temples as centres of spreading subversive ideas, that is, ideas which were not acceptable to the orthodox elements. Thus, he took strict action when he learnt in 1669 that in some of the temples in Thatta, Multan and especially at Banaras, both Hindus and Muslims used to come from great distances to learn from the brahmanas. Aurangzeb issued orders to the governors of all provinces to put down such practices and to destroy the temples where such practices took place. As a result of these orders, a number of temples such as the famous temple of Vishwanath at Banaras, and the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura built by Bir Singh Deo Bundela in the reign of Jahangir were destroyed and mosques erected in their place. The destruction of these temples had a political motive as well. Mustaid Khan, author of the Maasir-i-Alamgiri says, with reference to the destruction of the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura, "On seeing this instance of the strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the proud rajas were stifled, and in amazement they stood like images facing the wall".

It was in this context that many temples built in Orissa during the last ten to twelve years were destroyed. But it is wrong to think that there were any orders for the general destruction of temples. Mustaid Khan, who wrote his history of Aurangzeb in the early part of the eighteenth century and who had been closely associated with Aurangzeb, asserts that the motive of Aurangzeb was to "establish Islam" and that the Emperor ordered the governors to destroy all temples and to ban public practice of the religion of these misbelievers, that is, the Hindus. If Mustaid Khan's version was correct, it would have meant Aurangzeb going beyond the position of the sharia, for the sharia did not ban the non-Muslims from practising their faiths as long as they observed certain conditions, such as loyalty to the ruler, etc. Nor have we found any farmans to the governors ordering general destruction of temples, as suggested by Mustaid Khan.

The situation was different during periods of hostilities. Thus, during 1679-80, when there was a state of war with the Rathors of Marwar and the Rana of Udaipur, many temples of old standing were destroyed at Jodhpur and its parganas, and at Udaipur.

In his policy towards temples, Aurangzeb may have remained formally within the framework of the sharia, but there is little doubt that his stand in the matter was a setback to the policy of broad toleration followed by his predecessors. It led to a climate of opinion that destruction of temples on any excuse would not only be condoned but would be welcomed by the emperor. We do have instances of grants to Hindu temples and mathas by Aurangzeb. Thus, he gave grant to the gurudwara of Guru Ram Das at Dehra Dun. Grants to other temples have also been listed. Although an order had been issued in Gujarat in 1672 banning revenue-free grants to Hindus, such grants continued to be given to some of the Vaishnava temples at Vrindavan, to the jogis at Jakhbar in Punjab, to the Nath Panthi jogis in Sarkar Nagaur, and grant of 100 pakka bighas of land to Panth Bharati in pargana Siwana in Rajasthan "since he feeds travellers and is worthy of offering prayers". There are instances of grants to others also. However, there is little doubt that the trend was to limit revenue-free grants given to non-Muslims. On the whole, the atmosphere created by Aurangzeb's restrictive policy towards the Hindus, and of his demolition of many temples of old standing on one ground or another was bound to create disquiet among a large section of the Hindus, leading to disaffection and opposition.

## JIZYAH

Although Aurangzeb had not raised the slogan of defending Islam before the battle of Samugarh with Dara, and had tried to befriend the Rajput rajas as we have seen, there were a number of factors which make it necessary for Aurangzeb to present himself as the defender of the sharia, and to try and win over the theologians. A principal factor was the popular revulsion against his imprisonment of his father, Shah Jahan, and his treatment of his brothers, Murad and Dara, both of whom had the reputation of being liberal patrons of the poor and the needy. Aurangzeb was shocked when at the time of his second coronation in 1659, the chief qazi refused to crown him since his father was alive. However, Aurangzeb was rescued when Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujarati gave a ruling that since Shah Jahan was too feeble to discharge the duties of sovereignty, it was legitimate to crown him. Aurangzeb rewarded Abdul Wahab by making him the Chief Qazi.

Aurangzeb rewarded the theologians not only by putting down practices considered un-Islamic, as we have noted. He renovated mosques and monasteries which had fallen into disrepair, and appointed imams, muezzins and attendants with salaries. The theologians were obviously the main beneficiaries of these measures.

Another step taken at this time which would have gladdened the hearts of the orthodox ulama was the revival of pilgrim taxes on the Hindus at Mathura, Kurukshetra etc., thus reversing Akbar's policy in the matter.

However, the major problem Aurangzeb faced was the question of jizyah. Orthodox clerical opinion had been demanding its reimposition on the ground that it was wajib (compulsory) according to the sharia, and also because they felt that jizyah was a means of asserting the superior status of the theologians and Islam, and emphasizing the dependent and inferior position of the non-Muslims in an essentially Islamic state. We are told that immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb considered reimposition of jizyah, but postponed the matter due to "certain political exigencies". That it was re-imposed twenty-two years after Aurangzeb's accession to the throne is a clear indication that its institution was on account of political considerations, not "to promote the faith and to promote the laws of the sharia" as was the official explanation and has been dutifully reproduced by a number of contemporaries.

According to some English factors and the Italian, Manucci, Aurangzeb was motivated by the need to replenish his treasury, which had been exhausted by wars, and to compel the poorer Hindus to convert to Islam. According to some modern historians, Aurangzeb was justified in imposing jizyah which was sanctioned by sharia since he had abolished the various taxes considered illegal.

However, these arguments do not stand up to a critical scrutiny. We are told by the contemporary Khafi Khan that the various taxes remitted by the Emperor, continued to be included in the jama dami or the assessed income of the jagirs. In consequence, the remissions remained a dead letter.



Second, the income from jizyah was put in a separate treasury the proceeds from which were disbursed among the needy Muslims. Thus, it hardly relieved the general treasury. Regarding the economic impact of jizyah on poor Hindus, it should be borne in mind that the Hindus had the reputation of being very strong in their faith, this being conceded by sufis, such as Nizamuddin Auliya, many poets and other thinkers. Although jizyah had been levied and collected since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanat, it had not led to any large scale conversions. Nor did it happen during Aurangzeb's reign, else Aurangzeb would have been praised to the skies for his great success. As is well known, large scale conversions in Sindh, West Punjab, Kashmir and East Bengal had taken place much before Aurangzeb's accession.

Nevertheless, jizyah was regressive and bore more heavily on the poor than on the more affluent. The assesses were divided into three classes according to property i.e. those with property less than 200 dirham, those between 200 to 10,000 dirham, and those above, 10,000 dirham. They paid 12, 24 or 48 dirham or Rs. 3/1/3, Rs. 6/2/3 and Rs. 13/1/3 per year. The tax bore most heavily on the first of these, called tailors, dyers, cobblers, shoemakers etc. since the average wage of a worker or artisan in those days was about Rs. 3 per month. However, it should be noted that apart from women, the insane and those in government service who were exempt, jizyah was not levied on the indigent who is defined as one who owned no property, and whose income from labour did not exceed his and his family's necessities. In other words, jizyah was a property tax, not an income tax.

What, then, were the motives of Aurangzeb in reimposing jizyah after such a long lapse after his accession? It would appear that he took this step at a time when he was facing a growing political crisis. By 1676, all efforts to conciliate Shivaji had failed. After crowning himself, he had gone on to make extensive conquests in the South, with the active aid and support of the brothers, Madanna and Akhanna, who dominated Golconda. Following the internal dissolution of the state of Bijapur, Aurangzeb had launched a series of wars aimed at its conquest and the containments of the Marathas. But these had failed. To the essentially conservative mind of Aurangzeb, he hoped to meet the situation by a striking declaration which would rally the Muslims behind him, especially if he decided to invade the brother Muslim rulers of the Deccan, as appeared likely.

The reimposition of jizyah was not only meant to serve this purpose but to further cement his alliance with the theologians. Jizyah was to be collected by honest, God-fearing Muslims, who were especially appointed for the purpose. Its proceeds which we are told, amounted to rupees four crores in the entire kingdom, which was a large sum of money, and was reserved for the ulama. It was thus a big bribe for the theologians among whom there was a lot of unemployment. But the disadvantages outweighed the possible advantages of the step. It was bitterly resented by the Hindus who considered it as a mark of discrimination. Its mode of collection also had some special features. The payee was required to pay it personally and sometimes in the process he suffered humiliation at the hands of the theologians. In the rural areas,amins were appointed for collecting jizyah, but, perhaps, the amount was collected along with the land revenue. In the cities well-to-do Hindus were often harassed by the collectors of jizyah. We, therefore, hear of a number of occasions when Hindu traders shut their shops and observed hartal against the measure. Also, there was a lot of corruption, and it is said that the collectors of jizyah made lakhs. In a number of instances, the atnin or collector of jizyah was killed for his extortionate ways.

Jizyah may also be seen as the final step to establish the hegemonic position of Islam in the state. While this did not necessarily mean oppression of the non-Muslims, or denying them the regulated religious freedom as dhimmis or protected people, it implied giving the Muslims a superior position.

Aurangzeb's religious policies led to a series of contradictions, which he found hard to resolve. Although Aurangzeb tried as far as possible to satisfy the orthodox clerical elements, even he could not fulfil completely the "orthodox" agenda put forward by men like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. He refused to throw the Hindu rajas and others out of the service of the state, saying tersely on a petition "What connection does religion have with worldly affairs"? And what right have matters of religion to enter into bigotry?



For you is your religion, for me is mine. If this rule (suggested by you) were established it would be my duty to extirpate all (Hindu) rajas and their followers." In fact, the number of Hindus in the imperial service increased, both in absolute numbers and proportionately at all levels during the second half of his reign, as we shall note.

## SECOND PHASE (1679-1707)

Aurangzeb's modern biographer, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, was of the opinion that "Neither age nor experience of life softened Aurangzeb's bigotry." However, recent research leads us to modify this opinion.

Between 1679 and 1687, Aurangzeb tried to project himself as "the asylum of Muslims", who "honours none but the people of the true faith". During the period, the Deccani rulers were denounced as "lustful and sinful" for their alliance with the Maratha infidels so that "no respect was left for Islam and its adherents; mosques were without splendour while idol-temples flourished." (Maasir-i-Alarnngiri).

It was during this period that conversion of individuals, often for petty gains, was made much of, though privately Aurangzeb complained of the boastfulness and lack of manners of some of the new converts. However, by these means Aurangzeb could neither detach the Deccani rulers from their alliance with the Marathas, nor were the theological elements even in the camp were impressed. Thus, Qazi Shaikul Islam, the upright and highly respected sadr of the imperial army, refused in 1688 to give a fatwa that war against a Muslim king, that is the "heretical" Deccani rulers, was 'lawful'. He resigned his post, and decided to go to Mecca for a visit. Aurangzeb had to appoint a new chief qazi.

After the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was faced with the task of winning over the powerful rajas, nayaks and deshmukhs of Telangana and the Karnataka. This led to a modification of his policy of destroying even old standing temples as a reprisal for political opposition. Thus, the contemporary observer, Bhimsen, noted "The temples in Bijapur and Hyderabad Karnataka are beyond numbering, and each temple is like the fort of Parenda and Sholapur. In the whole world nowhere else are there so many temples". Many of the famous temples are named and described in detail by Bhimsen. He goes on to say, "From the neighbourhood of Adoni and Kanchi and the kingdom of Jinji and the ocean, there is not a village in which there is no temple, large or small". However, except in a few cases, little attempt was made by Aurangzeb to destroy them for fear of rousing further opposition.

From the beginning of his accession, Aurangzeb used to send large sums of money to Mecca to be distributed among the shaikhs and the poor. However, he gradually became disillusioned at the corrupt and grasping ways of the theologians, and wrote to the Sharif of Mecca, warning him of appropriating for himself the money sent for the needy at Mecca. He concluded sadly, "Why should it (the money) not be distributed among the poor of this country because the manifestation of God is reflected in every country"?

Aurangzeb was unrelenting in his opposition in giving remissions in jizyah. However, in case of crop failure, such remissions were regularly given, often at the instance of the jagirdars. Finally, in 1704, Aurangzeb suspended jizyah "for the duration of the war in the south," Since an end to war with the Marathas was nowhere in sight, it was tantamount to its abolition in the south. Jizyah was formally abolished in 1712 at the instance of Asad Khan and Zulfiqar Khan, two of the leading nobles of Aurangzeb.

Some modern writers are of the opinion that Aurangzeb's measures were designed to convert India from a dar-ul-harb or a land inhabited by infidels to dar-ul-Islam, or a land inhabited by Muslims. This is not correct. According to sharia, a state in which the laws of Islam prevailed and where the ruler was a Muslim was dar-ul-Islam. In such a state, the Hindus who submitted to the Muslim ruler, and agreed to pay jizyah were zimmi or protected people according to the sharia. Hence, the state in India had been considered a dar-ul-Islam since the advent of the Turks. Even when Mahadji Sindhia, the Maratha general, occupied Delhi in 1772, and the Mughal emperor became a puppet in his hands, the theologians

decreed that the state remained a dar-ul-Islam since the laws of Islam were allowed to prevail and the throne was occupied by a Muslim. Although Aurangzeb considered it legitimate to encourage conversion to Islam, evidence of systematic or large-scale attempts at forced conversion is lacking.

Nor were Hindu nobles discriminated against. Athar Ali's study has shown that the number of Hindus in the nobility during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign almost doubled with the Hindus, including Marathas, forming about one-third of the nobility.

Aurangzeb inducted large numbers of Marathas into the service during the latter half of his reign. Of the 96 Marathas who held ranks of 1000 zat and above between 1679 and 1707, 16 held ranks of 5000 and above, 18 held ranks between 3000 and 4000, and 62 from 1000 to 2700, thus for surpassing the Rajputs. However, they were not given important commands or posts, or treated as integral parts of the imperial service. Nor was any attempt made to establish personal or friendly social relations with them, on the model of the Rajputs. The Maratha mansabdars generally held three-monthly jagirs and, as per the practice since the days of Shah Jahan, even from this one-fourth was deducted.

## TERRITORIAL CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE EMPIRE

During the war of succession, many local zamindars and rajas had withheld revenue, or started plundering the neighbouring areas including Mughal territories and royal highways. After seating himself on the throne formally, Aurangzeb embarked upon an era of strong rule. In some cases, such as the north-east and the Deccan, the imperial frontier was advanced. However, his attempt immediately after his succession was to re-assert imperial authority and prestige. This included recovery of areas which had been lost during the war of succession and to which the Mughals felt they had a legal claim. To begin with, Aurangzeb was more concerned with consolidation than conquest and annexation. Thus, he sent an army to Bikaner to enforce obedience to the Mughal emperor, but made no effort to annex it. But in another case, such as Palamau in Bihar, the ruler who was accused of disloyalty was dispossessed and the bulk of his state annexed. The rebel Bundela chief, Champat Rai, who had been an ally of Aurangzeb at first but had taken to a life of plunder, was relentlessly hunted down. But Bundela lands were not annexed.

The rise of the Ahom power in the Assam valley and its conflict with the rulers of Kamata (Kamrup) on the one hand and with the Afghan rulers of Bengal on the other had been a continuous feature during the Sultanat period. The kingdom of Kamata declined by the end of the fifteenth century and was replaced by the kingdom of Kuch (Cooch Bihar) which dominated north Bengal and western Assam. Like the earlier rulers, the Kuch rulers also clashed with the Ahoms. Internal disputes led to the division of the Kuch kingdom in the early seventeenth century and to the entry of the Mughals in Assam at the instance of the Kuch ruler. The Mughals defeated the split-away kingdom and in 1612 occupied the western Assam valley up to the Bar Nadi, or Kuch-Hajo with the help of Kuch armies. The Kuch ruler became a Mughal vassal. Thus, the Mughals came into contact with the Ahoms who ruled eastern Assam across the Bar Nadi. After a long war with the Ahoms who had harboured a prince of the deposed dynasty, a treaty was made with them in 1638 which fixed the Bar Nadi as the boundary between them and the Mughals. Thus, Guwahati came under Mughal control.

There was a long-drawn out war between the Mughals and the Ahoms during the reign of Aurangzeb. The war began with the attempt of the Ahom rulers to expel the Mughals from Guwahati and the neighbouring area and thus complete their control over the Brahmaputra valley. Mir Jumla, who had been appointed the governor of Bengal by Aurangzeb, wanted to make his mark by bringing Cooch Bihar and entire Assam under Mughal rule. He first assaulted Cooch Bihar which had repudiated Mughal suzerainty, and annexed the entire kingdom to the Mughal empire. He next invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla occupied the Ahom capital, Garhgaon, and held it for six months despite rains, and a close siege by the Ahoms. After the rains, he advanced up to the limit of the Ahom kingdom, finally forcing the Ahom king to make a humiliating treaty (1663). The raja had to send his daughter to the Mughal harem, pay a large war indemnity and an annual tribute of 20 elephants. The Mughal boundary was extended from the Bar Nadi to the Bharali river in the north of the Brahmaputra.

Mir Jumla died soon after his brilliant victory. However, the advantages of a forward move in Assam were doubtful since the area was not rich and was surrounded by warlike tribes, such as the Nagas living in the mountains. It was found that the back of Ahom power had not been broken, and that it was beyond Mughal power to enforce the treaty. In 1667, the Ahoms renewed the contest. They not only recovered the areas ceded to the Mughals in 1663 but also occupied Guwahati. Earlier, the Mughals had also been expelled from Cooch Bihar. Thus, all the gains of Mir Jumla were rapidly lost. A long, desultory warfare with the Ahoms lasting a decade and a half followed. For a long period the command of the Mughal forces was with Raja Ram Singh, who had succeeded Mirza Raja Jai Singh to the gaddi of Amber. Ram Singh hardly had the resources for defeating the Ahom ruler. The Ahoms had in the past displayed great powers of endurance, enterprise in war and ability of making rapid marches. The Ahom army consisted almost entirely of infantry, stiffened with elephants. Bearing in mind the jungly terrain, criss—crossed by narrow streams, and full of quagmires, cavalry was not of much use in the area. The Ahoms also had a strong navy mounted with guns. The Ahoms were largely armed with iron spears, but also had swivel guns and match-locks. They were skillful in building wooden stockades behind which the infantry could offer strong points of resistance. When Mir Jumla had campaigned, he had an army of 12,000 horse, 30,000 foot, and a strong flotilla of war-vessels. Raja Ram Singh had only 8000 troopers which included his army of 4000 troopers, 500 ahadis who were match-lockmen, and 500 artillery men, and 15,000 auxiliary archers from Kuch-Bihar. As against this, the Ahoms could, in emergencies, mobilise about 100,000 men, all males in the kingdom being liable for military service. Ram Singh also did not have a strong force of war vessels. The Ahoms, unable to face Mughal artillery, quickly learnt to avoid pitched battles, and use the guerilla mode of warfare.

In this situation, the Mughals were hardly in a position to maintain themselves in the Assam valley. Their only hope was a division in the ranks of the Ahoms. Although the Ahom kingdom was in a state of internal disarray between 1670 and 1681 - "in the short space of eleven years there were no less than seven kings not one of whom died a natural death", the Mughals were unable to take advantage of it. Guwahati was lost and gained a number of times. In 1674, Ram Singh returned home. Finally, in 1681, the Ahoms united under a new ruler, and forced the Mughals to give up Kuch Hajo, and accept the river Manas as the boundary. By that time, Aurangzeb was fully involved in wars in the Deccan, and was not inclined to consider the holding on of a remote and difficult frontier area with little financial return as a matter of priority.

The Mughals had greater interest and success in East Bengal. Following Mir Jumla's death in 1663, Shaista Khan, who had suffered a severe set back at the hands of Shivaji, was appointed Governor of Bengal. Shaista Khan proved to be a good administrator and an able general. He modified Mir Jumla's forward policy. First, he patched up an agreement with the ruler of Cooch Bihar. The Raja re-affirmed his submission to the Mughal emperor, and agreed to pay an indemnity of five and a half lakhs of rupees. Next, he gave his attention to the problem of south Bengal, where the Magh (Arakanese) pirates had been terrorising the area up to Dacca from their headquarters at Chatgaon. Chatgaon (Chittagong) had been a bone of contention between the Muslim rulers of Bengal, and the rulers of Arakan for a long time. With the decline of the power of the rulers of Bengal, Chittagong and its neighbouring areas had passed under the Arakanese. With the help of the Portuguese or Firangi pirates, they had made slave raids and devastated the land up to Dacca and trade and industry had suffered a serious setback. Shaista Khan built up a navy to meet the Arakanese pirates and captured the island of Sondip as a base of operations against Chittagong. Next, he won the Firingis to his side by inducements of money and favours. The Arakan navy near Chittagong was routed and many of the ships captured. Chittagong was assaulted by land and sea and captured early in 1666. The destruction of the Arakanese navy opened the seas to free commerce. This was no minor factor in the rapid growth of Bengal's foreign trade during the period and the expansion of cultivation in east Bengal. In Orissa, the rebellion of the Pathans was put down and Balasore reopened to commerce.



## POPULAR REVOLTS-JATS, SATNAMIS, AFGHANS AND SIKHS

Peasant resistance to the process of centralization of authority, often at the expense of clan/tribal leaders or institutions such as the village community was a continuous feature under Mughal rule, and was often put down by ruthless severity. Simultaneously, efforts were made to draw in the tribal/clan leaders, or the privileged sections in the village in the task of administration, or land revenue assessment and collection by means of gifts, concessions, etc. Thus, repression and fitful efforts at conciliation had gone on all the time. The new feature we find in Aurangzeb's time is greater spirit of defiance and resistance, and better organization, either by local landed elements or charismatic leaders.

There has been a tendency to put all these movements under a common heading, such as Hindu reaction to the narrow, bigoted policies of Aurangzeb, or the result of increased economic exploitation. It is not denied that religion, or economic exploitation played a role in many of these popular uprisings. But that does not help us in understanding the specific features of each of them. It should also be remembered that in medieval times, all anti-establishment movements had to draw upon religion, or use religious slogans as a binding force. The Jat and the Sikh movements led to the setting up of separate regional states, the Jats succeeding in this earlier than the Sikhs. The Afghans also tried to carve out a separate tribal state of their own, but their movement was crushed till an Afghan state arose under different circumstances.

Thus, there was a regional dimension in many of these uprisings, as also in the case of the Marathas which we shall discuss separately.

### Jats and Satnamis

The Jats living on both sides of the river Jamuna had a strong sense of clan brotherhood and egalitarianism reflected in their clan brotherhoods which culminated in a chhaap. The chhaap was somewhat like a tribal jirga but was more hierarchical. The Jats were mostly peasant cultivators, with only a few zamindars in the doab and the trans-Jamuna plains. It is possible that the centralized Mughal state posed a danger to the life style of this peasant brotherhood which was always willing to take recourse to arms against perceived injustice. Thus, there are many instances of the Jats of this area having come into clash with the Mughal state under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. But a prolonged and widespread revolt took place for the first time under Aurangzeb. Early in 1667, the Jais of the Mathura region rose in rebellion under the leadership of Gokla, a small zamindar. The revolt spread, many peasants in neighbouring villages joining the rebels whose numbers swelled to 20,000. Abdun Nabi, the faujdar of Mathura, was killed in a battle with the rebels. He is called a religious and benevolent man but must have been extortionate because the property escheated to the state after his death amounted to 93,000 gold muhars and 13 lakhs of rupees. In view of the growing plundering activities of the Jats, towards the end of the year, Aurangzeb moved from Delhi to Agra. In a hard fought battle, Gokla was defeated and captured. He was killed brutally, his son converted to Islam, and the daughter married to one of the Emperor's slave of high rank.

The Jat uprising had all the characteristics of a peasant uprising. Religion seems to have played hardly a role in the struggle, although Abdun Nabi had erected a lofty mosque at Mathura. However, the temple of Bir Singh Deo Bundela at Mathura was destroyed after the defeat of the Jats.

In 1672, there was another armed conflict between the peasants and the Mughal state at Narnaul, not far from Mathura. This time the conflict was with a religious body called Satnamis. The Satnamis were a sect of bairagis who had their own scriptures. Like Kabir, they believed in monotheism, and condemned rituals and superstition. They had an attitude of sympathy with the poor, and hostility towards authority and wealth. Hence, their appeal lay mainly with the lower classes. They were mostly peasants, artisans and low caste people and have been called "goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other ignoble beings" by a contemporary writer. They did not observe distinctions of caste and rank or between Hindus and Muslims, and followed a strict code of conduct. Starting from a clash with a local official, it soon assumed the character of an open rebellion.



The Satnamis plundered many villages, and after defeating the local faujdar, seized the towns of Narnaul and Bairat. We are told that “the noise of their tumult reached Delhi where the grain supply became scanty and the citizens were greatly alarmed and distracted.” Hence, Aurangzeb sent a large force of 10,000 including artillery under Radandaz Khan and many high officials including Raja Bishan Singh. The rebels fought well but could not prevail against such a large, well organized force.

Meanwhile, discontent among the Jats had continued to simmer, assuming the classic character of withholding of revenue. In retaliation, in 1681, Multafat Khan, the faujdar of the environs of Agra, attacked the Jat village of Sinsani. In course of time, Rajaram, the zamindar of Sinsani organized the Jats of the region and imparted them military training. This was combined with the plundering of the important royal highway linking Agra to Burhanpur and Ajmer. The character of the struggle now changed subtly, primacy being accorded to ousting non-Jat zamindars of the region, and moving towards a Jat dominated state. This led to a conflict between the Jats and the Rajputs over zamindari rights, most of the primary zamindars, that is the cultivating peasants who owned the land being Jats, and the intermediary zamindars, that is those who collected the land revenue being Rajputs. Taking advantage of this situation, Aurangzeb approached Raja Bishan Singh, the Kachhwaha ruler to crush the uprising. Bishan Singh was appointed faujdar of Mathura and the entire area was granted to him in Zamindari. The Jats put up stiff resistance, but by 1691, Rajaram and his successor, Churaman, were compelled to submit. However, unrest among the Jat peasants continued and their plundering activities made the Delhi-Agra road unsafe for travellers. Later on, in the eighteenth century, taking advantage of Mughal civil wars and weakness in the central government, Churaman was able to carve out a separate Jat principality in the area and to oust the Rajput zamindars. Thus, what apparently started as a peasant uprising, was diverted from its character, and culminated in a state in which Jat chiefs formed the ruling class.

## The Afghans

Aurangzeb came into conflict with the Afghans also. Conflict with the hardy Afghan tribesmen who lived in the mountain region between the Punjab and Kabul was not new. Akbar had to fight against the Afghans and, in the process, lost the life of his close friend and confidant, Raja Birbal. Conflict with the Afghan tribesmen had taken place during the reign of Shah Jahan also. These conflicts were partly economic and partly political and religious. With little means of livelihood in the rugged mountains, the Afghans had no option but to prey on the caravans or to enrol in the Mughal armies. There had been a continuous incursion of Afghans into India, and many of them had settled down on the land as cultivators or zamindars, a number of them becoming nobles in various states. But the Pathans of the mountain passes looked down upon them. The fierce love of freedom of the Pathans made service in the Mughal armies difficult. The Mughals generally kept them contented by paying them subsidies. But growth of population or the rise of an ambitious leader could lead to a breach of this tacit agreement. During the reign of Aurangzeb, we see a new stirring among the Pathans. In 1667, Bhagu, the leader of the Yusufzai tribe, proclaimed as king a person named Muhammad Shah who claimed descent from an ancient royal lineage, and proclaimed himself his wazir. It would appear that among the Afghans, as among the Jats, the ambition of setting up a separate state of their own had begun to stir. A religious revivalist movement called the Raushanai, which emphasised a strict ethical life and devotion to a chosen pir, had provided an intellectual and moral background to the movement.

Gradually, Bhagu's movement spread till his followers started ravaging and plundering the Hazara, Attack and Peshawar districts and brought the traffic in the Khyber to a standstill. To clear the Khyber pass and crush the uprising, Aurangzeb deputed the Chief Bakshi, Amir Khan. A Rajput contingent was posted with him. After a series of hard-fought battles, the Afghan resistance was broken. But to watch over them, in 1671 Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, was appointed as thanedar of Jamrud. There was a second Afghan uprising in 1672. The leader of the opposition this time was the Afridi leader, Akmal Khan, who proclaimed himself king and read khutba and struck sikka in his name. He declared war against the Mughals and summoned all the Afghans to join him. According to a contemporary writer, with a following “more numerous than ants and locusts”, they closed the Khyber pass. Moving forward to clear the pass, Amir Khan advanced too far and suffered a disastrous defeat in the narrow

defile. The Khan managed to escape with his life, but 10,000 men perished, and cash and goods worth two crores were looted by the Afghans. This defeat brought other tribesmen into the fray, including Khushhal Khan Khattak, a sworn enemy of Aurangzeb from whose hands he had suffered imprisonment for some time.

In 1674, another Mughal noble Shujaat Khan, suffered a disastrous rout in the Khyber. But he was rescued by a heroic band of Rathors sent by Jaswant Singh. At last, in the middle of 1674, Aurangzeb himself went to Peshawar and remained in the neighbourhood till the end of 1675. By force and diplomacy, the Afghan united front was broken, and peace was slowly restored. A major role in this was played by Amir Khan, the new Mughal governor of Kabul who was adept in tribal politics.

The Afghan uprising shows that sentiments of resistance to the Mughal rule and the urge for regional freedom were not confined to sections of Hindus, such as Jats, Marathas, etc. Also, the Afghan uprising helped to relax Mughal pressure on Shivaji during a crucial period. It also made difficult, if not impossible, a forward policy by the Mughals in the Deccan till 1676 by which time Shivaji had crowned himself and entered into an alliance with Bijapur and Golconda.

## Sikhs

We have already discussed the growth of a democratic, monotheistic movement in the Punjab under Guru Nanak. Akbar had good relations with the gurus who succeeded Nanak, but Guru Arjun came into conflict with Jahangir on a charge of blessing the rebel prince, Khusrav. However, this did not lead to a persecution of the Sikhs as such. In fact, with the exception of a brief detention of Guru Hargovind, relations of the Sikh Gurus with Jahangir were cordial. There was a conflict between Guru Hargovind and the imperial forces on a number of occasions during the early years of Shah Jahan's reign. The cause of the conflict, as R.P. Tripathi says was "almost insignificant". While the emperor was hunting near Amritsar, one of his favourite hawks flew into the Guru's camp and his refusal to give it up led to a series of military clashes (1628). The Sikhs acquitted themselves well, their forces being led by a Pathan, Painsa Khan. At the intervention of a number of well-wishers at the court, such as Wazir Khan, the matter was hushed up.

A second conflict took place when the Guru's attempt to found a new city on the river Beas in the Jullandhar doab was objected to, and sought to be prevented. The Guru, again, had an upper hand. A third conflict took place when a notorious robber, Bidhi Chand, stole two horses from the imperial stables and presented them to the Guru. We are told that these horses "of surpassing beauty and swiftness" were being brought to the Guru when the royal officials had seized them. In the conflict which followed, and in which Painsa Khan joined with the imperialists, the Sikh forces again displayed great feats of valour, but the Guru was forced to leave Kartarpur, and return for some time to the Kashmir hills.

If we probe deeper into the causes of these conflicts, we are led to the conclusion that such a conflict was inherent in the rise of the Sikh movement. The establishment in the Punjab of a small but expanding community of Sikhs with a definite ethico-religious outlook, deeply devoted to the Guru and determined to fight against injustice of all types had, under special circumstances, the potential of coming into conflict with established authority. The appointment of masands in different regions to collect contributions from the faithful, and the transformation in the character of the Sikh gurudom following its acquiring a hereditary character after the nomination of Arjun, the youngest son of Guru Ramdas, as Guru in 1581, and the subsequent decision of his son and successor, Guru Hargovind, to wear two swords, signifying combination of spiritual and temporal power in the Guru were additional factors. Guru Hargovind also started recruiting a military following. We are told that many elements, dissatisfied with the Mughals for one reason or another, including a Pathan such as Painsa Khan, joined the Guru. With the growing power and prestige of the Guru, many Jat cultivators from the Jullandhar and Miyana doab also came under the influence of the Guru. Thus, the Guru began to emerge as a rallying point for discontented elements, and those who stood for justice.

It seems that the Mughal emperors were conscious of the growing importance of the Sikh Gurus, and tried to engage them in order to influence and, if possible, to control them.

Immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb had a special reason to look into the affairs of the Sikhs. There were complaints against Guru Har Kishan, the successor of Guru Hargovind, that he had met Dara Shikoh, blessed him, and assisted him in opposing Aurangzeb, and that he was performing miracles to support a religion in opposition to Islam. The charge was the same as at the time of Jahangir but Aurangzeb adopted a softer approach. He summoned Guru Har Rai to explain his conduct. The Guru sent his son Ram Rai. The Guru's conduct was not considered serious enough to merit punishment, but as a precautionary measure, Ram Rai was detained at Delhi, probably as a security for his father's good behaviour. According to A.C. Bannerji, "It is also possible that the emperor wanted to make the future Guru of the Sikhs amenable to Mughal influence through close contact with the imperial court." However, Ram Rai's conduct at the court displeased Guru Har Rai, and he nominated instead his younger son, Ram Kishan, who was then six years old as Guru. Aurangzeb continued to patronise Ram Rai, giving him a grant of land at Dehra Dun to set himself up there. Aurangzeb does not seem to have interfered in the succession of the Sikh Gurus hereafter. Nor was there any conflict with the Sikhs at the time. Thus, the new Guru, Tegh Bahadur, who succeeded in 1664 journeyed to Bihar, and joined Raja Ram Singh, son of Raja Jai Singh, in his Assam campaign.

Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to the Punjab in 1671. There is a lot of controversy regarding the events which led to Guru Tegh Bahadur's arrest and execution at Delhi in November 1675. There are no contemporary Persian accounts of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur, but from the account of Mustaid Khan in Maasir-i-Alamgiri, based on official records, it is clear that from April 1674 to the end of March 1676, Aurangzeb was out of Delhi, supervising the operations against the Afghans who had risen in rebellion. In the Persian sources written after a hundred years later, it has been made out that in association with one Hafiz Adam, a devotee of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the Guru had resorted to plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Punjab. The Sikh sakhis although written during the 18th century, indirectly support the account in the Persian sources, saying that "the Guru was in violent opposition to the Muslim rulers of the country." However, they ascribe this conflict to the narrow religious policies of Aurangzeb. According to Sikh traditions, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, Sher Afghan, had been trying to force the Hindus of Kashmir to convert, and that the final sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur was a protest against this persecution. Historical legends sometimes provide a meaningful insight, but they are not always reliable regarding details and dates. The Mughal governor of Kashmir since 1671 had been Iftexhar Khan, his predecessor being Saif Khan who was a humane and broad minded person. He had appointed a Hindu to advise him on administrative matters. He is also famous as a builder of bridges. Iftexhar Khan was anti-Shia, but none of the histories of Kashmir, including the history of Kashmir written by Narayan Kaul in 1710 mention any persecution of Hindus.

It is clear that this was a classic case of differing perceptions: the Mughal officialdom saw the Guru only as a disturber of peace and as an outlaw to whom it was legitimate to give the option of Islam or death. The Sikhs saw the Guru as a religious leader who was fighting against oppression and who gave up his life in defence of cherished religious beliefs.

Whether Aurangzeb was at Delhi or elsewhere, the Guru's execution could not have taken without his consent and approval. As in a number of other cases, Aurangzeb's approach in the matter was in a narrow law and order framework. The execution of the Guru was uncalled for. His martyrdom, paved the way for the final transformation of Sikhism into an armed opposition movement. A major role in this was played by Guru Govind Singh. Retreating into the Punjab hills, the Guru soon collected a small army around him which was used by the Raja of Nahan for some time. In 1699, the Guru founded the military brotherhood or khalsa at Anandpur. The initiation into the khalsa through a double edged sword, the willingness to give their lives for the sake of the Guru, the wearing of keshas and arms, the removal of all those masands whose integrity or loyalty was questionable, the vesting of the Guruship either in the khalsa panth or the Adi Granth, the rejection of some old customs and the adoption of some new ones<sup>1</sup> "sharpened the social identity of the Khalsa, who already belonged to a distinct socio-religious fraternity".



We need not follow in detail the military conflicts which followed. The Hill Rajas who had invited the Guru to help in their internecine wars found that the Guru had become too powerful. The combined forces of a number of hill rajas attacked the Guru at Anandpur, but were forced to retreat. The Hill rajas now pressed the Mughal government to intervene against the Guru on their behalf. Another reason for this was that as the number of soldiers with the Guru at Anandpur had increased, it had become necessary for him to raid the neighbouring villages for food and forage.

Aurangzeb was concerned with the growing power of the Guru and had asked the Mughal faujdar earlier "to admonish the Guru". He now wrote to the governor of Lahore and the faujdar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, to aid the hill rajas in their conflict with Guru Govind Singh. The Mughal forces assaulted Anandpur but the Sikhs fought bravely and beat off all assaults. The Mughals and their allies now invested the fort closely. When starvation began inside the fort, the Guru was forced to open the gate, apparently on a promise of safe conduct by Wazir Khan. But when the forces of the Guru were crossing a swollen stream, Wazir Khan's forces suddenly attacked. Two of the Guru's sons were captured, and on their refusal to embrace Islam, were beheaded at Sirhind. The Guru lost two of his remaining sons in another battle. After this, the Guru retired to Talwandi and was generally not disturbed.

It is doubtful whether the dastardly action of Wazir Khan against the sons of the Guru was carried out at the instance of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb, it seems, was not keen to destroy the Guru and wrote to the governor of Lahore "to conciliate the Guru". When the Guru wrote to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, apprising him of the events, Aurangzeb invited him to meet him. Towards the end of 1706, the Guru set out for the Deccan and was on the way when Aurangzeb died. According to some, he had hoped to persuade Aurangzeb to restore Anandpur to him.

Although Guru Govind Singh was not able to withstand Mughal might, he created a tradition and also forged a weapon for the establishment of a Sikh state later on. It showed how an egalitarian religious movement could, under certain circumstances, turn into a political and militaristic movement, and subtly move towards regional independence.

### BREACH WITH MARWAR AND MEWAR

Aurangzeb's relations with the Rajputs passed through a number of phases which need to be analyzed in order to understand the factors which led to the breach with Marwar and Mewar in 1679.

In the early phase, from 1658 to Jai Singh's death in 1667, Aurangzeb's relations with the Rajput rajas were cordial. In fact, during the period the Rajputs were treated as partners in the kingdom, and accorded greater honours than in the time of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. In anticipation of a war of succession, both Dara and Aurangzeb had been courting the nobles, including the Rajput nobles. During the retreat from Balkh, Jai Singh had commanded the rear contingents of Aurangzeb's army, and had also commanded his west wing during the Qandahar campaign. Some bitter remarks of Dara when Jai Singh had served him at Qandahar had alienated Jai Singh from him. That is why he fought against Shuja only till Shah Jahan sat on the throne and could issue orders. He then joined Aurangzeb and played a leading role in hounding Dara. He was so close to Aurangzeb that a contemporary historian, Ishwardas, calls him "the key to the brain" of Aurangzeb. Jai Singh was the major advisor of Aurangzeb regarding Rajput affairs, and it was at his instance that Jaswant Singh who had defected a second time after Samugarh, and opened negotiations which the fugitive Dara, was pardoned, and his mansab restored, and he was posted as governor of Gujarat even without appearing at the court for formal leave as was the custom. Later, Jai Singh was appointed viceroy of the Deccan, a charge normally given to princes of blood, or nobles of the highest rank and confidence. He was one of the few nobles who developed an independent Maratha policy, and tried to persuade Aurangzeb to accept it.

Immediately after his accession, Aurangzeb also had cordial relations with Rana Raj Singh, the ruler of Mewar. On the eve of the war of succession, Aurangzeb entered into correspondence with the Rana, and won him over by promising to restore the parganas sequestered by Shah Jahan in 1654, and revive



his overlordship over Dungapur, Banswara, etc. The Maharana was also assured of religious toleration and of a status higher than that accorded to Rana Sangram Singh. After Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the Rana's mansab was raised to 6000/6000 (1000 du-aspa sih-aspa), the sequestered parganas restored and his overlordship over Dungarpur, Banswara, Devaliya etc. recognized.

Likewise, good relations were maintained with the other important states of Bikaner, Bundi and Kota. Although Raja Karan of Bikaner had abandoned Aurangzeb in the Deccan after hearing of the illness of Shah Jahan and had gone home, he was pardoned. Rao Chhatrasal of Bundi, and Mukund Singh of Kota had laid down their lives fighting against Aurangzeb, but there was no attempt to interfere in the succession there, or to show displeasure in any way.

Thus, despite Aurangzeb's orthodox religious views, during the early years of his reign, the Rajputs were restored to the position of being partners in the kingdom as during the latter part of Akbar's reign. However, relations between Aurangzeb and the Rajputs seem gradually to have become cool. In 1660, Rana Raj Singh was asked to explain why he had invaded Kishangarh and married the young Raja's sister, Charumati, "without Imperial permission". Raj Singh returned a spirited reply that permission was not asked for since Rajputs had always married Rajputs and this had not been forbidden. Moreover, his ancestors had married among the Pawars of Ajmer. He also pointed out that he had not engaged in any hostilities with the Imperial forces. The explanation of the Rana was accepted, but Aurangzeb showed his displeasure by restoring Ghayaspur (Devaliya) and Banswara to Hari Singh, who had been ousted by the Rana and had been at the Imperial court since 1659. Subsequently, the younger sister of Charumati was married to Prince Muazzam.

The activities of Shivaji were a source of worry to Aurangzeb, and both Jaswant Singh and Jai Singh were successively employed against him. Jaswant Singh's negligent conduct during and after Shivaji's surprise attack on Shaista Khan's camp in 1662, and Shivaji's escape from Agra in 1666 from the custody of Kr. Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Rajah Jai Singh, gave an opportunity to hostile tongues to wag. It is difficult to say whether Aurangzeb credited the charge against the two leading Rajput rajas of secretly sympathising with Shivaji. To all intents and purposes, both Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh continued to receive high favours from Aurangzeb, and enjoy his confidence as long as they lived. This did not at all imply that he accepted their suggestions regarding policy. Thus, there were considerable differences in the policy towards Shivaji and the Deccan advocated by Jai Singh, and what was considered desirable and appropriate by Aurangzeb. It was at the instance of Jai Singh that Shivaji agreed to visit Aurangzeb at Agra. Aurangzeb considered Shivaji's escape as a great blow to his prestige, and showed his displeasure by forfeiting for some time Kr. Ram Singh's mansab for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. He also replaced Jai Singh as viceroy of the Deccan and recalled him, although Jai Singh tried hard to prevent it. Dispirited and broken-hearted, Jai Singh died soon after (1667).

Between 1666 and 1679, Aurangzeb had to face a series of domestic challenges, and he undertook a number of measures which had far reaching implications. Thus, there were the Jat and the Satnami uprisings, continued conflict with the Afghans, the Assamese, and the Marathas, and a growing financial crisis reflected in a gap between income and expenditure. One response of Aurangzeb was to reemphasize Islam as a major bond of unity by instituting a series of orthodox measures, and coming closer to the ulama. Another was to despatch Rajput forces to deal with the trouble spots, notably to the two frontiers, the north-east and the north-west. According to the Maasir-i-Alamgiri, "the Emperor decided that one of the great and eminent nobles of the Court should be deputed to Bengal with an army from his presence to put down the enemy and that he should join this to some of the troops serving in Bengal..." Raja Ram Singh who had been restored to the mansab of 5000/5000 following the death of Jai Singh was given this assignment. However, unlike Mir Jumla earlier, he was not given the charge of the subah of Bengal so that its resources could be used for the campaign.

In the north-west, it was in the middle of 1671 that Jaswant Singh was summoned to the court from Gujarat where he was the governor, and appointed thanedar of Jamrud. Although under the Mughals, the importance of a post depended upon the rank of the holder, and Jaswant Singh outranked both M.

Amin Khan, the subedar of Kabul, and Fidai Khan, the governor of Lahore, and held an independent charge, there seems to have been some surprise at his appointment to such a low post because the historian Ishwardas who was in the region, serving Qazi Shaikh-ul-Islam, tried to cover it up by saying that Jaswant Singh had been appointed to the "sardari of Kabul".

The surprising part was not the initial appointment of Ram Singh and Jaswant Singh to these two trouble spots, but that they were virtually made to languish there for long periods. It does not, of course, follow that the presence of these premier Rajput rajas at the court would have influenced Aurangzeb's policies. But their virtual banishment to distant places does support the suggestion of the contemporary observer, Mamuri, that before his departure for the Deccan, i.e. during this period, Aurangzeb had been exercising restraints in promoting the Rajputs.

Even more surprising was the fact that when Aurangzeb revived the forward policy in the Deccan after 1676, the Rajputs were hardly involved in the campaigning there. All this suggests a growing reservation on the part of Aurangzeb towards the Rajputs which forms the background to the breach with Marwar and Mewar, following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh at Jamrud in 1678 after a brief illness of about a month.

There has been a lot of controversy about the factors which led to the breach between Aurangzeb and Marwar and Mewar, the two leading Rajput states. Sir Jadunath Sarkar considered it a consequence of the growing rift between Aurangzeb and the Rajputs following Aurangzeb's narrow religious policy. He was of the opinion that Aurangzeb wanted to annex or weaken Marwar because "his plan of forcible conversion of the Hindus required that Jaswant's state should sink into a quiescent dependency or a regular province of the empire". Although Sir Jadunath's conclusions were contested by a number of historians, two contemporary sources which have recently come to light — the Persian Waqa-i-Ajmer<sup>1</sup> and the Rajasthani Jodhpur Hukumat-ri-Bahi - have thrown a flood of fresh light on the subject. The former is the secret report of a news-writer posted at Ranthambhor and Ajmer during the Rathor rebellion and who then accompanied the Imperial army in the Rajput war. The Jodhpur Hukumat-ri-Bahi deals with the Jodhpur state under Jaswant Singh, and gives in detail, the developments in the Maharana's camp from the time of his death till the arrival of Durga Das and the Ranis at the court at Delhi, and their subsequent flight to Jodhpur.

Maharaja Jaswant Singh who died at the age of 52 on 28 Nov. 1678 (Bahi) had no surviving heir, one of his sons Prithvi Singh having died of small-pox at Agra in 1667, and another son Jagat Singh in 1676. The death of Jaswant Singh raised the problem who was to succeed to the gaddi. There were no definite principles regulating the succession in Marwar. According to Jahangir, the rule of primogeniture did not obtain among the Rathors, the son whose mother was the special favourite of the father being nominated to the gaddi. Accordingly, in 1638, Maharaja Gaj Singh had set aside the elder son, Amar Singh, and nominated Jaswant Singh. The nomination was accepted by Shah Jahan although Jaswant Singh was only a minor, whereas Amar Singh had performed useful service against both Khan-i-Jahan Lodi and Juhar Singh in the Deccan, and had risen to the rank of 3000/2500. Amar Singh was granted the appendage of Nagor which had been earlier held by Rao Sur Singh of Bikaner. During the minority of Jaswant Singh, Marwar was administered by an imperial nominee, Mahesh Das Rathor, no objection being raised to this from any side.

When news reached Aurangzeb at Agra on 10 December of the death of Jaswant Singh without leaving a male heir, he issued orders that the state of Marwar including Jodhpur should be taken into khalisa, and a detailed inventory prepared of the property left behind by Jaswant Singh. He also decided to march to Ajmer personally. Meanwhile, the parganas of Sojat and Jaitaran were settled on the family of the deceased Maharaja for their support, on the request of the sardars accompanying the Ranis to Delhi (Bahi).

There is no reason to suppose that the taking of Jodhpur into khalisa signified its “annexation” to the Empire. Apart from the fact that the state already formed a part of the Mughal Empire, though it enjoyed autonomy in internal matters, there were many precedents of a state being occupied pending the settlement of a disputed succession. Thus, in 1669 when Rai Singh had usurped the gaddi of Nawanagar from his nephew, Satarsal (Chhatrasal), the state was occupied, the name of the capital being changed to Islamnagar and officials appointed to administer the state. After some time the state was restored to Tamachi, the son of Rai Singh, on the condition of “loyalty and strictly enforcing the regulations regarding religious practices”. Another parallel case was that of Jaisalmer. In 1650, on the death of Rawal Manohardas, who had died issueless, the queens and the Bhatias nominated Ram Chandra, a descendant of Rawal Maldeo’s second son, Bhawani Singh. However, Shah Jahan conferred the kingdom on Sabal Singh, a descendant of Rawal Maldeo’s eighth son, Khetsi. Jaswant Singh was deputed to lead an army to instal the Imperial nominee and, as a reward, was assigned the jagir of Pokharan.

Apart from the disputed succession, another reason for the state being taken into khalisa, and of Aurangzeb’s decision to march to Ajmer, was that on the death of the Maharaja, the various zamindars and other elements who had been subject to him, withheld revenues. In many cases, such as Ranthambhor, Sojat and Jodhpur disturbances were created. Some of the parganas, such as Phalodi and Pokharan, which had been allotted in jagir to the Maharaja, were claimed by the neighbouring states, and they prepared to use force to enforce their claims. The road to Ahmedabad had also become unsafe.

The escheating of Jaswant Singh’s property was not unusual either, escheat being applied to all nobles who died in debt to the state. Like most Mughal nobles, Jaswant Singh owed money to the state. As governor of Gujarat till 1672, he owed “a large sum to the government”, and had been ordered to pay back in instalments of two lakhs of rupees annually. We are told that Jaswant Singh was not a good manager of money. He had given most of his villages in patta to his sardars, keeping only 32 villages for his own expenses. As a result, he had not been able to clear his dues. (Waqai).

Following the death of Jaswant Singh, claims to the Marwar gaddi were put forward by Indra Singh, who was the grandson of Jaswant Singh’s elder brother, Amar Singh, and by Anup Singh, who was the son of a daughter of Amar Singh. Indra Singh argued that a great injustice had been done when the claims of Amar Singh were passed over. He pleaded that this ancient wrong should now be put right. He also offered to pay twenty lakhs of rupees as peshkash. Anup Singh offered to pay a peshkash of twenty-five lakhs and also offered to realise twenty lakhs for the Imperial treasury from Jaswant Singh’s estate. (Waqai).

Rani Hadi, the chief queen of Raja Jaswant Singh, who was then in residence at Jodhpur, stoutly objected to vacating the town and the fort pleading that Jodhpur was the watan of Jaswant Singh and that it was against custom that his descendants should be dispossessed. She had no objection if, leaving the pargana of Jodhpur, the rest of Marwar remained under khalisa. Two of the Ranis of Jaswant Singh were in an advanced stage of pregnancy, Rani Hadi apparently wanted to delay a decision by Aurangzeb till their confinement. The claim of Rani Hadi was backed by a strong body of Rathors, and by Rana Raj Singh of Mewar, who deputed an army of 5000 horses under one of his leading men, Sanwal Das, to help Rani Hadi.

The claim of Rani Hadi and her support by a strong section among the Rathors and by the Rana of Mewar, created a piquant situation. On behalf of Aurangzeb, it was pointed out by the Imperial faujdar at Ajmer, Iftekhar Khan, that “mansab and raj could not be conferred on women and servants.” He asked why no objection had been raised when Sojat and Jaitaran had been assigned to support Jaswant Singh’s family? He hinted darkly that “Jaswant Singh had been faithless to the salt on two occasions.” He also conveyed Aurangzeb’s willingness to convert the pattas of Jaswant’s followers into Imperial pattas or jagirs to allay their apprehensions that they would be displaced if Jodhpur was conferred on someone else (Waqai). But at the instance of Rani Hadi, the Rathors refused to yield Jodhpur, and prepared to offer resistance.



In order to overawe Rani Hadi and her supporters, and to enforce his orders, Aurangzeb left Delhi for Ajmer on January 9, 1679 at the head of a strong army. He also summoned Asad Khan, Shaista Khan and prince Akbar to his side. The supporters of Rani Hadi were in no position to withstand these overwhelming forces. Rani Hadi, therefore, gave way, and the Imperial forces entered Jodhpur. A diligent search was now made for any hidden treasure the Maharaja may have left behind, the grounds of Siwanah fort also being dug up in the process. A full complement of Mughal officers, including a qazi and a muhtasib, were posted at Jodhpur and in other towns and parganas of Marwar. But Jodhpur fort itself remained in the possession of Rani Hadi.

Meanwhile, news was received on 26 February of the birth of two posthumous sons to the Ranis of the Maharaja at Lahore. This completely altered the picture. The claims of the sons of Jaswant Singh were now supported, among others, by Rao Anup Singh, the ruler of Bikaner, and by Khan-i-Jahan, the Imperial Bakshi. The claims of the various sides were pressed with a great deal of vigour and canvassing, causing a good deal of annoyance to Aurangzeb. Finally on May 26, he gave the gaddi of Marwar to Indra Singh for a peshkash of thirty-six lakhs of rupees.

Earlier, desperately seeking to delay a decision in favour of Indra Singh, Rani Hadi had secretly made an astounding offer -that the Rathors would themselves destroy all the temples in Marwar if the tika was given to a son of Jaswant Singh. (Waqai). This offer which had been made at the instance of Tahir Khan, the faujdar of Jodhpur, does no credit to Rani Hadi. Though it was duly rejected by Aurangzeb, it shows the extent to which Aurangzeb's motives were being misunderstood by the Rajputs as well as by his own officials, a general impression having been created that Aurangzeb would like to see even old Hindu temples destroyed on any excuse or opportunity. Some other actions of Aurangzeb, such as the appointment of qazi and muhtasibs, etc. to Jodhpur and to the other towns of Marwar, deputing teams of officials and stone-cutters to systematically demolish temples in Marwar as if the Emperor had occupied hostile territory, and his decision to re-impose the jizyah after his return from the Ajmer campaign were also bound to exacerbate Rajput fears and apprehensions, and to make a peaceful solution of the dispute more difficult. As a last resort, Rani Hadi urged that rather than Jodhpur being conferred upon Indra Singh, it should remain in khalisa. (Waqai) If Aurangzeb had desired to reduce Marwar to "a quiescent dependency" in order to further his objective of the forcible conversion of the Hindus, as has been suggested by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, he should have accepted Rani Hadi's offer and kept Marwar in khalisa. Or, he should have set up a minority administration under one of the sons of Jaswant Singh and appointed a diwan to control the kingdom, as had been done by Shah Jahan for some time. The main objection of the Rajputs to Indra Singh's appointment was apparently their fear that it would be a precedent that a direct descendant of a raja may be set aside by the Mughal Emperor on his own. This, in conjunction with the apprehensions created among the Rajputs by Aurangzeb's other actions such as destruction of temples in Marwar, may explain the subsequent developments.

On 15 April, the two minor sons of Jaswant Singh reached Delhi along with their mothers and Durga Das. The Rajputs again pressed the claims of the two sons with great vehemence. Their claims were also backed by Khan-i-Jahan, the Mir Bakshi, who had always considered Jaswant Singh a brother. But Aurangzeb had already decided to partition the kingdom in order to satisfy the claims of both the sides. Before the grant of the tika of Jodhpur to Indra Singh, Aurangzeb had offered a mansab to Ajit Singh, the son of Jaswant Singh, who had been presented at the Court. After the event, it was again suggested that since Ajit Singh had Sojat and Jaitaran, he should serve the Emperor by keeping a chauki of 500 men in the Deccan. (Bahi).

It may be noted that the assessed income of Sojat and Jaitaran was Rs. 4 lakhs, as against an assessed income of about 6 lakhs for Jodhpur and Nagor. Such a division would have seriously weakened Jodhpur, and can only be explained in the context of Aurangzeb's reservations about the Rajputs to which we have referred above. The Rathor sardars, led by Durga Das, rejected this preferred compromise, which they felt was against the best interests of the state. Angered at the rejection of his offer by the sardars, Aurangzeb ordered that the princes and their mothers be put in confinement at the fort of Nurgarh. This



alarmed the Rajput sardars who escaped from Delhi with one of the princes after a valiant fight. The arrival of Ajit Singh and Durga Das in Jodhpur led to great rejoicing, and was the beginning of a Rathor uprising against the Mughals. Tahir Khan, who had been posted at Jodhpur, was compelled to retreat to Merta, while Indra Singh, who had been camping near Jodhpur, had to retire to Nagor. Thus, all the arrangements made by Aurangzeb collapsed, and a new stage was reached in the Marwar crisis. The Rathors trooped into Jodhpur and, amid great rejoicing and on an auspicious moment, the tika was given to the elder of the two sons with the title of Ajit Singh. In the flush of success, the Rathors ousted Mughal officials from a number of other areas such as Jaitaran and Siwana. However, the Rathors failed to dislodge the Mughals from Merta.

Aurangzeb seems now to have decided that the Rajputs needed to be taught a stern lesson. He deputed a strong force under Sarbuland Khan to march on Jodhpur. Heavy reinforcements were called in from the distant provinces. Soon afterwards, Indra Singh was removed from the gaddi on the ground that "he was too incompetent to rule the country and put down the disturbances". According to the Imperial news-reporter, there was "disaffection of people high and low towards Indra Singh and their total opposition to him". (Waqai). This step could have cleared the ground for an agreement with Ajit Singh, for Aurangzeb's action implied reversion to the position which existed before the recognition of Indra Singh, and was in line with the suggestion of Rani Hadi, that Jodhpur should be kept under khalisa till the claims of Jaswant Singh's sons were accepted. The fact that the child who had been left behind by the Rajputs at Agra, and whom Aurangzeb pretended to regard as genuine, was converted to Islam, named Muhammadi Raj and ordered to be brought up in the haratn, is not a proof of the evil intention of Aurangzeb for it was a well known convention that if a raja's son changed his religion, willingly or unwillingly, he lost all claim to his hereditary principality. Thus, after defeating Jujhar Singh Bundela, Shah Jahan had conferred the gaddi on his cousin, Devi Singh, and had either killed the sons of Jujhar Singh or converted them to Islam in order that they may forfeit their right to the gaddi for all time.

However, for the time being, Aurangzeb insisted that Ajit Singh who had escaped with Durga Das was an imposter (jali bachcha). He thus ruled out any negotiations with him. After a sharp engagement near Ajmer in August with Tahawwur Khan, the Imperial faujdar, the Rathors did not risk any further pitched battles with the Mughals, but retreated into the desert tracts, to carry on sporadic warfare. Towards the end of September, Aurangzeb himself reached Ajmer. For the time being, resistance in Marwar had been crushed and the Rathor capital, Jodhpur, occupied. Even Rani Hadi submitted after some time, and was allotted the pargana of Baran for her maintenance. Durga Das escaped with Ajit Singh to the Mewar territories where he was welcomed by the Rana, and the jagir of Kelwa was allotted for the maintenance of Ajit Singh.

## Mewar

If the Rathors had not received active help and encouragement from Rana Raj Singh from the outset, it is likely that their resistance to Aurangzeb would have collapsed. Out of all the states in Rajasthan, only Mewar was in a position to defy the Mughals for any length of time on account of its size, terrain and geographical location. Although Rana Amar Singh had submitted to the Mughals in 1615, the Ranas could never forget that at one time they had dominated southern and eastern Rajputana from Ajmer to Malwa, and from the boundary of Gujarat to the outskirts of Agra. Under Akbar and his successors, other Rajput states, such as Marwar, Bikaner and Amber had forged ahead. With Mughal support and patronage, the rulers of these states had consolidated and extended their hereditary principalities by bringing under their subjection territories which were controlled by an intermediate range of rajas and zamindars. No such favours had been extended to Mewar. On the other hand, it had been subjected to galling restrictions regarding Chittor, and Imperial policy had moved in the direction of granting an independent status not only to Harauti but to some of the states on the southern border of Mewar, such as Banswara, Durgapur, Pratapgarh, Devaliya, etc. To crown the humiliation, a number of Mewar parganas had been sequestered by Shah Jahan in 1654 for a breach of the agreement regarding Chittor. The Ranas of Mewar felt hemmed in by the Mughals, and chafed at the restrictions placed on them, leading to a decline in their real position in Rajasthan. Aurangzeb had tried to take advantage of the mood of sullen

resentment in Mewar by drawing Rana Raj Singh into an alliance with him during the war of succession. Though he made a number of concessions to the Rana, he could hardly honour the vague promise held out by him of restoring the Rana to the position and honour enjoyed by (Rana) Sangram Singh. Rana Raj Singh, therefore, gradually drifted away from Aurangzeb, and the mood of sullen resentment returned. Meanwhile, under Jaswant Singh and Mirza Raja Rai Singh, Marwar and Amber remained the most influential of the Rajput states, and continued to augment their position and territories.

The disputed succession in Marwar was apparently viewed by Rana Raj Singh as an opportunity for reasserting the importance of Mewar in Rajput affairs. He may have only desired to emphasize that the question of succession in an important state like Marwar should not be settled without taking into account the wishes of the leading Rajput rulers, particularly the Rana of Mewar. Or, he may also have hoped that in an administration or a regency dominated by Rani Hadi, who was a sister of the Rana's wife, the Rana's help and guidance would be eagerly sought. Thus, the interest taken by the Rana in the Marwar dispute cannot be explained merely on the basis of support to the principle of legitimacy, for he had extended support to Rani Hadi at a time before the two posthumous sons of Jaswant Singh had been born, and the claim of Indra Singh was the strongest from the point of view of legitimacy. Nor can it be explained on the ground of an implied threat to the Hindu religion for there is no evidence of any protest on the part of the Rana against Aurangzeb's policy regarding temples and his re-imposition of the jizyah. Nor, contrary to general belief, was the mother of Ajit Singh a relation of the Rana. She was the granddaughter of Raja Chhatra Man of Karauli and the daughter of Kr. Bhopal. Thus the Rana had no personal interest in the succession of Ajit Singh.

The close involvement of Mewar in the Marwar succession from the outset made it likely that the war in Marwar would extend to Mewar also. Both sides were conscious of this. The Maharana fortified Chittor and closed the Debari pass leading to the Mewar capital, Udaipur, from the north. The real reason for Aurangzeb's moving upto Ajmer, assembling such a large army and summoning important commanders, including a number of princes, was based on a conviction on his part that an extension of the conflict involving Mewar was inevitable.

Aurangzeb struck the first blow, and in November 1678, advanced up on Mewar. A strong detachment under Hasan Ali Khan penetrated upto Udaipur from the east and even raided the Rana's camp in the interior. The Rana abandoned the plains and even his capital, and retired into the deep hills to conduct a harassing warfare against the Mughals. Thereafter, Aurangzeb retired to Ajmer, leaving his sons and generals to occupy the plains, keep the Rana bottled up in the hills, and lay waste the country under his occupation. With the outbreak of the Mewar war, Marwar became a secondary sector though sporadic Rathor resistance continued.

The Mughals had no heart in the type of harassing and desultory warfare which now began, all the advantages of terrain, local knowledge and local support being in favour of the Rajputs. The Mughal soldiers and commanders were loath to advance into the hills in pursuit of the Rajputs. All that Aurangzeb could do was to repeatedly admonish and warn his commanders. As the war lengthened into a stalemate, Indra Singh renewed his claims and represented that all the troubles of the Imperialists would end if Aurangzeb would restore him to the gaddi of Marwar. (Waqai)

Aurangzeb now formed a plan of bringing Mewar to its knees by penetrating the main redoubt of the Maharana in the Kumbhalmir area from the west across the Desuri pass. Fighting in the hills was never a strong point with the Mughals, and the Rajput War, it seems, had become highly unpopular with all ranks. Apparently, there was a good deal of scepticism that Aurangzeb could succeed in bringing the Rana to his knees in a short time when both Akbar and Jahangir had failed to do so. Hence the progress of the Mughal forces was halting and slow. The Rana now proposed to the Mughals to come to terms. The Rathors too renewed the plea for the restoration of Ajit Singh, and protested their loyalty to the Empire, promising complete restoration of peace in Marwar if their terms were accepted. However, these overtures which had been made through Tahawwur Khan were turned down by Aurangzeb.

This was the situation when Rana Raj Singh passed away in September 1680. His death removed the chief bond of unity between the Sishodias and the Rathors. Even earlier, there had been friction between the Rathors and the Rana, Durga Das declining to accompany Kunwar Bhim Singh on a raid into Gujarat, and refusing to resort to a guerilla type of warfare on the ground that it was the Rajput custom to fight an open war. It had also been proposed to the Mughals by Sonak Bhati on behalf of Durga Das that the pargana of Gorwar should be detached from Mewar, and allotted to Ajit Singh as his jagir, presumably to compensate him for the loss of Jodhpur. The new Rana, Jai Singh, who knew of these secret proposals had become lukewarm in Ajit Singh's cause.

The rebellion of Prince Akbar in January 1681, his attempt to seize Ajmer in alliance with Durga Das and Tahawwur Khan, and his subsequent flight to Maharashtra are well known. These developments suggest that Aurangzeb's Rajput policy had caused widespread concern, not only among the Rajputs but in a section of the Mughal nobility as well. However, the collapse of Prince Akbar's rebellion also showed that very few of the nobles were prepared on that account to go so far as to rise in rebellion against a reigning monarch who was in full possession of his faculties.

The rebellion of Prince Akbar failed to bring about any change in Aurangzeb's Rajput policies. Rana Jai Singh was keen to reestablish peace, but Aurangzeb imposed stiff conditions on him. The Maharana were forced to cede the paragnas of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh in lieu of jizyah, and to promise not to support the Rathors. Apparently, the parganas of Dungarpur, Devaliya, etc. which had been granted to Raj Singh in view of a rise in his mansab from 5000 to 6000 were also sequestered. In return for agreeing to these terms, Jagat Singh was restored and accorded a mansab of 5000/ 5000. Regarding Ajit Singh, Aurangzeb was prepared only to reiterate his earlier promise that mansab and raj would be given to him when he came of age.

The period from 1681 to 1707 is a peculiarly barren one from the view point of the relations of the Mughals with the states of Rajputana. During this period, the Rathor War continued to be waged intermittently and with varying degrees of intensity. Its most romantic phase was from 1681 to 1686 when Durga Das was away in Maharashtra with Prince Akbar, and Ajit Singh was in hiding in Sirohi. During this phase, the struggle was conducted by individual captains in isolation from each other. With the return of Durga Das to Marwar in 1686, and with the appearance of Ajit Singh in person to head the resistance, the Rathors gained a number of victories. But Shujaat Khan, a brave and intrepid warrior who held the charge of faujdar of Jodhpur and governor of Gujarat from 1689 to 1701, once again put the Rathors on the defensive. Negotiations between Durga Das and the Mughals which were carried on intermittently from 1692, led to a slackening of the operations. In 1696, the Rana of Mewar married his niece to Ajit Singh, thus giving a final blow to Aurangzeb's pretence that he was an imposter. The same year, Prince Akbar's daughter, who had been left behind in Marwar in 1681, was returned to Aurangzeb by the Rathors to show their goodwill. However, no wider agreement could be reached as Aurangzeb refused to return Jodhpur to Ajit Singh, though he was now prepared to recognise Ajit Singh and his claim to the rest of the state. At last, in 1698, Ajit Singh reluctantly agreed to let Jodhpur remain in Mughal possession, and was recognised as the ruler of Marwar, along with grant of a mansab. However, he remained dissatisfied on account of Jodhpur, and rose in rebellion in 1701, and again in 1706, but without success.

The Rana of Mewar, too, remained dissatisfied. He demanded the restoration of the parganas of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh before he would agree to supply the contingent of 1000 horse for service as required by the Rana's mansab. In 1684, Aurangzeb restored the parganas, but stipulated that the Maharana agree to pay in cash a sum of rupees one lakh annually by way of jizyah. This led to further disputes and the matter could not be resolved. A Mewar contingent of much less than the required contingent of 1000 horse reached Gujarat only in 1702. But the question of Mandal, Bidnur and Mandalgarh remained a bone of contention. The Rana also attempted to reassert his control over Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. which led to complaints to the Emperor. That Aurangzeb's policy was considered wrong by a section at the court is indicated by the fact that Prince Azam, who was the favourite of his father and was regarded as the most likely to succeed to the throne, formed a secret pact with the Rana promising to restore the parganas and abandon the demand for jizyah in lieu of the Rana's support in a war of succession.



Aurangzeb's breach with Marwar and Mewar in 1679 does not signify his breach with the Rajputs as such. The rulers of Amber, Bikaner, Bundi and Kota continued to serve in the Mughal armies even after 1679. After the death of Ram Singh in 1688, Raja Bishan Singh of Amber was given a mansab of 3000, and appointed the faujdar of Mathura in which capacity he fought many battles against the Jats. Raja Anup Singh of Bikaner and his son, Kesari Singh, as well as Rao Bhao of Bundi and his son and successor, Anirudha Kishore Singh, served in the Deccan and also against the Jats, with Kishore Singh rising to the rank of 2500/3000. None of the other Rajput rajas rose to a rank above 3500 zat. The young Jai Singh, successor to Bishan Singh, came to the Deccan for service in 1698, and was accorded the mansab of 2000/2000 (1000 du-aspa sih-aspa). He gave a good account of himself at the siege of Khajna and won the favour of Prince Bidar Bakhat. But Aurangzeb turned down the Prince's suggestion to appoint Jai Singh as deputy governor of Malwa.

Since the rulers of Amber, Bikaner and Harauti continued to serve the Mughals, and to receive imperial mansabs/it would be wrong to consider the prolonged wars with Marwar and Mewar as constituting an abandonment of Akbar's policy of alliance with the Rajputs which, in turn, was a part of a larger policy of alliance with influential local ruling elements, including the zamindars. As recent research has shown, the number of the Marathas steadily increased with the passage of time.

However, there was a change in the relationship of the Rajputs and the Mughal state. At the beginning, Aurangzeb considered the Rajputs to be partners in the kingdom: they were given important positions and commands, and Jai Singh was close to Aurangzeb and played an important role in policy formulation. These cordial relations became strained, and after the death of Jai Singh, the Rajputs were stationed in frontier areas in the east, and the north-west and there was an attempt to reduce the total number of grants given to the Rajputs. However, they continued to be regarded as sword-arms of the empire. In the final phase, after 1679, the military role of the Rajputs in the Deccan is minimal. They are still regarded as allies, but even their loyalty was suspect. Thus, in place of an upward spiral, as in the time of Akbar, there was a downward spiral.

Was this change of policy merely a reflection of Aurangzeb's narrow religious policies, and his suspicious nature? Both had something to contribute because Aurangzeb's attitude towards Marwar and Mewar seems to be based more on suspicion and pique than part of any well formulated policy. It may, however, be argued that with the gradual consolidation of the Mughal empire in the north, and the shift of emphasis to the conquest of the Deccan and the compulsion of accommodating the local ruling elements, specifically the Marathas into the nobility, alliance with the Rajputs had lost its urgency. In a manner of speaking, the Rajput rajas now needed the alliance more than the Mughals in order to maintain their internal positions, and to augment their limited resources by grant of jagirs outside Rajasthan in addition to their watan. The decline in the real importance of the Rajputs was concealed, to some extent, by the personal positions acquired by Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh in the courts of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. As it was, from the time of Shah Jahan, the Marathas had begun to outclass the Rajputs in the service. But for the conflict with Shivaji, and the uncertainty in the minds of the Maratha sardars about Mughal policies in the Deccan, this development would have been even faster than it actually was.

The effect of the breach with Marwar and Mewar on the Mughal Empire should not be overestimated. The scale of the Mughal military operations in the area after the treaty with the Rana in 1681 was too small to effect the Mughal operations elsewhere, or to constitute a serious drain. Nor is there evidence that hostilities in the area seriously affected the overland trade to the Cambay sea ports.

We may, however, agree with Sir Jadunath Sarkar that "the loss caused to Aurangzeb by his Rajput policy cannot be measured solely by the men and money he poured on that desert soil". Inability to settle the issues concerning these states affected the prestige of the empire, and increased the area of lawlessness. Above all, it created doubts about the political sagacity of Aurangzeb as well as his bonafides in his dealings with non-Muslims. This helped to swell the tide of political disaffection and religious discord in the country, and was also reflected in the efforts of various royal princes to intrigue with the Rajput rajas, and to form their own groups and factions.



## UNIT-XXV

# CLIMAX OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE, MARATHAS AND THE DECCAN

### RISE OF THE MARATHAS

The rise of Marathas, like that of the Rajputs, was a medieval (8th century onwards) phenomenon. Both had mixed origins which have been discussed at length. It is clear that there was a definite process of both Brahmanization and Kshatriasation in medieval India. Thus, those enrolled in service, particularly military service, and in receipt of grants of land tended to become a separate group, marrying within itself, following a certain code of conduct (such as giving up widow remarriage, certain foods, etc.) and claiming a higher status. However, unlike the Rajputs, the Marathas had not been able to set up well-established independent states of their own. They were, hence, seen as powerful local chiefs and potential allies with a following of loose auxiliaries termed bargirs, rather than autonomous rulers. From the time of the Bahmani kingdom, as also under its successor states, Maratha chiefs or sardars were employed in the service of the state, and many of them, such as the Mores, the Ghatges, the Nimalkars etc. exercised local authority in many areas. The position of the Maratha chiefs improved further as first Malik Ambar, and then the Mughals competed for their support.

The rise of the Marathas during the 17th century, and the establishment of an independent Maratha state is closely associated with the family of Shivaji. Shivaji's ancestor, Babaji, was the patel (headman) of villages Hingani Beradi and Devalgaon in the Poona district. His sons, Maloji and Vithoji, settled in the Daultabad district and served as petty horsemen under the Jadhavs of Sindkhed. However, another branch of the family, the Ghorpades, were well established in the kingdom of Bijapur. Subsequently, Maloji rose in the service of Malik Ambar. An important step in the rise of the family was the grant by Malik Ambar of the parganas of Sholapur and Poona to Shahji, son of Maloji, in 1622. These parganas were held at that time by Murari Pandit on behalf of Bijapur, and Shahji earned his spurs by ousting Murari Jagdev from the area. In 1630, when Lukhaji Jadhav, father-in-law of Shahji, was treacherously murdered at the Ahmadnagar court, Shahji defected to the side of the Mughals, and was given the mansab of 5000 zat, 5000 sawar, and Poona as jagir by Shah Jahan. His brother Minaji and elder son, Sambhaji, were also given mansabs. However, Shahji's alliance with the Mughals was short lived and he defected to Bijapur in 1632 when Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, agreed to surrender Daultabad, joined the Mughal service, and was awarded Poona in jagir.

Following the agreement with Fath Khan, the Nizam Shah was sent to prison at Gwalior. Shahji, with the backing of Bijapur, now emerged as the champion of the Nizam Shahi dynasty. Following the example of Malik Ambar, Shahji found a Nizam Shahi prince, and raised him up as a ruler at Shahgarh. The Adil Shah sent a force of 7 - 8000 horsemen to aid Shahji. He also induced many Nizam Shahi nobles who had assumed independent charge of their forts and territories following the end of the Nizam Shahi rule to join Shahji. Many disbanded Nizam Shahi soldiers also joined Shahji whose forces swelled to 20,000 horse. With these he harassed the Mughals and took control of a large portion of the Ahmadnagar state. We are told that out of a yield of 84 lakh huns, at this time Shahji held territory worth 20 3/4 lakh huns, Bijapur worth 20 1/4 lakhs, and the Mughals 21 lakhs.

This background is important for understanding the subsequent rise of Shivaji and how under him the Bhonsles moved from being king makers to being independent kings.

## EARLY CAREER OF SHIVAJI

After the treaty of Bijapur with the Mughals in 1636, Shahji had to give up the areas of Ahmadnagar he dominated, and join the service of the Bijapur sultan who, according to agreement, posted him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontier. Taking advantage of the unsettled conditions, Shahji tried to set up a semi-independent principality at Bangalore just as Mir Jumla, the leading noble of Golconda, tried to carve out such a principality on the Coromandal coast. A number of other chiefs, such as the Abyssinian chiefs on the western coast, the Sidis, behaved in a similar manner.

Shahji left the Poona jagir to his neglected senior wife, Jija Bai, and his minor son, Shivaji. Shivaji showed his mettle when at the young age of 18, he overran a number of hill forts near Poona - Rajgarh, Kondana and Torna in the years 1645-47. With the death of his guardian, Dadaji Kondadeo, in 1647 Shivaji became his own master, and the full control of his father's jagir passed to him.

There is no reason to believe that Shivaji acted in a manner which was contrary to the wishes of his father. In fact, Shivaji acted in the same manner at Poona as Shahji at Bangalore. The reasons were to some extent similar. Karnataka was a frontier area in which the Bijapur government was still struggling to establish its control. The Poona region was a relatively neglected region because after the treaty of 1636 with Shah Jahan, Bijapur had shifted its interests to the south, and Shah Jahan was busy with Central Asian and other matters.

In any case, the Bijapur government considered father and son to be one because a farman of 1644 addressed to Kanhoji Jedhe tells us that Shahji had been removed from the court and disgraced as his agent Dadaji Kondadeva had committed rebellious activities at Kondana. Subsequently, a commission consisting of Khandoji and Baji Ghorpade was appointed to proceed against Shahji. These proceedings dragged on till 1649 when, following the death of his patron, Randaullah Khan, Shahji was imprisoned. Shivaji interceded with the Mughals to get his father released.

In 1656, shortly before his death, Shahji visited Poona and toured the area under Shivaji's control, and presumably, advised him how to conduct its administration.

Shivaji began his real career of conquest in 1656 when he conquered Javli from the Maratha chief, Chandra Rao More. The Javli kingdom and the accumulated treasure of the Mores were important, and Shivaji acquired them by means of treachery. The conquest of Javli made him the undisputed master of the Mavala area on the highlands and freed his path to the Satara area and to the coastal strip, the Konkan. Mavali foot soldiers became a strong part of his army. With their help, he strengthened his position by acquiring a further series of hill forts near Poona.

The Mughal invasion of Bijapur in 1657 saved Shivaji from Bijapuri reprisals. Shivaji first entered into negotiations with Aurangzeb, then changed sides and made deep inroads into Mughal areas, seizing rich booty. When Aurangzeb came to terms with the new Bijapur ruler in preparation for the civil war, he pardoned Shivaji also. But he distrusted Shivaji and advised the Bijapur ruler to expel him from the Bijapur area he had seized, and if he wanted to employ him, employ him in the Karnataka, far away from the Mughal frontiers.

The nature of Shivaji's interaction with the Mughals during this period would be helpful in understanding the nature of Shivaji's ambitions. In 1648, when Shivaji had approached Prince Murad Bakhsh, the Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan, to intercede on behalf of his father, Shahji and offered to join the Mughal service. The prince had offered him a mansab of 5000, and restoration of Shahji to the mansab of 5000 he had held earlier. Shivaji had also asked for the deshmukhi of Junnar and Ahmadnagar parganas which Prince Murad had promised to try and secure after reaching the Emperor's presence. But Shahji was released before this, without Mughal intervention.

In 1657, at the time of the Mughal invasion of Bijapur, Shivaji had demanded, and Aurangzeb had agreed, that all the forts and mahals pertaining to Bijapur which were in Shivaji's possession be granted

to him, as also the port of Dabhol and its dependencies. But Aurangzeb had balked at his demand for the cession of the forts and territories in the Adil Shahi Konkan, even though this was to be done "after the imperialists had seized the old Nizam Shahi territory now in the hands of Adil Shah." Taking advantage of the Mughal civil war, Shivaji had conquered Purandar and seized north Konkan, including Kalyan and Bhiwandi.

It is clear that the Mughals were not keen to see the rise of an independent powerful Maratha state on their frontier. Bijapur, too, was particularly concerned with Shivaji's entry into North Konkan and his conquest of Kalyan and Bhiwandi. The Konkan was not only an outlet for Bijapur exports, but Kalyan and Bhiwandi ports were important for the import of war horses which the Portuguese were trying to monopolize. This was the background to the despatch against him of an expedition led by Afzal Khan, a premier noble of Bijapur, at the head of 10,000 troops, with instructions to capture him by any means possible. Treachery was common in those days and both Afzal Khan and Shivaji had resorted to treachery on a number of occasions, Shivaji's forces were not used to open fighting and shrank from an open contest with this powerful chief. Afzal Khan sent an invitation to Shivaji for a personal interview, promising to get him pardoned from the Bijapuri court. Convinced that this was a trap, Shivaji went prepared, and murdered the Khan (1659) in a cunning but daring manner. Shivaji put his leaderless army to rout and captured all his goods and equipment including his artillery. Flushed with victory, the Maratha troops overran the powerful fort of Panhala and poured into south Konkan and the Kolhapur districts, making extensive conquests.

Shivaji's exploits made him a legendary figure. His name passed from house to house and he was credited with magical powers. People flocked to him from the Maratha areas to join his army, and even Afghan mercenaries who had been previously in the service of Bijapur, joined his army.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was anxiously watching the rise of a Maratha power so near the Mughal frontiers. Aurangzeb instructed the new Mughal Viceroy of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, who was related to Aurangzeb by marriage, to invade Shivaji's dominions. At first, the war went badly for Shivaji. Shaista Khan occupied Poona (1660) and made it his headquarters. He then sent detachments to wrest control of the Konkan from Shivaji. Despite harassing attacks from Shivaji, and the bravery of Maratha defenders, the Mughals secured their control on north Konkan.

But Shivaji was not the one to keep quiet. After the killing of Afzal Khan, Bijapur had launched another campaign under Sidi Salabat, and wrested Panhala from Shivaji. Thereafter, the Bijapuri campaign had slackened. In 1662, Shivaji made an agreement with Bijapur through its wazir, Abul Muhammad, whereby his possessions in the north-west part of the kingdom were confirmed, and on his part, he agreed not to invade the Bijapur territories. After securing his back, Shivaji was able to concentrate on the Mughals. His most spectacular stroke was his night attack on Shaista Khan's camp. He infiltrated into the camp of the Khan at Poona, and at night attacked the Khan in his haram (1663), killing his son and one of his captains, and wounding the Khan. This daring attack put the Khan into disgrace and Shivaji's stock rose once again. In anger, Aurangzeb transferred Shaista Khan to Bengal, even refusing to give him an interview at the time of transfer as was the custom. Meanwhile, Shivaji made another bold move. He attacked Surat, which was the premier Mughal port, and looted it to his heart's content (1664), returning home laden with treasure worth a crore of rupees.

## TREATY OF PURANDHAR-THE AGRA VISIT

After the disgrace of Shaista Khan, and Shivaji's raid on Surat which caused great discomfiture to Aurangzeb, he appointed Mirza Raja Jai Singh, who was one of his most trusted noble to lead the campaign against Shivaji. He was given an army of 12,000 horse, and Diler Khan, another confidant of Aurangzeb was placed under him. Jai Singh was not only given full military authority, but also the administrative charge of allotting jagirs and making promotions and demotions, normally exercised by the Viceroy of the Deccan. A little later, he was made Viceroy of the Deccan in place of Prince Muazzam.



Unlike his predecessors, Jai Singh did not underestimate the Marathas. He made careful diplomatic and military preparations. He appealed to all the rivals and opponents of Shivaji and, in order to isolate Shivaji, even tried to win over the sultan of Bijapur by dangling before him the bait of reducing his tribute. He also induced some of the Maratha deshmukhs hostile to Shivaji to join him. Marching to Poona, Jai Singh decided to strike at the heart of Shivaji's territories - fort Purandar where Shivaji had lodged his family and his treasure. Jai Singh closely besieged Purandar, (1665), beating off all Maratha attempts to relieve it. With the fall of the fort in sight, and no relief likely from any quarter, Shivaji opened negotiations with Jai Singh. After hard bargaining, the following terms were agreed upon:

(i) Out of 35 forts held by Shivaji, 23 forts with surrounding territory which yielded a revenue of four lakhs of huns every year were to be surrendered to the Mughals, while the remaining 12 forts with an annual income of one lakh of huns were to be left to Shivaji "on condition of service and loyalty to the throne".

(ii) Territory worth four lakhs of huns a year in the Bijapuri Konkan, which Shivaji already held, was granted to him. In addition, Bijapur territory worth five lakhs of huns a year in the uplands (Balaghat) which Shivaji was to conquer, was also granted to him. In return for these, he was to pay 40 lakhs huns in installments to the Mughals.

Shivaji asked to be excused from personal service. Hence, a mansab of 5000 was granted in his place to his minor son, Sambhaji. Shivaji promised, however, to join personally in any Mughal campaign in the Deccan.

Jai Singh cleverly threw a bone of contention between Shivaji and the Bijapuri ruler. But the success of Jai Singh's scheme depended upon Mughal support to Shivaji in making up from Bijapur territory worth the amount he had yielded to the Mughals. This proved to be the fatal flaw. Aurangzeb had not lost his reservations about Shivaji, and was doubtful of the wisdom of a joint Mughal-Maratha attack on Bijapur.

Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh:

"Tal-Konkan is granted to Shiva. But no order will be issued by me about Bijapuri-Balaghat being given to him. If he can take it, let him wrest it from Adil Shah" (Haft Anjuman).

From the exchange of letters between Jai Singh and his son, Kr. Ram Singh, preserved in the State Archives, Bikaner, it is clear that Aurangzeb was not alone in opposing an active alliance between the Mughals and Shivaji against Bijapur. Diler Khan, who had been appointed by Aurangzeb to be with Jai Singh, and to keep watch on him, said to Jai Singh :

"Maharaja, don't invade Bijapur. You have conquered Shiva,, let him manage things in the Deccan, and manage our business there". Some of Jai Singh's sardars also echoed Diler Khan's views.

Jai Singh had larger ideas. His basic approach was to solve the Maratha problem in the context of a forward policy in the Deccan. If Shivaji was left alone to fend against Bijapur, after losing territory worth four lakh huns to the Mughals out of a total holding of nine lakhs huns in the Mughal and Bijapur territory, he would hardly be enthusiastic in the Mughal cause. A fresh alliance between Shivaji and Bijapur was not impossible. As Jai Singh explained to Aurangzeb, Bijapur had offered to cede territory worth five lakh huns in Bijapur Balaghat if Shivaji would allow his brother to join the service of Bijapur.

Jai Singh wrote to Aurangzeb, "The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of the Deccan and Karnataka." "What can be better than this that first we overthrow Bijapur with the help of Shiva." Bearing in mind Aurangzeb's prejudice against Shivaji, Jai Singh added: "...now that we have hemmed him in like the centre of a circle (with our possessions), if Shiva strays by a hair's breath from the path of obedience, he can be totally annihilated by us with the slightest exertion."



Jai Singh exaggerated. The Mughals would have been able to hem Shivaji in "like the centre of a circle" only if they were successful in conquering Bijapur. Aurangzeb agreed to the campaign against Bijapur only reluctantly, without giving Jai Singh adequate forces for the purpose. As for Shivaji, the most that Aurangzeb was prepared to concede was to allot him mahals yielding five lakh huns in Bijapuri Balaghat "subject to the condition that you (Shivaji) conquer them before my (projected) campaign against Bijapur."

Despite Maratha support, the task of conquering Bijapur was a difficult one. Jai Singh's hope of surprising Bijapur proved illusory since preparations of his campaign had not remained a secret, and in preparation of it, the Bijapuri ruler had adopted a scorched earth policy. Arrived at Bijapur, Jai Singh did not have the heavy guns to engage in a siege, nor means to support or to gather provisions for the besieging army. His difficulties were added to by Golconda sending an army of 12,000 sawars and 40,000 foot to aid Bijapur. As soon as Jai Singh received a set back, Diler Khan and the faction hostile to Shivaji ascribed the failure to the lukewarmness and treachery of Shivaji, and demanded that he be imprisoned. To keep him out of harm's way, Jai Singh sent Shivaji to besiege Panhala. But Shivaji failed. Seeing his grandiose scheme collapsing before his eyes, Jai Singh persuaded Shivaji to visit the emperor at Agra. If Shivaji and Aurangzeb could be reconciled, Jai Singh thought, Aurangzeb might be persuaded to give greater resources for a renewed invasion of Bijapur. But the visit proved to be a disaster. Shivaji felt insulted when he was put in the category of mansabdars of 5000 - a rank which had been granted earlier to his minor son. Nor did the emperor, whose birthday was being celebrated, break protocol to speak to Shivaji.

Hence, Shivaji walked off angrily and refused imperial service. Such an episode had never happened, and a strong group at the court including Jahanara and Jaswant Singh argued that exemplary punishment should be meted out to Shivaji in order to maintain and assert imperial dignity. Since Shivaji had come to Agra on Jai Singh's assurance, Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh for advice. Jai Singh strongly argued for a lenient treatment for Shivaji. But before any decision could be taken, Shivaji escaped from detention (1666). The manner of Shivaji's escape is too well known to be repeated here.

Aurangzeb always blamed himself for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. There is little doubt that Shivaji's Agra visit proved to be the turning point in Mughal relations with the Marathas - although for two years after his return home, Shivaji kept quiet. The visit proved that unlike Jai Singh, Aurangzeb attached little value to the alliance with Shivaji. For him, Shivaji was just a "petty bhumia" (land-holder). As subsequent developments proved, Aurangzeb's stubborn reservations about Shivaji, refusal to recognise his importance and attaching a low price to his friendship were among the biggest political mistakes made by Aurangzeb.

It might be argued that the mansab of 5000 awarded to Shivaji was not a low one, the rank of 5000 being given to his son on his behalf since he was not willing to accept service at that time. Also, this was the starting rank given by Shah Jahan to Shahji in 1629, and to Shivaji in 1648. However, these arguments are extraneous. As Mamuri, a contemporary of Aurangzeb<sup>1</sup> observes, since his minor son had been given a mansab of 5000 in absentia, and his relative, Netaji, given the same rank, Shivaji had hoped for a mansab of not less than 7000. The question is to what extent did Aurangzeb value Shivaji's friendship? If, like Jai Singh, he had considered it crucial in the larger context of the Deccan, he could have dispensed with precedents, and gone out of his way to befriend him, just as Jahangir had done in the case of Rana Amar Singh of Mewar in 1615.

## SHIVAJI'S SWARAJYA-ADMINISTRATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Aurangzeb virtually goaded Shivaji into resuming his career of conquest by insisting upon a narrow interpretation of the treaty of Purandar, although with the failure of the expedition against Bijapur, the bottom had dropped out of the treaty. Shivaji could not be reconciled to the loss of 23 forts and territory worth four lakhs of rupees a year to the Mughals without any compensation from Bijapur.

In order to consolidate his position, after his return from Agra, Shivaji had asked for the Emperor's pardon and entered into a treaty with him whereby Sambhaji was restored to the mansab of 5000, awarded jagirs in Berar, and sent a contingent to serve the Mughal Viceroy at Aurangabad. But shortly afterwards, Aurangzeb attached the Berar jagir to pay for a sum of rupees one lakh advanced to Shivaji for his journey to Agra. This was just the excuse Shivaji was looking for. He launched a vigorous offensive in 1670, recovering some of the hill forts, including Kondana, surrendered by the Treaty of Purandar in 1665. He attacked Surat a second time. He not only recovered the powerful fort of Purandar, but made deep inroads into Mughal territories, especially in Berar and Khandesh. Mughal preoccupation with the Afghan uprising in the north-west helped Shivaji. He also renewed his contest with Bijapur, securing Panhala and Satara by means of bribes, and raiding the Kanara country at leisure.

In 1674, Shivaji crowned himself formally at Rajgarh. Shivaji had travelled far from being a petty jagirdar at Poona. He was by now the most powerful among the Maratha chiefs, and by virtue of the extent of his dominions and the size of his army, could claim a status equal to the effete Deccani sultans. The formal coronation had, therefore, a number of purposes. It placed him on a pedestal much higher than any of the Maratha chiefs, some of whom had continued to look upon him as an upstart. To strengthen his social position further, Shivaji married into some of the leading old Maratha families - the Mohites, the Shirkes, etc. A formal declaration was also made by the priest presiding over the function, Gaga Bhatta, that Shivaji was a high class kshatriya. Finally, as an independent ruler, it now became possible for Shivaji to enter into treaties with the Deccani sultans on a footing of equality and not as a rebel. It was also an important step in the further growth of Maratha national sentiment.

Although at the time of his accession, Shivaji assumed the title of haindava-dharmoddaraka" or "Redeemer of the Hindu dharma, and "Kshatriya-kulavatansa" or the jewel of the Kshatriya clan, there is no reason to think that Shivaji was setting himself as a champion of the Hindus, intent to fight the narrow religious policies of Aurangzeb. Protection of dharma which was often interpreted as protecting the four-fold division of varnas, as well of the brahmins and the territory (go-brahman-pratipalak,) was the normal duty of a Hindu sovereign. There is a lot of controversy whether Ramdas who is considered Shivaji's guru, had entrusted him with the mission of redeeming Hinduism. According to R.R. Ranade, contact between Shivaji and guru Ramdas was established after his coronation, not before. However, in a period when all struggles also assumed a religious character, Shivaji's success was bound to be seen as an assertion of the Hindu spirit of freedom against Muslim or Mughal encroachments.

In 1676, Shivaji undertook a bold new venture. He planned the invasion of Karnataka which was considered a land of gold. Shivaji was also keen to claim the patrimony of his father, Shahji, at Tanjore in eastern Karnataka which was at the time under the control of his half brother, Vyankoji. Before undertaking the campaign, Shivaji guarded his rear by bribing Khawas Khan, the regent at Bijapur, and making a formal peace with him. But Shivaji was aided greatly by the brothers, Madanna and Akanna, who dominated Hyderabad at the time. Shivaji, was given a grand welcome by the Qutb Shah at his capital and a formal agreement was arrived at. The Qutb Shah agreed to pay a subsidy of one lakh huns (five lakhs of rupees) annually to Shivaji and a Maratha ambassador was to live at the Qutb Shahi court. The territory and the booty gained in Karnataka was to be shared. The Qutb Shah supplied a contingent of 5000 troops and artillery to aid Shivaji and also provided money at the rate of four and a half lakhs of huns a month for the expenses of his army. The treaty was very favourable to Shivaji and enabled him to capture Jinji and Vellore from Bijapuri officials and also to conquer much of the territories held by his half-brother, Vyankoji. He also ousted Sher Khan Lodi from southern Karnataka. Although Shivaji had assumed the title of haindava-dharmodharakla (protector of the Hindu faith), he plundered mercilessly

the Hindu population of the area. According to Sabhasad, Shivaji annexed territory worth 20 lakhs of huns a year, and captured booty which was beyond computation. He left Santaji, a natural son of Shahji, in charge of the territories, aided by a seasoned administrator, Raghunath Narayan Hanumante. Returning home laden with treasure, Shivaji refused to share anything with the Qutb Shah, thus straining his relations with him.

The Karnataka expedition was the last major expedition of Shivaji. The base at Jinji built up by Shivaji proved to be a haven of refuge for his son, Rajaram, during Aurangzeb's all-out war on the Marathas.

Shivaji died in 1680, shortly after his return from the Karnataka expedition. Meanwhile, he had laid the foundations of a sound system of administration. Shivaji's system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccani states. Although he designated eight ministers, sometimes called the Ashtapradhan, it was not in the nature of a council of ministers, each minister being directly responsible to the ruler. The most important ministers were the Peshwa who looked after the finances and general administration, and the sar-i-naubat (senapati) which was a post of honour and was generally given to one of the leading Maratha chiefs. The majumdar was the accountant, while the waqe navis was responsible for intelligence, posts and household affairs. The surunavis or chitnis helped the king with his correspondence. The dabir was master of ceremonies and also helped the king in his dealings with foreign powers. The nyayadhish and panditrao were in charge of justice and charitable grants.

More important than the appointment of these officials was Shivaji's organisation of the army and the revenue system. Shivaji preferred to give cash salaries to the regular soldiers, though sometimes the chiefs received revenue grants (saranjam). Strict discipline was maintained in the army, no women or dancing girls being allowed to accompany the army. The plunder taken by each soldier during campaigns was strictly accounted for. The regular army (paga) consisting of about 30,000 to 40,000 cavalry was supervised by havaldars who received fixed salaries.

In addition, there were silahdars or loose auxiliaries whose numbers varied from year to year according to need, and their expectations of plunder. Local chieftains also joined along with their retainers for plunder. He had a large infantry whose number is placed at one lakh. We do not know how many of them were fighting men. He had guns mounted in the forts, and field artillery the strength of which is doubtful because the Poona region was not known for a strong tradition of metallurgy.

The forts which were a major sources of strength for Shivaji were carefully supervised, Mavali foot soldiers and gunners being appointed there. We are told that three men of equal rank were placed in charge of each fort to guard against treachery.

Shivaji was one of the few Indian rulers who tried to develop a navy. His conquest of the ports of Kalyan, Bhivandi and Panvel in North Konkan brought him adjacent to the Portuguese possessions at Goa. He realized quickly that without a navy he would not be able to control the creeks on which places of trade and commerce were located. Nor would he be able to defend the coast and areas from the depredations of the Sidis of Janjira, an African group of people who dominated the island of Janjira and its adjacent areas.

Using the timber which was available in plenty in the Kalyan-Bhiwandi area, Shivaji built a navy of between 60 and 160 gunboats (ghurabs,) and a miscellaneous variety of ships - shibars, manchwas etc. which were mainly used for trading purposes. Though most of Shivaji's efforts at sea were confined to battles to seize Janjira and its neighbouring areas from the Sidis who sometimes joined the Mughals to harass his coastal areas, he did use his ships for plunder, including the pilgrim ships from Surat to Mecca. He also used his ships for trade with Mocha. For sailors, Shivaji recruited the local traditional sea-farers, such as the Kolis and Bhandaris. He also recruited Muslims, including the "infamous" Malabar pirates. In short, in the picturesque language of Sabhasad, "The Raja put the saddle on the ocean".

Shivaji's revenue system seems to have been patterned largely on the system of Malik Ambar in which an attempt was made to measure the land. For the purpose, Shivaji tried to establish links with the



village headmen. However, it is not correct to think that Shivaji tried to do away with the desh mukhs or the zamindars of the area. Shivaji had to deal with an area where due to the neglect and weakness of the Bijapur administration, the bigger desh mukhs had become very powerful. Sabhasad, who wrote in the eighteenth century, describes the situation as follows :

“..the mirasdars grew and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles (vade) and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers. They never waited on the revenue officer of the government and resorted to fighting if he asked them to pay more. This class had become unruly and seized the country.”

Shivaji's early effort was to bring these sections under control, especially since many of them were in close touch with the Bijapur government, and often joined them in their expeditions against Shivaji. Sabhasad says that Shivaji demolished the bastions, castles and strongholds of the desais, and where there were strong forts, he posted his own men. He also prohibited the illegal exactions of the mirasdars, put a stop to ijara or revenue-farming and “fixed the dues of the zamindars from the villages in cash and grain, as well as the rights and perquisites of the desh mukhs and the deshkulkarni, and the patil (and) and the kulkarni” i.e. the hereditary officials at the district and pargana level.

Thus, it is clear that Shivaji's efforts were to reform the existing system rather than try and create a new one. It was only after he was able to control the powerful desh mukhs that Shivaji's diwan was able to produce an assessment based on measurement in 1679. While the desh mukhs were asked to cooperate, measurement of land would not have been possible without the help of village headmen.

Just as it has been imagined that Shivaji tried to do away with the zamindari system, it has been postulated that he did away with the jagirdari system. This is largely based on a single statement of Sabhasad who says that since the grant of mokasa (jagir) would have created disorder among the rayat (cultivators or land-holders) “no mokasa was to be given to anyone” However, Sabhasad himself says that after the defeat of Afzal Khan, many people were rewarded with the grant of villages in mokasa. Mokasa mahals were also set apart for Goddess Tulja Bhawani, the patron goddess of Shivaji. There are many other examples of this nature. Thus, after the Karnataka expedition, Santaji, the natural son of Shahji, was given mokasa mahals.

Perhaps, what Shivaji was opposed to, and to which Sabhasad refers to vaguely, was the grant of a mokasa mahal darobast, i.e. in entirety or as inam. This was a part of the Mughal system. Thus, even Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, did not get all the villages in Jodhpur pargana in watan jagir.

It is difficult to form a precise idea of the actual land-revenue demand under Shivaji. Sabhasad says that the state demand was two-fifth of the produce in grain. To this must have been added many cesses which are described in the sources during the period of the Peshwas. The demand must have been heavy, but there is no basis for the statement of Fryer, a foreign traveller, that it was double the rate of former days. On the other hand, the establishment of internal law and order, curbing the power of the mirasdars, and providing facilities for the restoration and expansion of cultivation within Shivaji's swarajya must have been welcomed by the cultivators.

Shivaji supplemented his income by levying a contribution on the neighbouring Mughal territories. This contribution which came to one-fourth of the land revenue, began to be called chauthai (one-fourth) or chauth. Chauth was not a new feature. The zamindars in Gujarat had been charging banth which was one-fourth (chauthai) of the revenue in areas under their control. Thus, banth or chauthai were both in the nature of zamindari charges. The Portuguese in Diu had been, on this basis, giving chauth to the Raja of Ramnagar in return for his not raiding the area. The Mughals too, paid a fourth of the revenue of Porbandar on the Kathiawar coast to its zamindars. Similar rights may also have been held by the zamindars of the Konkan. Shivaji used it to claim zamindari rights over the entire Deccan. In practice, it became a kind of protection money against Maratha depredations.



Another claim, again based on zamindari rights, was Shivaji's claim of sardeshmukhi. This claim which amounted to ten per cent of the revenue was based on the notion that Shivaji was the head of all the deshmukhs in the area. Interestingly enough, the ruler of Bijapur had also claimed to be sardeshmukh, and we have examples of grant of sardeshmukhi and even sar-pateli by the Bijapur ruler to some noble families. Shivaji's claim of sardeshmukhi was linked to his claim as the ruler of possessing superior rights over all the deshmukhs of the area. It may be noted that when Shivaji had ascended the gaddi, he had put an impost called singhasanapatti over all the deshmukhs.

Shivaji's setting up an independent state, in opposition to both Bijapur and the mighty Mughal empire was no mean achievement. It could become possible because Shivaji was able to gather the enthusiastic support and backing of ever widening sections in Maharashtra, thereby winning over or neutralising many of the powerful deshmukh families which were initially opposed to him.

Shivaji not only proved to be an able general, a skilful tactician and a shrewd diplomat, he laid the foundation of a strong state by curbing the power of the deshmukhs. The army was an effective instrument of his policies, where rapidity of movement was the most important factor. The army depended for its salaries to a considerable extent on the plunder of the neighbouring areas. But the state cannot thereby be called just a "war-state". In pre-modern times, almost all states supplemented their income by plunder, though, of course, the proportion between the two varied widely from case to case.

The Maratha movement had a strong regional base. Although Shivaji employed Afghan and other Muslims in the army, and one or both the admirals of his navy were Muslims, possibly Abyssinian Muslims, the officials and commanders of Shivaji were drawn almost exclusively from Maharashtra. Nor, as we have seen, did the administration have any specifically Hindu character. It had, however, a popular base. To that extent, Shivaji was a popular king who represented the assertion of popular will in the area against Mughal centralization of power.

### AURANGZEB AND THE DECCANI STATES (1658-87)

It might have been expected that after his accession to the throne, Aurangzeb would have tried to implement in the Deccan the policy he had been pressing upon Shah Jahan, viz. the out-right annexation of the two Deccani kingdoms Bijapur and Golconda. However, almost three decades passed before Aurangzeb geared himself up for the annexation of these kingdoms.

The intervening period between 1658 and 1687 can be divided into three phases. The first phase lasted till 1668 during which the main attempt was to recover from Bijapur the territories belonging to the Ahmadnagar state surrendered to it by the treaty of 1636; the second phase lasted till 1684 during which the major danger in the Deccan was considered to be the Marathas, and efforts were made to pressurize Bijapur and Golconda into joining hands with the Mughals against Shivaji and then against his son and successor, Sambhaji. Simultaneously, the Mughals nibbled at the territories of the Deccani states which they tried to bring under their complete domination and control. The last phase began in 1684 when Aurangzeb despaired of getting the cooperation of Bijapur and Golconda against the Marathas, and decided that to destroy the Marathas it was necessary first to conquer Bijapur and Golconda.

It may be noted that the treaty of 1636, by which Shah Jahan had given one-third of the territories of Ahmadnagar state as a bribe for withdrawing support to the Marathas, and promised that the Mughals would "never never" conquer Bijapur and Golconda, had been abandoned by Shah Jahan himself. The resumption of a policy of limited advance in the Deccan had far-reaching implications which, it seems, neither Shah Jahan nor Aurangzeb adequately appreciated : it destroyed for all times confidence in the Mughal treaties and promises, and made impossible "a union of hearts" against the Marathas — a policy which Aurangzeb pursued with great perseverance for a quarter of a century, but with little success.

## The First Phase (1658-68)

On coming to the throne, Aurangzeb had two problems in the Deccan: the problem posed by the rising power of Shivaji, and the problem of persuading Bijapur to part with the territories ceded to it by the treaty of 1636. Kalyani and Bidar were secured in 1657. Parenda was secured by bribe in 1660. Sholapur still remained. After his accession, Aurangzeb asked Jai Singh to punish both Shivaji and Adil Shah. This shows Aurangzeb's confidence in the superiority of the Mughal arms and the underestimation of his opponents.

Jai Singh decided to adopt a policy of divide and rule, arguing that "it is not very difficult for the victorious armies to conquer both of these wretched rulers. But if policy can accomplish a thing, why would we court delay (by resorting to force)?" As he saw it, the question for the Mughals was how to keep the Deccanis divided without conceding anything to them in return for their support against the Marathas. Jai Singh did put forward a plausible policy for attaining this objective. Jai Singh was of the opinion that the Maratha problem could not be solved without a forward policy in the Deccan — a conclusion to which Aurangzeb finally came 20 years later.

While planning his invasion of Bijapur, Jai Singh had written to Aurangzeb, "The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of all Deccan and Karnataka". But Aurangzeb shrank from this bold policy. We can only guess at the reasons: the ruler of Iran had adopted a threatening attitude in the northwest; the campaign for the conquest of the Deccan would be long and arduous and would need the presence of the emperor himself for large armies could not be left in charge of a noble or an ambitious prince, as Shah Jahan had discovered to his misfortune. Also, as long as Shah Jahan was alive, how could Aurangzeb afford to go away on a distant campaign?

With his limited resources, Jai Singh's Bijapur campaign (1665) was bound to fail. The campaign recreated the united front of the Deccani states against the Mughals, for the Qutb Shah sent a large force to aid Bijapur. The Deccanis adopted guerilla tactics, luring Jai Singh on to Bijapur while devastating the countryside so that the Mughals could get no supplies. Jai Singh found that he had no means to assault the city since he had not brought siege guns, and to invest the city was impossible. The retreat proved costly, and neither money nor any additional territory was gained by Jai Singh by this campaign. This disappointment and the censures of Aurangzeb hastened Jai Singh's death (1667). The following year (1668), the Mughals secured the surrender of Sholapur by bribery. The first phase was thus over.

## The Second Phase (1668-84)

The rapid internal decay of Bijapur after 1672 following the death of Ali Adil Shah led to a new situation. Given his conviction that Shivaji was unreliable and ambitious, and that it was not possible to arrive at a stable understanding with him, Aurangzeb had three options:

- (1) to adopt a policy of strict neutrality towards the Deccan states even if it implied the conquest or domination of Bijapur by Shivaji, singly or in alliance with Golconda; or
- (2) to attempt to shore up Bijapur against Maratha incursions, even against its wishes, by finding a reliable instrument or faction at the Bijapur court to support this policy, and, if possible, to get Golconda to join in this enterprise; or
- (3) outright annexation of both the Deccani states, or of Bijapur to begin with.

The first option was unthinkable and was never considered seriously, though considering various aspects, its adoption might not have been as harmful as the others. Stable and prosperous states in the Deccan, even if one of them (i.e. Bijapur) was dominated by the Marathas, might not have been really harmful to the Mughals. But the events from 1656 onwards, the nature of the Mughal state, and Aurangzeb's desire for a strong policy including, where necessary, annexation precluded a policy of masterly inactivity. Aurangzeb therefore veered round to the second option, and finally abandoned it in favour of the third in 1684 when he was at last convinced, on the basis of his personal experience, that the Deccani states would never join hands with him to completely crush the Marathas.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar is right in thinking that the growing feebleness of Bijapur following the accession of the boy king, Sikandar, in 1672, and faction fights at the Bijapuri court were the starting point of a new forward policy in the Deccan, signalized by the replacement of Shah Alam by the “energetic and successful” general, Bahadur Khan, as subahdar of the Deccan (1673). This marks the beginning of the second phase of Aurangzeb’s policy in the Deccan. During this phase, Aurangzeb’s objectives were still limited. No extra forces were assigned to Bahadur Khan and, as Sir Jadunath admits, with the ordinary contingent of a provincial governor the task of subduing Shivaji, who was then at the height of his power, and at the same time to conquer Bijapur was impossible, Jai Singh with much larger forces and the cooperation of Shivaji having earlier failed in the task.

A new factor during the period was the rise to power of Madanna and Akhanna in Golconda. Madanna Pandit, a Telegu brahman, who had been secretary and personal assistance to Saiyid Muzaffar, the Golconda wazir, was appointed wazir and peshwa by Abul Hasan after his accession in 1672. These two gifted brothers virtually ruled Golconda from 1672 almost till the extinction of the state in 1687. The brothers followed a policy of trying to establish a tripartite alliance between Golconda, Bijapur and Shivaji. This policy was periodically disturbed by faction fights at the Bijapur court, and by the overweening ambition of Shivaji. The factions at Bijapur could not be depended upon to follow a consistent policy. They adopted a pro or anti-Mughal stance depending upon their immediate interests. Shivaji looted and alternately supported Bijapur against the Mughals.

Although seriously concerned at the growing Maratha power, Aurangzeb, it seems, was keen to limit Mughal expansion in the Deccan. Hence, repeated efforts were made to instal and back a party at Bijapur which would cooperate with the Mughals against Shivaji, and which would not be led by Golconda.

On being posted to the Deccan, Bahadur Khan adopted a cautious and conciliatory policy. He entered into negotiations with Khawas Khan, the leader of the Deccani party, and tried to induce him to join the Mughals actively in the campaigns against Shivaji. Bahadur Khan met Khawas Khan at Pandharpur in October 1675 where the latter promised to get the sister of Sikandar Adil Shah married to one of Aurangzeb’s sons, and to have his own daughter married to the son of Bahadur Khan. Khawas Khan agreed to join in the campaign against Shivaji personally. In return, the Mughals promised to pay three lakhs to Khawas Khan to pay off the rebellious Afghan soldiers. Bahadur Khan advanced to the river Bhima to help Khawas Khan in disbanding the Afghan soldiers and in stripping Bahlol Khan, the leader of the Afghan faction, of the post of sar-i-lashkar. However, he was foiled in this enterprise by the arrest and overthrow of Khawas Khan by Bahlol Khan. This was the immediate background to Bahadur Khan’s invasion of Bijapur in 1676. Bahadur Khan succeeded in wresting Gulbarga and Naldurg from Bijapur (1677). The conquest of Naldurg and Gulbarga not only linked together the Mughal possessions enclosed by the Bhima and the Manjira in the west; it also brought the Mughals within easy striking distance of both Bijapur and Golconda cities.

Aurangzeb was dissatisfied with these limited successes and replaced Bahadur Khan by his lieutenant, Diler Khan, who reversed Bahadur Khan’s policy of allying with the Deccani party at Bijapur against the Afghans. Diler Khan listened to Bahlol Khan’s grandiloquent plea for a joint expedition against Golkonda and then jointly crushing Shivaji. However, the invasion of Golconda failed ignominiously (1677), and only furthered the policy of Madanna and Akhanna in building up a united front of the Deccani power against the Mughals. Madanna had already negotiated a subsidiary treaty with Shivaji, promising him an annual sum of one lakh huns for the defence of the realm. A Maratha agent, Prahlad Niraji, had been posted at Hyderabad as Shivaji’s envoy.

Simultaneously, at the instance of Akhanna, a treaty had been concluded in 1676 between Shivaji and Bahlol Khan, who had just succeeded Khawas Khan. The terms of this treaty were that the Bijapur government would pay Shivaji a sum of rupees three lakhs as a contribution, and one lakh huns annually as subsidy for protection against the Mughals, and confirm him in possession of the country bounded on the east by the Krishna, including Kolhapur district. This was followed by Golconda’s support to Shivaji in



his Karnataka campaign (1677-78). Perhaps the brothers Madanna and Akhanna hoped that by encouraging Shivaji to expand towards the south, he could be inclined to limit his ambitions vis-a-vis Bijapur. However, Shivaji's overweening ambition and faction fights at the Bijapur court between the Afghans and the Deccanis created serious obstacles in the realization of such a policy. Thus, the plea of Masaud Khan, Bahlol Khan's successor, to Shivaji, "We are neighbours. We eat the same salt. You are as deeply concerned (in the welfare of) this state as I am. The enemy (i.e. the Mughals) are day and night trying to ruin it. We two ought to unite and expel the foreigners", fell on deaf ears. Hence, Bijapuri factions were periodically pushed in the direction of an understanding with the Mughals to counter Shivaji's depredations. But such an understanding could not last, since no Bijapur faction was prepared to join hands in the destruction of Maratha power which was considered the sword-arm against the Mughals. This diplomatic struggle, in particular the roles of Madanna and Akhanna in Deccan politics and their efforts to build an alliance of the Deccani states, including Shivaji, to contain Mughal expansionism, has still not been studied adequately.

The year 1678 may be considered the high water-mark of the influence of the brothers Madanna and Akhanna in Deccani politics. Following the failure of the Mughal-Bijapuri raid on Golkonda (1677), and the death of Bahlol Khan soon afterwards, it was agreed that Sidi Masaud, the leader of the Deccani party, would become the wazir, that the riotous Afghan soldiers would be paid off and disbanded, and that a Golkonda Resident would live at Bijapur and advise the wazir about administration. It was also agreed that Shivaji would be "confined to the Konkan". As part of this agreement, Akhanna was posted at Bijapur as the Resident.

Thus, for the time being, Golconda and Mughal policies vis-a-vis Bijapur appeared to run on parallel lines, that is, to contain Shivaji. Could the Deccani politics have been stabilized if Aurangzeb had been prepared to join hands with Madanna and Akhanna in shoring up Bijapur and helping them to contain Shivaji? Such a possibility, even if considered, would have been difficult if not impossible to implement. The Mughals at first tried to win over Sidi Masaud. But in 1679, following secret negotiations of Masaud Khan with Shivaji, Diler Khan made an all-out bid to capture Bijapur which, at that time, had a garrison of only five thousand. However, thanks to the timely and effective Maratha intervention, he failed abjectly. The only result of Mughal diplomatic and military efforts was the reassertion of the united front of the three Deccani powers against the Mughals. A new element which was brought into play was the Karnataki foot soldiers. Thirty thousand of them sent by the Berad chief, Prem Naik, were a major factor in withstanding the Mughal siege of Bijapur. Shivaji, too, sent a large force to relieve Bijapur and raided the Mughal dominions in all directions. Thus, Diler Khan could achieve nothing except laying Mughal territories open to Maratha raids, and he was recalled by Aurangzeb.

It will thus be seen that between the retreat of Jai Singh from Bijapur in 1666 and the arrival of Aurangzeb in the Deccan in 1680 in pursuit of Prince Akbar, the Mughal record in the Deccan was pretty dismal. Following the breach with Shivaji in 1676, Aurangzeb had tried to repeat Jai Singh's earlier success against the Marathas but failed completely. He neither conciliated the Marathas, nor was he able to win over the Deccani states to an alliance against the Marathas. He resorted to a futile policy of pinpricks against Bijapur and nibbling at its territories. However, during this period, Aurangzeb made no real effort to conquer the Deccani states, either single handed or in conjunction with the Marathas, as had been advocated earlier by Jai Singh. Neither the Afghan uprising nor an alleged Persian threat of invasion can fully explain this. We are thus led to the conclusion that, in reality, Aurangzeb dreaded the idea of the conquest of the two Deccani states since he realized that the process would be a long-drawn out one, and that it could not be achieved without the use of large forces and much treasure, and further, that for resolving the perennial quarrel of Mughal commanders, an energetic prince would have to be placed in command of operations - a situation full of danger which he heartily wished to avoid. Nor was he prepared to proceed to the Deccan in person. Thus, lack of a consistent policy chiefly characterized this period.



The arrival of Aurangzeb in the Deccan in 1680 in pursuit of Prince Akbar did not lead to any immediate change in the Mughal policy towards the Deccani states. At first, Aurangzeb concentrated on the Marathas, and once again tried to persuade or pressurize the Deccani states into giving aid and assistance to the Mughals against them.

### The Third Phase (1684-87)

By 1684, Aurangzeb had come to the conclusion that he could not achieve his objectives without first undertaking the outright annexation of one or both of the Deccani states. We may consider this as marking the third phase of Aurangzeb's Deccan policy.

Aurangzeb called upon the Adil Shah as a vassal to supply provision to the imperial army, to allow the Mughal armies free passage through his territory and to supply a contingent of 5000 to 6000 cavalry for the war against the Marathas. He also demanded that Sharza Khan, the leading Bijapuri noble opposed to the Mughals, be expelled. An open rupture was now inevitable. The Adil Shah appealed for help both to Golconda and Sambhaji, which was promptly given. However, even the combined forces of the Deccani states could not withstand the full strength of the Mughal army, particularly when it was commanded by the Mughal emperor himself. Even then, it took 18 months of siege, with Aurangzeb being personally present during the final stages, before Bijapur fell (1686). This provides an ample justification for the earlier failure of Jai Singh (1665), and of Diler Khan (1679-80).

A campaign against Golconda was inevitable following the downfall of Bijapur. The "sins" of the Qutb Shah were too many to be pardoned. He had given supreme power to the infidels, Madanna and Akhanna, and helped Shivaji on various occasions. His latest "treachery" was sending 40,000 men to aid Bijapur, despite Aurangzeb's warning. In 1685, despite stiff resistance, the Mughals had occupied Golconda. The emperor had agreed to pardon the Qutb Shah in return for a huge subsidy, the ceding of some areas and the ousting of Madanna and Akhanna. The Qutb Shah had agreed- Madanna and Akhanna were dragged out into the streets and murdered (1686). But even this crime failed to save the Qutb Shahi monarchy. After the fall of Bijapur, Aurangzeb decided to settle scores with the Qutb Shah. The siege opened early in 1687 and after more than six months of campaigning the fort fell on account of treachery and bribery.

Aurangzeb's decision to annex Bijapur and Golconda, including the Karnataka, cannot be fully explained in terms of the threat posed by the combination of Sambhaji and Prince Akbar. By 1684, Prince Akbar had been virtually bottled up in Shivaji's szvarajya, and even the scale of Maratha depredations in Mughal territories had declined. The ease with which Aurangzeb could divert the bulk of the Mughal army for prolonged sieges of Bijapur and Golconda was an index of his confidence in his ability to deal with the Marathas. Nor can the new policy be explained fully in terms of his religious prejudices. Some sections of the old Golconda nobility were unhappy at their eclipse by the brothers Madanna and Akhanna whom they accused of filling all the important offices of state by their relations and brahmans, and had even appealed to Aurangzeb to intervene in defence of Islam. But Aurangzeb had paid scant attention to them; nor can we be certain that these charges had any substance. However, in justification of his new course of action, Aurangzeb -had accused the Qutb Shah of handing over the entire control of the affairs of the kingdom to "infidels", that is, the brothers Madanna and Akhanna, and not permitting the free practice of Islam. Apparently, these charges were meant to prepare the ground for the Mughal invasion and occupation of Golconda, for there was a sharp difference of opinion in the matter at the court. The fatwa of the chief sadr, Qazi Abdul Wahab, that it was unlawful to attack and conquer the territory of brother Muslim kings was an index of this.

The opposition of the annexation of the entire Bijapur and Golconda, especially the newly conquered territories of the Karnataka, was high-lighted by the correspondence of the crown prince Shah Alam, with the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. According to a contemporary historian, Ishwardas, Aurangzeb had written to Sikandar Adil Shah on the eve of the invasion of Bijapur that "if you accept imperial service, as a mark of royal bounty your country would be left to you as before." Some time after his

surrender, Sikandar requested that “the zamindari of the land across the river Krishna... be granted to me in order to enable me to leave my family there and then I shall be in attendance upon His Majesty.” Aurangzeb refused, saying sarcastically that he should see the beauties of Hindustan, and sent him as a prisoner to fort Daultabad, and then to Gwalior.

Apparently, in the case of both Bijapur and Golconda, Shah Alam wanted that the entire kingdoms should not be annexed. But he was accused of wanting to “bind Abul Hasan to his interests,” and was arrested and imprisoned. The unwillingness of the princes and the leading nobles to continue the campaign in the Deccan, once the threat from Prince Akbar’s side had subsided, the prince having embarked for Iran in 1683, is underlined in a despatch from the Amber wakil in 1683. According to it, Aurangzeb wanted to return to north India after the rains, leaving behind Khan-i-Jahan Bahadur as the Viceroy of the Deccan. However, Khan-i-Jahan Bahadur scouted the proposal, saying that the situation in the Deccan was such that the Marathas came within five to six kos of the royal encampment, and displayed acts of audacity and disobedience even though the Emperor himself was present, with the royal princes and the leading nobles in attendance. At his suggestion that a royal prince be left behind whom he would serve, the Emperor asked Shah Alam. However, Shah Alam bluntly refused, saying that he had been maligned by Diler Khan and others when he had served earlier in the Deccan, and hence he had sworn not to leave the side of the Emperor.

Was Aurangzeb’s decision to conquer and annex Bijapur and Golconda a result of the growing crisis of the jagirdari system, more especially, the shortage of *pai-baqi* lands for being allotted in jagir to the large number of new Maratha and Deccani entrants to the service? No contemporary writer has put forward this argument. Khafi Khan’s complaints of *be-jagiri* apparently refers to the period after the conquest of the Deccani states when many Deccani nobles had to be absorbed in the Mughal service.

However, we cannot rule out the argument that the growing demand of the nobles for jagirs was a factor in Aurangzeb’s decision of outright annexation of Bijapur and Golconda, something which he had been resisting all along.

## MARATHAS AND THE DECCAN (1687-1707)

Aurangzeb had triumphed but he soon found that the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda was only the beginning of his difficulties. The last and the most difficult phase of Aurangzeb’s life began now. After the downfall of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was able to concentrate all his forces against the Marathas. Earlier, by a series of carefully calculated moves, and well chosen troops, Aurangzeb was able to put the Marathas on the defensive, and virtually seal off the routes across which the Marathas would have to traverse in order to aid Bijapur and Golconda. Sambhaji’s preoccupation with internal enemies and with those in his immediate neighbourhood, that is, the Sidis and the Portuguese, also aided Aurangzeb in his scheme of isolating the Deccani states, and dealing with each one of them according to his convenience.

In 1689, Sambhaji was surprised at his secret hide-out at Sangameshwar by a Mughal force. He was paraded before Aurangzeb and executed as a rebel and an infidel. This was undoubtedly another major political mistake on the part of Aurangzeb. He could have set a seal on his conquest of Bijapur and Golconda by coming to terms with the Marathas. In fact, some of the nobles advocated Sambhaji being kept a prisoner and asked to surrender all forts. By executing Sambhaji, Aurangzeb not only threw away the chance of a compromise but provided the Marathas a cause. In the absence of a single rallying point, the Maratha sardars were left free to plunder the Mughal territories, disappearing at the approach of the Mughal forces. Instead of destroying the Marathas, Aurangzeb made the Maratha opposition allpervasive in the Deccan. Rajaram, the younger brother of Sambhaji, was crowned as king, but decided to escape when the Mughal’s attacked his capital. Leaving Ramchandra Amatya as his vice-regent (*hukumat panah*), Rajaram sought shelter at Jinji on the east coast and continued the fight against the Mughals from there with the help of his half-cousin, Shahji of Tanjore. Thus, Maratha resistance spread from the west to the east coast.

However, at the moment, Aurangzeb was at the height of his power, having triumphed over all his enemies. Some of the nobles were of the opinion that Aurangzeb should now return to north India, leaving to others the task of carrying on mopping up operations against the Marathas. Aurangzeb rejected all such suggestions. Convinced that the Maratha power had been crushed, after 1690 Aurangzeb concentrated on annexing to the empire the rich and extensive Karnataka tract, and to settle the administration of the two conquered kingdoms.

Recent studies show that Aurangzeb's reorganization of administration in the old settled tracts of Golconda and Bijapur was broadly on sound lines. Aurangzeb transferred a cadre of experienced Mughal officers into these two provinces. The old Golconda was divided into nine sarkars, with a faujdar at the headquarters. Hyderabad-Karnataka was made a separate charge, as also Bijapuri-Karnataka. The old revenue system was reorganised. A full scale survey and assessment of lands was not undertaken. However, the new assessment of Golconda carried out with the help of the local deshmukhs proved to be a lasting one, and was used by Nizam-ul-Mulk and the British later. Formally, ijara (revenue farming) was abolished, but perhaps it continued at the lower level. The powerful Reddi, Valema and Brahman deshmukhs were fleeced, but left in their positions. The land-revenue demand was raised by 13 per cent, with 4 per cent as jizyah.

Both in Golconda and Bijapur, the Irani, Afghan and Decanni nobility were sought to be integrated in the Mughal nobility, with their old status safeguarded. Thus, in Golconda, twenty-four Qutb Shahi nobles were given mansabs of 1000 zat and above. Many of these nobles were dispersed to different parts of the country after some time. Thus, Mahabat Khan who had been given a mansab of 7000/7000 and appointed governor of Hyderabad, and faujdar and diwan of Hyderabad-Karnataka, was after some time appointed governor of Lahore. Another noble from Golconda, Ali Askar Khan, was appointed governor of Awadh. However, as detailed studies show, the replacement of the local rulers who were patrons of culture and source of all authority, legitimacy and power were replaced by a Mughal governor who was "part of a harsher, less personal imperial service". (I.F. Richards) Hence, popular sentiment continued to adhere to the deposed monarchs. Moreover, in Golconda, all the brahmans were removed from leading positions. The deshmukhs, though restored to their old positions, were never called to court or given official positions, or their contingents made a part of the royal army as bargirs. Efforts were also made to deal with the various Reddi, Valema and Brahman deshmukhs, desphandes and muniwars. These sections, and the military leaders, the nayaks, had not generally sided with the Marathas. Many of them were fleeced, either to fill the Imperial coffers, or to line the pockets of the local officials before they were restored to their positions. However, with the exception of the Berad chief, Pidiya Nayak, none of them were given mansabs, or even called to the court which has been the tradition earlier.

The task of settling Bijapur and the Karnataka was much more difficult. Ever since the time of Shahji, followed by the subsequent expedition of Shivaji, the Marathas had set themselves up at Bangalore and Tanjore, and established links with some of the powerful local Nayaks.

The arrival of Rajaram in Jinji led to a widespread support to him, forcing Aurangzeb to send a powerful force under Zulfiqar Khan, a powerful noble and son of the Wazir, Asad Khan, to deal with the situation. With his force of 10,000 horse and 15,000 Rajput foot-men, Zulfiqar Khan brought the rebellion in the Karnataka under control, but was unable to besiege Jinji effectively. Meanwhile, Maratha resistance revived rapidly. In 1692, the Marathas not only recovered many forts, including Rajgarh and Panhala, but sent a force of 30,000 horse into Karnataka under two of their leading commanders, Santa Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav, to relieve Jinji. These intrepid commanders were to prove a thorn in the side of the Mughals both in the Karnataka and in the Maharashtra area. Thus, they defeated and held to ransom some of the Mughal commanders and for some time cut off all communications between Zulfiqar Ali Khan and the Mughal court.

Commenting on the speedy revival and spread of Maratha activities, the Amber agent at the court wrote in 1695.



“The royal servants are worried day and night how to deal with the Marathas (lit. “disturbers”) in the Deccan. Large territories have been brought under the control of royal officials, but due to lack of means, they do not have the strength (to control them). For in place of 7000 (sawars) they keep (only) 700. Royal princes and their sons are roaming around in every quarter like faujdars, but to no avail. From every quarter, news of the activities of the Marathas reach the ears of the Emperor, but he is unable to find any proper remedy for dealing with them. He is further confounded by hearing news of disturbances in North India (Hindustan)”.

There is evidence to suggest that Aurangzeb’s decision regarding the outright annexation of both Bijapur and Golconda led to serious questioning in the minds of thoughtful observers and nobles, and created doubts about the sagacity and wisdom of Aurangzeb as a ruler. Thus, the failure of Zulfiqar Khan’s efforts to rapidly conquer Jinji and the neighbouring areas led to a spate of rumours that Zulfiqar Khan had made a deal with the Marathas and that he would soon declare independence in the Deccan, that the Marathas would soon conquer Bijapur and Golconda or that following the death of Aurangzeb, these territories would be restored to the Adil Shah and Qutb Shah. These rumours were in reality an index of the growth of war-weariness and of the feeling that these areas, particularly the Karnataka, were not vital to the Mughals, and that in his desire to conquer all, Aurangzeb was not able to control the situation, or give the mansabdars their due, or even to cherish and protect the peasantry. This, in turn, led to half-hearted efforts and tardiness on the part of the nobles in all matters, connected with the Deccan.

It was not till 1698 that Zulfiqar Ali Khan finally conquered Jinji. However, the main prize, Rajaram, escaped. With his return to Satara, there was a marked growth of Maratha activities all over, including the Karnataka.

In Bijapur, the state of administration had deteriorated on account of factionalism in the nobility and the ravages of the Marathas. The Marathas had become so bold that none of the nobles felt they could face them. Thus, Santa Ghorpade defeated and imprisoned Ismail Khan “accounted one of the bravest warriors of the Deccan”. Sharza Khan entitled Rustam Khan after the surrender of Bijapur; Ali Mardan Khan, Ruhullah Khan each of them were released after paying a substantial ransom. By the time Rajaram returned to Satara, the Marathas had virtually set up a parallel government in the old Bijapur state. Thus, according to the contemporary observer, Khafi Khan, the Marathas had appointed a kamaish-dar in every district to collect chauth. Whenever from the resistance of the zamindars and the faujdar, the kamaish-dar was unable to collect the chauth, the Maratha commander, called subadar, hastened to support him, and besiege and destroy the towns that resisted. Similarly, all merchants were taxed for rah-dari. In every region, the Marathas built forts as strong points. The muqaddams, or headmen of the village often cooperated with the Maratha subadars, and with their assistance, they bargained with the royal officers as to the payment of land revenue.

The Maratha depredations not only extended to the Deccan, but in 1699, they crossed the Narmada and ravaged the environs of Ujjain. Soon they entered Gujarat, hovered near Surat, and sacked Broach.

Undaunted, Aurangzeb stuck to his resolve to crush the Marathas. He constituted two mobile forces with artillery, commanded by Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and Ghaziuddin Khan Firuz Jang. They were able to limit the Maratha incursions, and in a running battle with Firuz Jang, Santa Ghorpade was killed. But this did change the basic situation.

Soon afterwards, Aurangzeb set out to win back all the Maratha forts. For five and half years, from 1700 to 1705, Aurangzeb dragged his weary and ailing body from the siege of one fort to another. Floods, disease and the Maratha roving bands took fearful toll of the Mughal army. Weariness and disaffection steadily grew among the nobles and the army. Demoralization set in and many jagirdars made secret pacts with the Marathas and agreed to pay chauth if the Marathas did not disturb their jagirs.



The long-extending war had inflicted extensive damage not only on the Mughals, but also undermined the infant Maratha state created by Shivaji. That is why in 1695 and in 1698, Raja Ram had attempted to open negotiations with the Mughals. Aurangzeb had spurned his offers. In 1700, following the death of Raja Ram, his eldest widow, Tara Bai, proposed peace to Aurangzeb, offering to maintain a contingent of 5000 horses for Imperial service, and to cede seven forts, in return for the recognition of her son, Shivaji II, as the king of the Marathas, the grant of a mansab of 7000, and the right of collecting sardeshmukhi in the Deccan. Thus Tara Bai dropped the claim of independence, and also of chauth.

It seems that Aurangzeb was still confident of his ability to crush the Marathas. According to Khafi Khan, he thought that it would not be difficult to overcome two young children and a helpless woman. Also, he did not, perhaps want to rule out the claim of Shambhaji's son, Shahu, who had been brought up in the Imperial court since 1689. Hence, he rejected the offer, demanding that the Marathas surrender all the forts.

In 1703, Aurangzeb opened negotiations with the Marathas. He was prepared to release Shahu, the son of Sambhaji, who had been captured at Satara along with his mother. Shahu had been treated well. He had been given the title of raja and the mansab of 7000/ 7000. On coming of age he had been married to two Maratha girls of respectable families. Aurangzeb was prepared to grant Shahu Shivaji's swarajya and the right of sardeshmukhi over the Deccan, thus recognising his special position. Over 70 Maratha sardars actually assembled to receive Shahu. But Aurangzeb cancelled the arrangements at the last minute uncertain about the intentions of the Marathas.

From later Persian sources, it seems that Aurangzeb was prepared to return Shivaji's swarajya, as also the grant of sardeshmukhi over the six subahs in the Deccan. There is, however, no reference to his willingness to grant chauth. Suspicious that the Marathas might carry off Shahu, Aurangzeb withdrew his offer at the last moment.

By 1706, Aurangzeb was convinced of the futility of his effort to capture all the Maratha forts. He slowly retreated to Aurangabad while an exulting Maratha army hovered around and attacked the stragglers. Thus, when Aurangzeb breathed his last at Aurangabad in 1707, he left behind an empire which was sorely distracted, and in which all the various internal problems of the empire were coming to a head.

## ASSESSMENT OF AURANGZEB

There has been a great deal of debate about the responsibility of Aurangzeb in the downfall of the Mughal empire which virtually collapsed and began to disintegrate in less than two decades after his death. According to some, Aurangzeb strove manfully to stem the forces of disintegration represented by the Hindus, and tried to rally the Muslims for the defence of the empire, but was stymied by the combine of the Hindus and the shias i.e. the Marathas and the Deccani kingdoms. On the other hand, Sir Jadunath Sarkar compares Aurangzeb to the boa constrictor, who kept on swelling everything so that the empire "collapsed under its own weight."

There can be little doubt that Aurangzeb's policy of puritanism, of attempting to force Muslims to strictly abide by the life style prescribed by the sharia, his discriminatory policies against the non-Muslims, and his attempt to make the ulama a pillar of support (by giving them large concessions) was bound to fail. India was too large and varied a country to abide by a narrow, religiously prescribed code which went against long-established conventions and practices. Thus, many of the social reform measures of Aurangzeb, such as banning of wine and intoxicants, and cultivation of bhang were honoured more in the breach. Thus, even Qazi Abdul Wahab, a favourite of Aurangzeb, drank in private. Nor were the nobles and princes willing to follow the grim, dutiful ascetical life-style favoured by Aurangzeb. Thus, Asad Khan, his wazir and the most highly paid official in the empire, maintained such a high life style that according to the Maasir-ul-Umara, a highly reliable biographical account of the nobles written during the 18th Century, says that "the expenses of his haram and for the purveyors of music and song were so great that his revenues did not meet them."

Unlike some of his predecessors, such as Babur, Akbar, Jahangir, etc., Aurangzeb did not believe in holding convivial parties in which wine and music flowed and to which the nobles were invited, or of holding discussions with them. In consequence, Aurangzeb remained an austere, aloof and remote figure. This may have suited the life style of a saint, but did not suit one who had to make political decisions for which both consultations and a sense of participation was necessary. Thus, at the height of the Marwar crisis, even the Imperial Bakhshi, Khan-i-Jahan, had to force his way into the ghusal-khana or private audience hall to give his opinion, and was punished for his audacity. Likewise, even Prince Shah Alam, then his father's favourite, could not give to Aurangzeb his views regarding Bijapur and Golconda, and was imprisoned for daring to differ from him.

Aurangzeb's attempt to utilise the ulama and through them to rally the Muslims in support behind him was even less successful. The ulama proved to be corrupt and grasping, as was shown in the case of many qazis who were appointed amils of jizyah. Even the respected Qazi Abdul Wahab at his death left behind a sum of two lakhs of ashrafis and five lakhs of rupees in cash apart from an immense quantity of other valuables.

According to Khafi Khan, Aurangzeb had established the qazis so firmly in the affairs of state, with reference to the general principles as well as details of the administration, that "the leading and responsible officers of the empire began to look upon them with envy and jealousy." Thus, Qazi Abdul Wahab Gujrati, the Qazi-ul-Quzzat, had become so strong and powerful that all the well known amirs were afraid of him. It was in this context that in the seventies, when Aurangzeb wanted to send Mahabat Khan with a force to uproot Shivaji, Mahabat Khan retorted that there was no need for an army being sent against Shiva as a fatwa (decree) of the Qazi would suffice! Later on, in a letter written to Aurangzeb in 1676, Mahabat Khan expressed shock that "experienced and able officers of the state are deprived of all trust and confidence while full reliance is placed on the hypocritical mystics and empty-headed ulama" Mahabat Khan went to say "Since these men are selling knowledge and manners for the company of kings, to rely upon them was neither in accordance with the sharia, nor suited to the ways of the world."

Oddly enough, while departing from Akbar's policy of sulh-i-kul, Aurangzeb, like Akbar, wanted to combine worldly power with spiritual powers. Thus, to counter the Satnamis who were supposed to be endowed with magical powers so that no arms prevailed against them, Aurangzeb ordered prayer formulae and symbols written by his own hand to be sewn on the imperial banners and standards in facing them.

Again, in 1695-96, when the river Bhima suddenly rose in flood, and caused great destruction in the royal camp, Aurangzeb wrote prayers on papers, and ordered them to be thrown into the water. Bhimsen says: "Immediately the water began to subside. The prayer of the God-devoted Emperor was accepted by God, and the world became composed again." No wonder, Shaikh Kalimullah, the well known sufi saint of Delhi, accused Aurangzeb of hypocrisy and presumptuousness in trying to combine sultanat or worldly rule with faqiri or sainthood.

Like Akbar and the other rulers of the time, Aurangzeb claimed the right to supersede ruling of the sharia by secular decrees, called zawabit, and also to choose between rulings of different schools of sharia. Thus, during the siege of Satara, out of a group which made a sortie from the fort, four Muslims and nine non-Muslims soldiers were captured. The Qazi of the camp proposed that if the Hindus accepted Islam they should be released and the Muslim kept in prison for three years. Aurangzeb turned down the proposal and wrote on the petition that the Qazi should take recourse to some other school of law than the Hanafi school "so that control over the kingdom was not lost". This was done and the Qazi recommended that "the Hindu and Muslims prisoners of war should be executed as a deterrent." This was acted upon.

While upholding the sharia, Aurangzeb was not prepared to repudiate his Timurid legacy. Thus, in his letters to his sons written towards the end of his reign, he refers approvingly to some of the actions of Akbar and Shah Jahan, and, almost echoing Abul Fazl, says... "You should consider the protection of the

subjects as the source of happiness in this world and the next." No special emphasis is placed in these letters of advice on defending the faith and punishing the irreligious and waging war on the infidel, but uphold the discharge of "truly necessary worldly tasks" as being truly religious tasks.

Thus, Aurangzeb's character was a complex one, with his orthodox bent of mind and his emphasis on sharia competing with or being in conflict with his equally strong emphasis on the tasks of rulership in a multi-religious country.

Aurangzeb has been called an indefatigable and stern administrator who neither spared himself nor those close to him. Nevertheless, Aurangzeb's very industriousness reflected, like Philippe II in Europe, the mind of a clerk or a junior functionary rather than that of a politician with insight and an understanding of larger forces. Thus, his handling of the Marwar-Mewar issue was clumsy and inapt, and brought no advantage to him or to the government. He failed to understand the nature of the Maratha movement, or to befriend Shivaji or his successors although there were a number of opportunities for doing so. His hope of utilizing the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan against the "infidel" Marathas was a will-o-the-wisp. When, finally, he was disillusioned, he decided upon the outright annexation of the two Deccani kingdoms, against the advice and wishes of many of his nobles and prince Shah Alam. The unending war in the Deccan brought to the surface all the inherent weaknesses of the Mughal administrative system. The chief of these was the jagirdari system on whose successful working depended the nobility, the army and the administration.

## THE JAGIRDARI CRISIS

The crisis of the jagirdari system had both an administrative and a social basis. The success of the jagirdari system depended on the ability of the holder of the jagir getting sufficient resources for living in the style he was accustomed to or expected, and maintaining a sufficient quota of troops for the service of the state. The jagirdari system implied giving the jagirdars or nobles a vested interest in collecting land-revenue from the zamindars in the tract of land assigned to them as jagir. Thus, the co-relation between the jama (assessed income) and the hasil (income) depended not only upon the realistic nature of revenue assignment and its income but also on the ability of the jagirdar with the help of the faujdar, to overawe and compel the zamindars who were armed, and often associated closely with the owner-cultivators on a caste and kinship basis, to pay the assessed land-revenue.

Thus, the jagir system was based on the specific social system prevailing in the country. Due to a variety of factors, the Mughals were, by and large, able to "persuade" the zamindars of north India, except those living in remote and inaccessible areas, to cooperate in paying the assessed land-revenue. In fact, more and more of them were converted from peshkash paying zamindars to kharaj (land-revenue) collecting agents, receiving, in turn a definite share in the proceeds as nankar. Even then, due to the rapid expansion of the number of mansabdars, there was an apparent mismatch between the available resources, and the demands of salaries by the mansabdars and their contingents. This was met by reducing salaries and the number of troops and horses a mansabdar was required to maintain. This also implied that a mansabdar became even more dependent on the support of the local faujdar for over-awing the local zamindar when necessary.

The attempt to import this system into the Deccan where conditions were vastly different, and where there was an endemic warfare which local zamindars were fully prepared to utilize for their own purposes, was the real basis of the crisis of the jagirdari system. As Bhimsen, who was posted in the Deccan, says:

"The provinces given to the mansabdars in tankhwah (salary) cannot be governed because of the smallness of their force (jamiat). The zamindars, too, have assumed strength, joined the Marathas, enlisted armies (jamiat) and laid the hands of oppression on the country." He concludes, "When such is the condition of zamindars it has become difficult for a dam or dirham to reach the jagirdars".



Regarding the lack of military force at the disposal of the jagirdars and faujdars, Bhimsen says that during the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, except Ram Singh Hada, Dalpat Bundela and Jai Singh Kachhwaha (grandson of Mirza Raja Jai Singh), who had their watans, no mansabdar maintained more than 1000 sawars. Bhimsen goes on to say: "The lawless men of every district, disregarding the petty faujdars, have acquired strength. The faujdars, despairing of being able to bear the trouble and cost of campaigning, consider it a gain to sit at one place, and to enter into an agreement with the enemy i.e. the Marathas." The Amber wakil wrote back home that even mansabdars of 7000 maintained contingents of only 700, and that due to the ineffectiveness of the faujdars, royal princes and their sons were roaming the country side like faujdars.

The working of the administrative system worsened the situation. The most paying (sair hasil) jagirs were reserved for the khalisa to meet the cost of the war. In consequence, the jagirdars were given jagirs in the areas called zor-talab, i.e. where it was difficult to realize land-revenue on account of the entrenched power of the zamindars and the land-owning community. This was generally in the areas outside the old Golconda and Bijapuri kingdoms. When the jagirdars were unable to produce for dagh the requisite number of sawars and horses of the requisite quality, their jagirs were confiscated, and included in the pai-baqi (land meant for assignment).

The struggle for sair-hasil jagirs thus became a matter of life and death for mansabdars, and allowed the royal mutasaddis (lower officials) the opportunity of indulging in all kinds of corrupt practices, including frequent transfers of which Bhimsen complains bitterly. In this situation, the smaller mansabdars were the worst hit.

The growing disfunctionality of the jagirdari system was aggravated by the problem of be-jagiri or lack of sufficient jagirs for assignment. Khafi Khan, says that on account of the inadequacy of pai baqi, or lands meant for assignment in jagirs, and the appointment of innumerable mansabdars especially large numbers of Deccanis and Marathas, sons of old nobles or khanazads were not able to get jagirs for four or five years. This was in the year 1691-92. The situation seems to have worsened because, anxious not to allow the number of mansabdars to exceed the resources after the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb put a virtual ban on the recruitment of new nobles. He repeatedly declared that he did not need any new servants, and desired that no papers (misls) for new entrants be put up to him. For some time the Imperial Bakhshi, Ruhullah Khan, under the pressure of nobles, continued to put fresh cases before the Emperor, on the plea that the Empire consisted of seven Sultanats (presumably the five Deccani Sultanats and Malwa and Gujarat), i.e. it was vast, and the Emperor alone could say yes or no to the large number of needy khanazads. After the death of Ruhullah Khan (1692), Aurangzeb angrily turned down all the requests of the new Bakhshi, Mukhlis Khan. Khafi Khan says that this led to great lamentation in the camp among those who had waited for an appointment for years. Thus, imperial signature i.e. grant of a jagir became like one pomegranate among a hundred sick!

It is hardly necessary to bring together more information on the subject. The question of frequent transfers, especially of smaller mansabdars, asking a lump sum of payment (qabz) before the jagir was handed over to the agent of the new jagirdar, demanding money for the upkeep of the royal animals even before possession of the jagirs etc. were abuses in the working of the system. Failure to meet the expectations of the khanazads, i.e. those who had served the Empire for generations, and whose loyalty and support were important for the Empire, was something completely different. It undermined the loyalty of the old nobles, and as the system deteriorated, made them look to opportunities for carving out their own spheres of domination. Both Asad Khan the wazir, and his son, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and the leading noble, Ghaziuddin Firuz Jung were suspected of harbouring such ambitions. It has been argued that there was no jagirdari crisis because after the annexation of the two Decanni kingdoms, the jama of the empire rose by 23 per cent or Rs. 5.3 crores annually, whereas the numbers of mansabdars was kept within that limit. It has also been argued that there was no shortage of pai baqi, according to a Mughal revenue document of 1689. However, two aspects need to be kept in mind. The jama in the Deccan had been grossly inflated from the time of Akbar. Hence, what the nobles received for meeting their claims (talab) was a



fraction of the real income (hasil), leading to an acute struggle for more paying sair hasil jagirs. Also, later documents suggest that large areas were kept in pai baqi on extraneous grounds, but in reality to meet the spiralling cost of a war the end of which seemed nowhere in sight, and for which most of the nobles had no heart.

There has been a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the precise extent of the growth of the number of mansabdars under Aurangzeb. We are told by Lahori that during the twentieth year of Shah Jahan's reign, there were 8000 mansabdars and 7000 ahadis and mounted artillery men. A document under Aurangzeb which, it seems, was prepared before the annexation of Bijapur and Golconda, gives a figure of 14,449 of whom 7,457 received cash salaries and 6992 were jagirdars. These figures show that there was no addition to the number of jagirdars during this period. Unlike Shah Jahan, there is no official history of Aurangzeb after the tenth year, so that it is difficult to know the precise number of mansabdars.



# UNIT-XXVI

## SOCIETY-STRUCTURE AND GROWTH

### RURAL SOCIETY

The social structure during the Sultanat period, which we have analyzed earlier, continued to operate under Mughal rule, showing signs of both continuity and change. The most important changes were the further stratification of rural society; growth of urbanization and of the class of artisans and masterartisans, the growth of a composite ruling class accompanied with bureaucratization and commercialization; the growth of middle segments, and the further expansion and strengthening of the commercial classes. While it is difficult to form a precise idea of the total population of the country in the absence of statistics, by utilizing the statistics of the cultivated area, yields, revenue rates and the jama or the estimated revenue demand from land, modern scholars have put the population of the country at the end of the 16th century between 140 and 150 million which slowly increased to 200 million by the end of the 18th century, thus giving a population growth rate of 0.14 per cent per annum.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, about 85 per cent of India's population lived in rural areas. Any study of the social system should, therefore, start with the villages. However, in contemporary historical sources, including the accounts of the large number of foreign travellers who visited India during the period, we have hardly any account of life in the rural areas. The deficiency has been made up to some extent by the large mass of documents dealing with land revenue and rural affairs pertaining to the various states of Rajasthan, Marathi records of the 18th century, and Mughal documents mainly dealing with the Deccan. Literary sources, too, provide some information on rural life and conditions.

A main feature of rural society in the country, excluding tribal areas, was its highly stratified nature. People were divided and grouped on the basis of their resident status, caste, and position as office holders. While there were considerable differences in their material status, material situation was not a primary factor in fixing their position in rural society.

### RESIDENT CULTIVATORS: RIYAYATIS AND KHUD KASHT

The largest section in the village consisted of cultivators, the large majority of whom claimed to be descendants of original settlers of the village. The word used in Sanskrit for old settlers was sthanik or resident, and the words thani or stalwahak for such settlers in Maharashtra were obviously derived from it. Other words, such as mirasi in Maharashtra, or gaonveti or gaveti in Rajasthan were also in use for these sections.

The resident cultivators were often divided into two: the riyayati and the raiyati, or the privileged and the ordinary. The riyayati section consisted of the resident owner-cultivators, for whom the word mirasi was used in Maharashtra, and gharu-hala in parts of Rajasthan. The word used in Persian was khud kasht. According to a late 18th century glossary, the word khud kasht is defined as one who, "having paid himself the money (for the purchase of) oxen etc, gets the cultivation done by the peasants (riaya)". It sums up by saying, "if the owner of land (malik-i-zamin) cultivates his own land, he is called khud-kasht"

Thus, resident status in the village, ownership of land, and cultivating the land with the help of family labour, supplemented by hired labour, were the characteristic features of the khud-kasht. The khud-kasht not only paid land revenue at a concessional rate, but were exempt, partially or wholly, from various imposts, such as tax on marriages. Nor did a khud-kasht pay any house tax as long as he had only one habitation in the village. But as a perceptive British administrator of the 18th century W.W. Hunter, observed:

"The khud-kasht right was a valuable right, not only because it implied an economic advantage, but because it conferred a certain social status. The resident cultivators formed the governing body of the village community its bhadralok or respectable class." They had a number of other privileges, such as access to village pastures and forest lands, to the water reservoir and the fishes, and to the services of the village servants or officials.

Apart from the khud-kasht, the privileged section or riyayatis comprised in Rajasthan and perhaps in many parts of the country, of those belonging to the higher castes, Brahman, Rajput and Mahajan (bania), as also the local village officials, such as the patel or chaudhari, quanungo, patwari, etc. though many of these may have been drawn from the body of the khud-kasht.

The riyayatis had a separate dastur or tax regulation in various parts of the country. In Rajasthan, according to documents, these sections paid one-fourth of the produce, whereas the normal demand was from one-fourth to half. It should be noted however, that due to caste taboo, brahmans did not cultivate the land themselves, but had it ploughed through hired labour. Also, as we shall see, concessions in land-revenue was given on occasions to other sections also.

## PAHIS OR OUTSIDERS

The khud-kasht or owner-cultivators are sometimes equated wrongly with the entire body of resident cultivators. They are also contrasted with the pahi or pai-kasht who came from neighbouring villages or parganas to cultivate surplus land, or to resettle a ruined village or to settle a new one. In many cases, the pahis were given pattas at concessional rates, the full rate being paid in the third or fifth year, or even later. Thus, we are told that village Mehrajpur in pargana Malarna (Eastern Rajasthan) which had been deserted in 1728 on account of failure of rains and the wells and ponds having dried up, was resettled when the former patel was asked to settle in the village and give an undertaking that he would bring the entire land of the village under plough. He was given a patta at the rate of one-third of the produce for three years. The pahi-kasht who came to the village were given pattas for paying one-third of the produce for the current year.

Such concession could vary, both in terms of amount and duration, depending on circumstances. When the pahis had no implements of their own, they were provided with ploughs, bullocks, seeds, manure and money either directly by the state, or by the village money-lender (bohra). They were also allowed to retain their fields as long as they continued to pay land-revenue.

The movement of peasants from village to village, either due to natural factors, such as famins, or man-made factors, such as war or local oppresion was not a new feature. It is referred to by the Hindi poet, Tulsidas, in the 16th century. It was an old feature that peasants moved from their villages to improve their conditions, such as settling a new village, or expanding cultivation in an old village or resettling it. Thus, rural society' was not as fixed and unchanging as we often picture it; though the structure itself hardly underwent any change. Thus, a new village was settled on the same structure as the old one. During periods of unrest, the number of pahis must have increased, as is the evidence for the 18th century. But we do not have any documents for the earlier period to make a comparion.

Sometimes the pahis were drawn from the section of dalits who came to new or ruined villages in the hope of acquiring ownership rights over the lands they had brought under the plough. Such a development was generally not possible in their own villages due to social taboos. But we do find instances in many areas, such as Kota, where peasants from the dalit sections were allowed to become owners of land.

It would not be correct to treat pahis as temporary or migrating workers because most of them settled in the village and could, in course of time which could extend to one or more generation, be absorbed in the body of resident cultivators.

## THE RAIYATIS

The general category of cultivators were called raiyatis or paltis in Rajasthan. The Persian word used for them was muzarian. The paltis generally belonged to middle castes - Jat, Gujar, Mali, Ahir, Meena etc. They could be either owners (malik, dhani) of the lands they cultivated, or tenants. The raiyati owner cultivators were assessed according to the raiyati dastur which itself was variable, according to the nature of the crop, the season, means of irrigation etc. However, as a norm, the land revenue levied on polaj land on the ordinary peasant was normally one-half of the produce. Wheat and bajra was charged at two-fifth. Land-revenue did not include other cesses (jihati).

Raiyati or palti tenants have been divided into two — state tenants who cultivated the cultivatable wasteland (banjar), or cultivated the land abandoned by a dhani or an owner-cultivator. Such tenants usually had their own ploughs and oxen, and were given a patta which could be for one year, or a single harvest. The patta was generally renewable. The second category of tenants were dhani tenants who tilled the personal lands of zamindars, bhomias, patels, holders of inam lands etc. Very often they were dependent on the mahajan, zamindar and the patel for bullocks, ploughs, seeds, etc. They either paid rent in addition to the land-revenue to the owner of the land or cultivated it on the basis of share-cropping. These cultivators had low social esteem, and sometimes the word palti applied to them was used in a derogatory sense. The paltis also moved from village to village for better terms, or were offered concessional terms for settling a deserted or a new village. These paltis are sometimes indistinguishable from pahis.

Apart from the cultivators, there were landless persons who worked as labourers (majurs). In addition, there were the service people - the ironsmith, the carpenter, the rope-maker, the potter, the leather worker, barber, washermen, the village watchman, etc. In Maharashtra, these service sectors were twelve in number who were called balutedars, receiving a prescribed share (baluta) from the village produce. There was another section called alutedars, which were "neither essential nor universal in the Deccan villages, only some of them were occasionally found in the larger villages". They were the village priests, tailor, water carrier, gardner, drum-beater, volcalist, musician, oil presser, betel nut seller, gold smith etc. These received a lower share of the produce or were given a strip of land for their remuneration. The landless and the bulk of the service classes were designated kamin or low, and included a sizable section of dalits.

It is difficult to estimate the proportion of the three principal sections - the riyayati, the raiyati, and the service classes. In some estimates pertaining to eastern Rajasthan, the riyayati or privileged classes amounted to 13 percent; the service classes 11 percent and the remainder 76 percent. Even this does not give a true picture of the gross inequalities in village society. According to a takhmina document about mauza Chandawar in Eastern Rajasthan in 1666, out of 86 cultivators, 9 cultivated on an average about 126 bighas each, 23 cultivators had 70 bighas of land each under actual cultivation, and the remaining 50 cultivated 30 bighas of land each. A study of two villages in pargana Chatsu in V.S. 1723/ A.D. 1666 shows that while in Chatsu village, only 10 asamis (5 percent of the total) had 5 to 8 oxen each, 61 asamis (30.5 percent) had one oxen each which was insufficient for cultivation. The remaining 129 asamis (64 percent) had 2 to 4 oxen. In another village, Kotkhwada, the proportion was 8.8 percent of the asamis with 5 to 7 oxen, 21.5 percent with one ox, and 69.2 percent with 2 to 4. This picture is repeated in the case of ploughs. Thus, in village Multhan 4 asamis (10 percent) had 3 to 5 ploughs, while the rest had one to two ploughs.

From this limited evidence, we may not be for wrong in concluding that while the large majority of the cultivators belonged to the middling status, in many of the bigger villages, there were 4 to 15 asamis, constituting 5 to 10 percent of the total, who were financially affluent. At the other end of the spectrum, there were 15 to 30 percent cultivators in many villages who did not have land or means of cultivation, and who could be classified poor. This does not include the landless and the poorer sections in the service classes.



We do not have sufficient information at present to decide whether poverty was growing, or the rich becoming richer. A general assumption is that whenever the control of the government, whether central or local, weakened, the richer sections in the villages transferred their burden on to the shoulders of the weaker sections. However, the main point to note is that rural society in Mughal India was not an undifferentiated mass of pauperized peasants.

The question is, what effect did this disparity have on the growth pattern of the village? We have evidence of both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, the richer sections including the mahajans, lent oxen, ploughs, seeds, etc. to the weaker sections for cultivation, or lent money for payment of land-revenue and realized their dues with interest at the time of harvest. They foreclosed the land in case of default. Similarly, in times of famine, the richer sections of the village lent money to the weaker sections, and used their resources to bring under their cultivation abandoned fields. The state hardly interfered, its main concern being to ensure that raiyati lands were not converted by the privileged sections into riyayati lands which paid land-revenue at a concessional rate.

At the positive level, it is the privileged sections, including the village zamindar, and the rich cultivators who played a leading role in providing money, implements and organization for expanding and improving cultivation, including introduction of higher quality crops, such as wheat and cash-crops (cotton, indigo, oil-seeds etc.) which meant additional investment, and new crops (such as tobacco, maize etc.). The superior crops needed more water, and were generally more labour intensive.

Thus, the processes of stratification and growth of income disparity, and of expansion and improvement of cultivation went on side by side. But these could be disrupted in case of a general breakdown of law and order or absence of an equitable approach towards levying and collection of land-revenue.

## VILLAGE COMMUNITY

Although the word "village community" was popularized by British administrators, such as Baden-Powell, and picked up by nationalist leaders as a basis for Indian democracy, there is no equivalent for the word in Indian languages. The reason for this was that the "village" itself implied a local community, however divided by caste, office, economic status etc. As we have seen, the village panchayat was dominated by the resident cultivators, or a few persons drawn from that section. We have also seen that land was not held by the village community, but by individuals who were assessed separately. However, the body of resident cultivators were sometimes held responsible for the payment of the assessed land - revenue. This was a device to prevent the flight of peasants from the village as far as possible. As the zamindars became stronger during the eighteenth century, following the growing weakness of centralized government, the role of the resident cultivators in regulating the internal affairs of the village also became weaker.

## TOWNS AND TOWN LIFE

Towns and town-life are considered to be an index of the state of development and culture in a country. According to Abdul Fazl, "People that are attached to the world will collect in towns, without which there would be no progress." City life was a special feature of Muslim civilization. A noted French historian of modern times, Fernand Braudel says, "Towns are like electric transformers. They increase tension, accelerate the rhythm of exchange and constantly recharge human life. Towns generate expansion and are themselves generated by it."

We had noted in an earlier volume the growth of towns and town-life in India during the Sultanat period. The process of the growth of towns became faster during the 16th and 17th centuries, and continued till the middle of the 18th century.

There is no agreement among scholars regarding the size of a town, though it is generally agreed that the size of a town depends on the population of a country. The basic feature of a town is the existence

of a market. The smallest towns in India, the qasba, has been defined as a village with a market, in other words, it had the characteristics of village life, viz. agricultural production, and a market. Generally speaking, a qasba was also a pargana headquarter. There was a hierarchy of towns from the humble qasba to the district (sarkar) headquarter where the faujdar resided, to the provincial and imperial towns like Agra, Delhi, Lahore, etc.

We are told that in Akbar's empire, there were 120 big cities and 3200 townships or rural towns (qasbas). These did not include the towns and townships in South India. In the 17th century, the largest city was Agra with an estimated population of 500,000 which rose to 600,000 when the Emperor was in the town. It still remained very large when the court shifted back to Delhi in the middle of the 17th Century. Delhi was now held to be as populous as Paris which was then the biggest town in Europe. According to a traveller, Coryat, in the beginning of the 17th century, Lahore was bigger than Agra, and was "one of the largest cities of the whole universe". Ahmadabad was estimated to be larger than London and its suburbs. Patna, we are told, had a population of 200,000. Other large towns included Dacca, Rajmahal, Thatta, Burhanpur, Masulipatam.

However, what mattered was not so much the size as the nature of the towns and the role they played in the social, economic and cultural life of the country. According to a recent estimate, during the 17th Century there was a very high ratio of urban to the total population of the country, as much as 15 per cent, a proportion which was not exceeded till the middle of the 20th century. Even if this figure of urbanization may be disputed, it is agreed that in Mughal India, the largest towns were "thriving centres of manufacturing and marketing, banking and entrepreneurial activities, intersections in a network of communications by land and water which crossed and re-crossed the sub-continent and extended far beyond, to South East Asia, to the Middle East, to Western Europe, and elsewhere."

Four distinct types of urban centres can be identified. First, there were cities whose prime function was administrative where other roles, such as manufacturing or religion were of secondary importance. These were cities such as Agra, Delhi, Lahore, as well as many provincial capitals. Later, Poona, Faizabad, Haiderabad emerged as important centres of this type. Secondly, there were cities which had a predominantly commercial and manufacturing character to which may be attached some administrative functions. Cities such as Patna, and Ahmadabad fell in this category. Thirdly, there were the pilgrim centres where some trade and craft activities also flourished, but which had a large floating population. Cities such as Banaras and Mathura, Kanci and Tirumalai in South India fall in this category. Ajmer was both religious and administrative in character. Lastly, there were centres which flourished because of distinctive manufacturing technique or skill or local commodity. Bayana because of indigo, Patan in Gujarat for dyeing, Khairabad in Awadh for textiles fell in this category.

On account of the peace and law and order established by the Mughals in north and central India, and the consequent growth of commerce and manufacture, the period has been conceived of a "veritable golden age of urbanization". Of course, the process was not the same in different parts of the empire - Western U.P. and Eastern Punjab were the most rapidly developing till the end of the 17th century, while eastern U.P. and Bihar and Bengal forged ahead in the first half of the 18th century, due to the strong rule of the Nawabs or local rulers. Poona, Hugli etc. also developed under Maratha rule.

Describing the lay-out of the new city of Shahjahanbad, Bernier says that the style of housing had to suit the climate conditions of India, being airy was very important, as also having terraces to sleep in the open at night during the hot weather. He says: "Very few of the houses are built entirely of brick or stone, and several are made only of clay and straw, yet they are airy and pleasant, most of them having courts and gardens being commodious inside and having good furniture. The thatched roof is supported by a layer of long handsome and strong canes, and the clay walls are covered with a fine white lime". Intermixed with these houses, and the shops above whom the merchants lived, were an immense number of small ones, built of mud and thatched with straw, in which lived the common soldiers, the vast multitude of servants and camp followers.

It is wrong to think that all the streets were narrow, crooked and unpaved. In each town there were one or two principal roads, which formed chowks. The roads were generally paved. The city was divided into wards or mohallas in which people of one caste or profession generally lived, though we have mohallas at Delhi consisting of both Hindus and Muslims. The mohalla was locked up at night for security - a practice which seems to be returning to Delhi in recent times.

It has been argued that cities in India did not have a specific legal character of their own, like many towns in Europe, and hence had no civic life. This judgement needs, however, to be modified. The general administration of the city in India was in the hands of the kotwal who had his own staff for watch and ward. In special cases, he could ask the faujdar for help. Apart from regulating weights and measures, and keep track of prices, prohibit illegal cesses etc. he had a number of civic duties such as to appoint persons to look after the water courses, prohibit the selling of slaves, set the idle to some handicrafts and to organize people in reciprocal assistance in the mohallas, and appoint a guild-master for every guild of artificers. We know that in many cities there were heads of traders (malik-ut-tujjar or Nagar seths), sometimes on a caste or religious basis. Thus, there was a structure of local consultation and participation. The kotwal was also to act as an intelligence agent, keeping track of the coming and going of peoples, births and deaths, census operations etc. In general, the point to note is that the administrative structure of towns was such as to discharge in a satisfactory manner the effective purposes of town-life.

## ARTISANS AND MASTER CRAFTSMEN

The number of workers in constructing royal buildings in medieval India was enormous. We are told that Alauddin Khalji engaged 70,000 workers for his buildings. Babur claimed that 680 workmen worked daily on his buildings at Agra, while 1491 men worked as stone-cutters in his buildings at Agra, Sikri, Bayana, Dholpur etc. Under Akbar, 3 - 4,000 artisans, labourers and other functionaries worked daily to construct the Agra fort. In addition, 8,000 labourers were employed to supply stone and lime. If Tavernier is to be believed, "twenty thousand men worked incessantly" to construct the Taj Mahal. If to this we add the workers needed for constructing the houses of the nobles, the artisans and labourers used in the building industry alone would be enormous.

In addition there were the artisans who were employed in the various manufactures, urban and rural. It is impossible to form any idea of the number of these artisans except to say that though generally organized on a caste basis, there was sufficient flexibility for the numbers in any craft being added to in case of growth of demand. The major industry was, undoubtedly, the textile industry based on cotton but supplemented by silk or tussar mainly produced in Bengal, and often used to make cloth mixed with cotton and silk or painted. Carpentry which included ship-building, and production of leather goods were other major industries, supplemented by metallurgy, paper making, glass making etc.

It has been remarked that the Indian craftsman was able to produce goods of very high quality with very simple tools. One cause of this was general indifference to labour saving devices on account of a limited domestic market, and fear of unemployment if such devices were introduced. Thus, in 1672, the Dutch in Coromandal had successfully introduced a technique which quadrupled production of iron nails and cannon balls. Local authorities banned the new technique lest it deprives many locksmiths of their livelihood. Tapan Raychaudhuri notes, "Both early modern Europe and medieval China were far ahead of mid-eighteenth century India in such crucial fields of technology as the use of wind and water power, metallurgy, printing, nautical instruments, and basic tools and precision instruments."

This does not, of course, mean that no technological progress was made in Medieval India. India was able to produce, mainly at Surat, ships as good as any sent from Europe to Asia, as also manufacture heavy guns. There also had been modifications in the technique of raw-silk reeling, indigo or saltpetre manufacture and the arts of dyeing and printing cloth at the instance of European companies. This showed that the Indian artisans were not opposed to new technique as long as it did not threaten their livelihood, and augmented their income.



Unlike Europe, the concentration of manufacturing industries in the towns to the exclusion of the villages did not take place in India. The villages in India continued not only with traditional crafts like manufacture of sugar, oil, indigo, raw silk, etc., but also developed localized centres of production. Thus, in the coastal area from Madras to Armagaon, there were artisan villages which specialized in producing cloth for export. According to Orme, in Bengal, near the main road and large towns, by the middle of the 18th century, there was hardly a village where every inhabitant was not engaged in the manufacture of textiles. Such examples can also be cited for other regions, such as Gujarat, Awadh, etc.

In the main, the artisans still worked on a domestic basis. Thus, in a weaving family, women and children cleaned the cotton, and spun the thread, men worked over the loom. In general, the artisans owned their tools of trade. It was only in the royal karkhanas that the craftsmen worked at one place under supervision, and were provided with the tools and raw materials. This may have been copied by a few of the richer, powerful nobles. It was only in some enterprises, such as large construction of public buildings and public works such as tanks, diamond mining, ship-building etc. that workers were brought together, and worked under some kind of superior supervision. We are told that in all 20,000 or 30,000 workers were employed in the diamond mining field, with 2000-3000 workers employed by one contractor. But in most cases, these were ad-hoc organizations, the workers dispersing as soon as the work in hand had been completed. In other words, there was hardly any stable organization for large scale enterprises.

Artisans may be classified broadly into two categories. On the one hand were the rural artisans who were only part time artisans, and often indistinguishable from cultivators. These included oil-pressers, indigo and saltpetre workers, sugar manufacturers etc. Their work was seasonal and many of them worked in manufacture for only five or six months in a year. However, as demand increased, they sometimes let out their lands for others to cultivate. The same applied to cocoon producers, as demand for silk grew. Weavers were part of the traditional system of supplying cloth to the villagers in return for a share of the produce. Often they had a small family plot of land to fall upon and to keep them tied down to the village. They sold their surplus produce in the market.

The second category were the professional artisans in towns and villagers. As trade and manufacture grew, the merchants gradually extended their control over the professional artisans through the dadni or putting out system.

They not only brought the artisans under control not only by giving them loans, but providing raw materials, and even laying down the size, patterns etc. of the piece. Thus, in the Coromandal, Kasi Viranna had brought under his control all the weaver settlements between Madras and Armgaon so that they were called "Virennas' villages". In such cases, despite owning their own looms, the artisans tended to become wage earners because the cost of the raw materials and their labour was prescribed by the trader. Thus, in 1676, local merchants in Madras told representatives of the English East India Company that they "had raised the wages of their weavers to get a better quality of cloth". However, this was not capitalist production in the real sense of the word. The Russian scholar, Chicherov, calls it "deconcentrated capitalist manufacture". He says: "It does not, however, lead to the overthrow of the old mode of production, but rather tends to preserve and retain it.... This system presents everywhere an obstacle to the real capitalist mode of production".

An alternate path of development was the emergence of master craftsmen to the position of organisers of production and merchants and financiers. The growth of master-craftsmen, called ustads in Medieval India, is a little studied subject. That this section had grown both economically and socially is indicated by Abul Fazl placing these sections, whom he calls "artificiers", in the second rank in society, side by side with merchants, below nobles and warriors, but above the learned and the religious classes. The social importance of the master-craftsmen is indicated by two available farmans of Akbar granting lands to two master-craftsmen. In Bengal, there were affluent master-weavers employing their own capital who sold freely on their own accounts. In mid-eighteenth century, we hear of a master printer of textiles in Awadh who had as many as 500 apprentices. In Kashmir, in the shawl industry, there were mastercraftsmen



who owned upto 300 looms. There were master-carpenters at Surat, and in Bengal and Bihar who hired carpenters for ad hoc work. Thus, as Tapan Raychaudhury observes. "The emergence of artisans as 'capitalist-entrepreneurs'-Marx's 'truly revolutionary way' in the transition from merchantile to industrial capitalism - was thus not absent from the Indian scene."

## WOMEN

Women have certain common problems, such as their dependence on father, husband or son, and the effects of the male dominated patriarchal family system which operated all over India, except in some areas such as Kerala and many tribal areas. Within these limits, the lives of the upper class women and working women were very different. The upper class women were generally educated, and lived a life of luxury, though confined to the inmates of the haram, and sharing the husband with numerous wives and mistresses. Some of these women played an active part in politics, as ruler themselves. Such as Rani Durgawati of Gondwana and Chand Bibi of Ahmadnagar or exercising political power through their husbands, like Nur Jahan. There were others such as Jahanara, daughter of Shah Jahan, who was closely associated in the political processes, both under Shah Jahan, and under aurangzeb after the death of Shah Jahan. Many other women, such as the vegetable seller Zuhra during the reign of Muhammad Shah, or his queen, Udham Bai, a former dancing girl, played a role in politics during the period of Mughal decline.

However, more important than this was the role of women in giving moral and cultural tone to society from behind the curtains. They influenced royal taste and patronage, and themselves extended patronage to artists, singers etc. Some of them have many literary works to their credit. Thus, Jahanara wrote under the pen-name "Makhfi" (concealed). Roshanara set up a literary atelier (bait-ul-ulum) at Delhi to which Aurangzeb had banished her.

Many harmful social practices, such as child marriage, or forced marriages, denial of a share in parental property etc. also continued in medieval times. Akbar tried to fix the age of marriage for boys and girls, give freedom to girls to marry on their own and not under parental pressure. But these were largely disregarded. Likewise, there was little impact on Mughal attempt to regulate sati because all the important Rajput rajas continued to practise it. Thus, when Maharaja Man Singh Kachhwaha died at Elichpur in the Deccan in 1614, four ranis committed sati along with him, and another five at Amber. Of course, that large numbers of ranis, whose names and pedigrees are given in contemporary Rajasthani sources, lived on as widows after the death of a ruler suggests that there was no over-whelming pressure on them to commit sati. However, an unfortunate practice was that in order to increase the sacred honour that accrued to a ruler from the women who committed sati, the number of such women was increased by making many common law wives and maids who had been called to the bed of the ruler and given a special status, and who generally belonged to the non-Rajput sections and the lower castes, were made to commit sati. Thus, when Maharaja Anup Singh of Bikaner died in 1698, apart from 2 ranis, 9 common law wives (kkawas, patar, khalsa) and 7 maids (sahelis) committed sati.

Divorce was generally not favoured by the Muslim nobles, though we have a few instances of it. Regarding property, after escheat, the ruler distributed the property of a deceased noble according to his likes among the sons. There are no references to a share of the property being given to daughters of nobles. But such laws may have been enforced by the courts for other Muslims.

For women belonging to the common fold, life was hard. We see in paintings women working in building activities, along with infants. Working women received wages which were lower than those given to men. Thus, in Kota, according to official figures, women working in the fields received lower wages than men. Women specialized in some vocations. Thus, spinning was widely practised by women of almost all classes. In Bengal the fine thread from which the famous muslin of Dacca was woven was prepared by women, often belonging to upper castes, who had nimble fingers and a keen eye-sight. We are told that such women received the wages of a skilled worker, that is, upto Rs.3 per month. The chikan work for which Awadh was famous was also a speciality of women. However, it is clear that all such women worked under the tight control of a merchant, or a master craftsman.

## SERVANTS AND SLAVES

European traders and travellers who came to India during the sixteenth centuries remark on the number of servants and retainers the rulers and members of the ruling classes employed, both for ostentation and show, and for service in their large households. Moreland who dwells upon it in his India at the Death of Akbar, says "much of the domestic service rendered was sheer waste", and that its effect was "to withdraw from useful employment a large share of the energy and resources of the people, and to direct them towards unprofitable expenditure".

It may be noted that the service sector formed a large section in all feudal societies. Apart from work in the fields in the villages, and manual labour and manufacture in the cities, the only employment opportunity at a slightly higher level (excluding the armed forces) was service with the king and members of the feudal nobility. The limited nature of employment opportunities in such societies is shown by the existence of large numbers of beggars in the cities. The large class of clerics, monks, wandering religious ministrals etc. was another class to which Morland's remark could be applied.

It should not, however, be forgotten that service with the ruling class was an escape from rural drudgery for many, and their slightly higher living standards provided employment opportunities to the large class of artisans. These sections also felt that they had a right to share in the ruling classes' prosperity, howsoever it was earned. In other words, standards applicable to modern societies cannot be uncritically applied to pre-modern societies.

However, Moreland is right in stating that functions assigned to free men and slaves in service were, to a large extent, interchangeable. Slavery was an old institution in India, but by far and large, slaves were not used for productive purposes in fields or manufacture. Firuz Tughlaq perhaps, was the only one who used slaves for manufacture. The use of slaves for war purposes largely ended in India with the rise of the Afghans. Akbar did use them in the army, calling them 'chelas', but for service purposes only.

Unlike the Sultanat period, we do not have many references to the price of slaves. Pyrard puts the price of a slave-girl at the equivalent of about 50 rupees at Goa. The Portuguese employed slaves on a large scale. The Portuguese Arakanese and Maghs made slave-raids into East Bengal, and set up slave markets at Chitagong, Sandwip, Hughli and Pipli. Goa was a busy market for slaves. Many of these slaves were also sold in South-East Asia. Shaista Khan put an end to these raids in the time of Aurangzeb. Slaves were obtained from various sources. There was a continuous import of slaves from East Africa though on a small scale. The pilgrim-ships to Jeddah also indulged in slave trade.

Ships returning from the Red Sea, both European and Indian, would generally carry fifty slaves bought in Mocha or Jeddah. Indian slaves were either hereditary and or captured from wars, or in raids in villages allegedly for rebellion or non-payment of government dues. Many people sold their children for food in times of famines which were frequent. Akbar banned the practice of enslaving prisoners of war, and converting them to Islam. He also allowed people to re-purchase the children they had sold, and to reconvert them. How effective these measures were is doubtful.

Although slaves in India were generally not mistreated, and it was considered an act of morality to free slaves, slavery was debasing, and lowered the status of free working men.

## STANDARD OF LIVING

Indigenous sources and accounts of foreign travellers who visited India during the 16th and 17th centuries present a picture of a small group in the ruling class living a life of great ostentation and luxury, contrasting it with the miserable condition of the masses - the peasants, the artisans and other labouring classes. The sharp contrast between the standard of living of the ruling classes and the peasants and the labouring classes was, of course, not peculiar to India, but existed in a greater or lesser degree in all "civilized" countries of the world, including Europe, during that period.

We have little information about standard of life in the villages where the large majority of the people lived. As we have seen, the Indian village was highly segmented both socially and economically, and there was considerable inequality in distribution of land, though there was plenty of cultivable waste land (banjar) available which could be brought under the plough if capital, labour and organisation were forthcoming.

The share of the produce paid by the different categories of peasants is not easy to compute. The general Mughal formula was from one-third to half. However, the precise share depended on a number of factors - nature of the soil, strength of the owner - cultivator, nature of the zamindar dominating the area, custom etc. Caste also played a role. Thus, in some parts of Rajasthan and Orissa, upper castes - the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas or Rajputs paid land-revenue at a concessional rate — sometimes 25% whereas the others paid 40%. Village officials, such as the village chaudhris, muqaddams etc. were also sometimes assessed at a concessional rate. Such concessions were extended under special circumstances, such as the resettlement of a deserted village, to ordinary cultivators as well. But in their case, the concessions was a temporary measure, the landrevenue increasing till it reached the normal rate in the third or fifth year.

It would be unrealistic to postulate a uniform standard of living for all the peasants and artisans in a village. Nor was every village similar to another. Some of the bigger villages served as grain collecting centres, or had a local market (mandi). A higher proportion of the richer section of the peasants including grain-dealers (mahajans) and money-lenders must have lived in these villages which developed into qasbas.

We have already noted the disparities in village society. In lean years or during famine, while the poor were driven to starvation or migration to the towns, the rich and a section of the middle peasants found it an opportunity to bring the poor peasants into debt, or to acquire their lands and agricultural implements.

Babur had observed that in India “peasants and people of low standing go about naked”. He then goes on to describe the decency-clout worn by the men and the ‘sari’ worn by the women. This is followed by Abul Fazl, who says that the common people “for the most part went naked wearing only a cloth (lungi) about the loins”. Ralph Fitch, who wrote under Akbar, says that “the people go naked save a little cloth bound about their middle, (but)... In the winter, which is our May, the men wear quilted gowns of cotton and quilted caps.”

The overwhelming impression is thus of scantiness of clothing. Though climatic factors and social traditions cannot be discounted, scantiness of clothing was an index of poverty since the upper classes and the privileged sections could be distinguished by the type and the quality of the clothes they wore. In those days although cotton production and weaving were widespread in the country, cloth was more expensive to wheat than at present.

Regarding women's clothes, we have already referred to the sari which was generally made of cotton. Moreland points out that women did not wear any blouses with their sari, and treats it as an illustration of paucity of clothing. However, it may be pointed out that in many rural areas of eastern India, till recent times, wearing of a blouse was not common. In Malabar, both men and women, irrespective of their means, did not wear anything above their waists. In northwestern India, the blouse (choli or angiyd) was worn by ordinary women even in rural area. Thus, the contemporary Hindi writer, Surdas, mentions the choli or angiya of various colours worn by the milkmaids of the Agra-Mathura region.

While the ordinary people wore no shoes, and went about with bare feet, wearing of shoes was apparently considered a mark of respectability and was used by the richer section in the villages. The shepards, masons, labourers and palki-bearers are depicted in contemporary paintings as wearing shoes.



Then as now, women, both rich and poor, wore jewellery profusely which has been described by contemporary writers, both in Persian and regional languages, in considerable detail. It is also depicted by many painters of the period. Foreign travellers also dwell on this as a strange phenomenon. Ralph Fitch, writing of Patna, said "Here the women be so bedecked with silver and copper that it is strange to see, they use no shoes by reason of the rings of silver and copper they wear on their toes". In addition to gold, silver and copper ornaments and those made in glass or ivory were used.

The housing of the poor in rural areas has not changed much since the Mughal times. The bulk of the peasants lived in single room houses made of mud with thatched roofs. The houses of the working class in the south were "nothing but huts covered with cajan leaves." They were so low that a person could not stand upright in them. The rooms would not generally have any windows on account of the hot climate, the entrance being sufficient for light and air. Manrique found that the houses were kept very clean with frequent plastering of the ground and the walls with mud mixed with cow-dung. But in Gujarat the houses were roofed with tiles (khaprail) and often built of brick and lime. Houses in Bengal and Orissa were made of bomboo or reed with thatched roofs.

Utensils made of bell-metal or copper were expensive and were generally not used by the poor. The only iron used was the "small iron hearths" used by the common people for baking their bread. It is clear from contemporary accounts that the articles in the diet of the common people in India consisted chiefly of rice, millets and pulses. In Bengal, Orissa, Sindh, Kashmir and parts of South India, rice being the major crop was the staple diet of the masses. Millet (juwar and bajra) held the same position in western India (Rajasthan and Gujarat). A modern writer, Irfan Habib, says that "generally speaking, it was the lowest varieties, out of his produce, which the peasant was able to retain for his own family." Wheat was not apparently a part of the diet of the common people in the wheat producing region of Agra-Delhi. Writing of Malwa, Terry says that "the ordinary sort of people" did not eat wheat, but used the flour of "a coarser grain," made up in round broad and thick cakes (chapatis)" which were "wholesome and hearty". Foodgrains were supplemented by herbs (saga), beans and other vegetables which were produced in the villages and by fish in Bengal, Orissa and the coastal areas including Sindh.

In the Delhi-Agra region, however, Palseart says of the workmen that "for their monotonous daily food they have nothing but a little kitchery (khichri) made of the green pulse, mixed with rice... eaten with butter in the evening, in the day time they munch a little parched pulse or other grain (sattu)". Then as now, some money was spent on fairs and festivals which were frequent. They provided welcome relief to the villagers in their drab lives and an opportunity to buy products not produced in the village. Money was also spent on birth and death ceremonies and marriages, and sometimes debts had to be contracted for the purpose. Famine and epidemics were two of the scourges, in the lives of the villagers. Famines were of frequent occurrence, the severe ones being often accompanied by epidemics which depopulated villages. Nevertheless, for many writers of the time in regional languages, village life was an ideal and both joys and sorrow had to be faced with equanimity.

We are on somewhat firmer ground in assessing the standard of living of the workmen since their wages have been given in the Ain, and also by many travellers. According to the Ain, an ordinary labourer got about 2 dams a day or Rs.11/2 per month while a superior labourer could hope to get 3 to 4 dams a day or Rs.21/4 to 3 per month. Carpenters got 3 to 7 dams and builders from 5 to 7 dams per day. Pietro Delia Vella says that at Surat servants cost very little - Rs.3 a month. It has been computed that the basic necessities of a person could be met by Rs.1 a month while Rs.2 a month was sufficient to feed a family of five. Slaves were numerous and lived on nothing except their keep. Pelsaert says that palanquin - bearers (porters) got Rs.4 a month for short journeys, but Rs.5 a month for journeys of more than sixty days. Soldiers hired for protection got the same.

It is difficult to draw a comparison between the food available to the poor in medieval and modern times. The peasant of Mughal times was more fortunate with ghee, while his modern descendant has more salt and three entirely new articles of food, maize, potatoes and chillies. A modern Indian



economist, Ashok Desai, is of the opinion that in view of the larger average size of holding, higher productivity of land and a more favourable land-man ratio, "The standards of food consumption were substantially higher than now".

By comparing prices and wages between Akbar's time and the present, we may conclude that while a wage-earner could have purchased more wheat than a modern worker, it was an item which hardly figures in his diet. On the other hand, he could purchase more gram, barley, milk and ghee, as also goat-meat as compared to a modern workman. But few of the workmen (excluding Muslims) ate meat. According to Ashok Desai, "the purchasing power of the wages was nearly the same in 1595 and 1961. But the low paid worker of Akbar's time was able to keep the standard of nutrition much higher than now because of cheap meat, ghee and milk. Sugar and gur were expensive; even salt a little costlier for him". The upper classes in India consisted of nobles, the autonomous rajas and chiefs, and the wealthy merchants in towns. Their living standards have been discussed when dealing with them.

## THE RULING CLASSES-NOBILITY, RURAL GENTRY

The ruling classes in Medieval India may be broadly divided into two - the nobility which represented royal power or central authority, and the class of local rulers or chiefs and landed elites or zamindars who represented local power. However, no hard and fast distinction can be made between the two because from the time of the Lodis, and increasingly from the time of Akbar, local chiefs and landed elements began to be incorporated into the nobility and associated even more closely than before into the local administrative system. Relations between the two sections were often marked by tension and strife. Simultaneously, mutual cooperation was needed and was sought for local purposes, including the task of expanding and improving cultivation while the local rulers often sought legitimization from the centre. A common feature, between the two was that both depended and drew their financial resources from the surplus labour of the peasant who cultivated the land. Thus, in this context both were basically feudal in nature.

### The Nobility

Unlike Europe, the nobility in India was not a legal category but indicated a class of people who were not only involved in the tasks of government at the higher level but reflected a certain level of culture and urbanity. Both the numbers and composition of the nobility underwent a change as the Mughal empire was consolidated, and expanded to cover the entire country. Thus, between 1595 and 1656-57, while the numbers of the high mansabdars remained more or less fixed at 25, the medium mansabdars (500/1000 to 2500) more than doubled from 98 to 225. The composition of the nobility also changed. The nobles who came to India at the time of Babur and Humayun, or came to India during the reign of Akbar were mainly drawn from the homeland of the Mughals — Turan, and Khurasan, along with Uzbeks and Tajiks. As we have seen, the Mughals never followed a narrow racialist policy. From the time of Akbar, Shaikhzadas or Indian Muslims, and Rajputs representing the indigenous ruling class also began to be inducted into the nobility. Babur tried to induct many of the leading Afghans into the nobility, but the Afghans proved restless and untrustworthy. Heightened struggle with the Afghans under Humayun, and with Akbar in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa led to the virtual exclusion of the Afghans from higher posts in the nobility. But the process began to be reversed under Jahangir, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi being a favourite. In the time of Aurangzeb, many Afghans from the Deccan states entered the Mughal nobility.

The Iranis and Turanis, for whom the word Mughal was used, continued to be the largest group in the nobility, forming as much as 40 per cent of the nobles holding ranks of 1000 zat and above even during the last 25 years of Aurangzeb's reign, between 1679 and 1707. However, less than a quarter of these, i.e. less than 10 per cent of the total nobles holding a mansab of 1000 zat and, above had been born outside India. Thus, Bernier's statement that the Mughal nobles were "foreigners who enticed each other to the court" hardly holds up to a critical scrutiny.

Bernier's statement that the immigrants "are generally persons of low descent, some having been originally slaves, and the majority being destitute of education" is even more off the mark. The Mughals

gave special favours to those of high descent, while a good literary education was considered vital for future progress. It should also be kept in mind that the immigrants came to India with their families, and made India their home. They also assimilated themselves into the prevailing Indo-Mughal court culture. Thus, they were no longer foreigners in any real sense of the term. However, this did not mean that social distinctions between the Iranis, Turanis and the Indians disappeared. Those, who could trace a foreign ancestry considered themselves to be a privileged and superior group, and tended to marry among themselves.

Although the position of the nobles was not hereditary, those whose ancestors had been in the service of the king for more than a generation were called khanazads, or the house born ones. They felt a special affinity with the ruling house, and claimed a privileged position in the grant of mansabs. Thus, in the period between 1679 - 1707, the proportion of Khanazads i.e. descendants of mansabdars, excluding sons-in-law, among those holding ranks of 1000 zat and above, was almost half. Even this did not satisfy the old mansabdars since there was a lot of pending demand for mansabs among their wards. Despite its limitations, the Mughal nobility was not a closed shop, but fairly open in its recruitment policy. At the same time, the Mughal nobility was highly hierarchical in nature, with the senior positions being virtually reserved for the nobly born, including the Hindu rajas. Thus, in the period 1658 - 79, the number of Iranis and Turani nobles holding ranks of 5000 and above was over 60 per cent while the leading Rajput rajas formed another 11 per cent. Even then, there was a chance for people with an ordinary background reaching the highest posts, as in the case of Rai Patr Dās under Akbar, and Rai Raghunath under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

The top heavy nature of the Mughal nobility is shown in other ways as well. Thus, it has been calculated that in Shah Jahan's reign, 73 members of the upper elite received 33,091 crore dams or 37.6 per cent of the entire assessed income of the empire. The personal salaries they enjoyed put them on par with autonomous rajas of a middle size kingdom. By all accounts, the life style of the high nobles was very opulent. They had large multi-storied mansions with gardens and running water, a large haram and a multitude of male and female retainers and servants. A single house in the Deccan fit for a noble cost Rs.1,50,000. Rich carpets, costly curtains and richly decorated inlay furniture consisting of bedsteads, mirrors, chairs and stools were considered necessary. The roof was richly gilded, and the floor and the walls covered with fine plaster. A lot of money was spent on the table. We are told that a hundred dishes used to be prepared for Abul Fazl every day. A lot was spent on fruits, and imported wines. Ice which was an item of luxury was used all the year round. Apart from China ware which was a luxury, gold and silver vessels were used widely.

Another costly item was the stables. Every noble had to maintain a sizeable number of beasts of burden - elephants, camels, mules, and horses, as well as carts, palanquins etc. for transport. Tents were another costly item of equipment. Both men and women were accustomed to use jewels for adorning different parts of their body. From the time of Jahangir, men pierced their ears for putting pearls. Costly clothes, generally of cotton, plain or painted, and silk, plain or stripped, brocades and costly shawls made in Kashmir were also used widely.

It was also considered necessary for a leading noble to extend patronage to the arts. Thus, poets, musicians, painters etc. sometimes received extravagant rewards. Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana, son of Bairam Khan, was reputed to give ass-loads of money to every poet who composed a panegyric in his name. The extravagant gifts of many nobles to their retainers, and grants of lands and gifts to holy men are also mentioned.

Thus, as Moreland stated, "spending not hoarding" was the dominant characteristic of the pattern of life of the nobles. This was a common feature of the landed gentry the world over. However, prudent nobles could save money. Contemporary chronicles give us the names of many nobles who left large sums of money and valuables at their death. Thus, when Ali Mardan Khan died in 1657, Shah Jahan escheated his property, amounting in cash and goods to one crore of rupees. Azam Khan Koka (4000/4000) governor of Bengal, left 22 lakhs of rupees and 1,12,000 muhars. Muhammad Amin Khan, subedar of Gujarat who

died in 1682, left seventy lakhs of rupees and one lakh seventyfive thousand ashrafis and large number of animals including ten chests of Chinaware of all kinds which were escheated by Aurangzeb. The purpose of escheat basically was to recover from the nobles the money most nobles took as advance from the state. After this had been done, the balance was distributed by the monarch among the heirs of the noble according to his estimate of their worth. The sharai laws in this matter were disregarded, because the Mughal rulers claimed to be the owners of all the property of their nobles. Aurangzeb modified this rule in 1666. The property of only those nobles was escheated who had dues towards the state. But the rulers reserved to themselves the right to distribute the property left behind by the nobles according to his likes and dislikes.

Two aspects of the nobility need to be noted. As the empire was consolidated, the nobles began to be subjected to even more detailed rules and regulations regarding their salaries and promotion, conduct of business, rewards, even deportment. These were set out in regulations called dastur-ul-amal. Normally, a mansabdar started with a small mansab and was promoted according to rules and regulations (zabta) though the ruler could always depart from them. Thus, an element of bureaucracy was introduced in the functioning of the nobility. The manner in which meticulous records were maintained from the village level upwards re-inforced this.

Second, the Mughal nobles, including the monarchs and members of the royal family, were not allergic to trade. Some of them supplemented their income by trade, and by investing their money with traders. Abul Fazl advised the nobles "to indulge a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings, reserving a portion in goods and wares, and somewhat invested in the speculation of others." Disregarding the Islamic injunction on taking of interest, Abul Fazl exhorts the nobles that "a share may be entrusted to borrowers of credit." He ends by saying, "Let such a one be frank in his commercial dealings, and give no place in his heart to self-reproach."

It is difficult to estimate the extent of the commercial dealings of the Mughal nobles. It has been pointed out that during the seventeenth century, members of the royal family, including kings, princes, princesses and ladies of the harem engaged in commercial ventures. Thus, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram, and the Queen Mother owned ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. This was continued under Shah Jahan and even under Aurangzeb.

Many nobles carried on trade in their own name, or in partnership with merchants. Thus, Mir Jumla had a fleet of ships which sailed to Burma, Macassar and Maldives, Persia, Arabia etc. Other prominent nobles, such as Asaf Khan, Safi Khan etc. also owned ships. The English factor at Surat wrote in 1614, "great and small are merchants." Some nobles tried to misuse their official positions for profit. Thus, as governor of Lahore, Wazir Khan got a commission on everything that was bought and sold at Lahore. As Governor of Bengal, Mir Jumla and later Shaista Khan tried to monopolise trade in all important commodities. Thus, Shaista Khan extended from time to time his monopoly over saltpere, bees wax and even fodder. Prince Azim-ush-Shan tried to force merchants to buy at prices dictated by him in the name of sauda-i-khas, but had to modify it after a sharp reproof from Aurangzeb. However, even the chief Qazi of Aurangzeb, Qazi Abdul Wahab, had substantial commercial undertakings which he tried to conceal from Aurangzeb.

It would appear that as trade and commerce expanded following the Mughal peace, and growth of foreign trade to which the foreign companies contributed, the Mughal nobility, members of the royal family, and even judicial and ecclesiastical officials became more commerce minded. A modern author, Tapan Raychandhuri, considers the involvement of these elements in commerce to be of "dubious value". Although the trade by the nobles was only a fraction of the total trade in the country, it did imply diverting a part of the resources siphoned off from agriculture into domestic and foreign trade. The nobles also gave patronage to skilled manufactures, and the trade they created. Tavernier says, "on arrival for embarking at Surat, you find plenty of money. For it is the principal trade of the nobles of India to place their money on vessels on speculation for Hormuz, Basra and Mocha, and even for Bantam, Achin and Philippines." Thus, even Mir Jumla lent money to the English.



The greed of the nobles for money led to a good deal of corruption. No action would be carried out without giving or receiving presents. Nobles at the court who had access to the Emperor, sometimes sold their good offices to the highest bidder. Thus, Qabil Khan, the mir munshi of Aurangzeb, amassed 12 lakhs in cash and valuables during his two and a half years of service. It was for this reason that the Mughal nobles, and clerks in the administration, had earned a bad reputation for bribery and corruption. However, the nobles also built mosques, hospices, sarais, covered markets (katara), khanqahs and dug water-tanks in the places where they settled down. They also bought land to build orchards. Not all of these were for profit, but were considered meritorious acts. Thus, the upkeep of mosques, sarais, hospices, etc. was sometimes met from the income of the markets and orchards.

The urge of the nobles for money made them more grasping in their dealings with the peasants. According to Shaikh Farid Bhakhari, who wrote a biography of Mughal nobles in the early years of Shah Jahan's reign, Jahangir's mir bakhshi and favourite, Farid Bukhari, expected fifty percent more revenue from the amils from his jagir, and if for that reason the peasants migrated, he would surrender that jagir and obtain another in its place. How general this was is difficult to say. Imperial policy laid great emphasis on the expansion and improvement of cultivation and there was a machinery for checking the oppression of the jagirdars. Official policy and private approaches did not always match. The French traveller, Bernier, tells us how the peasantry, on account of the demands of the rapacious lords, were driven to despair at "so execrable a tyranny" and had to flee to the neighbouring Rajas. Bernier traces this to absence of private property in land on the part of the nobles, or the jagir system of transferability. He argued that the "Timariots" or jagirdars had no interest in the improvement of land because of its transferability. We do have some instances of nobles who founded villages. But neither the French landed gentry whom Bernier defends nor the Rajput nobility as a class appear to have taken much interest in the improvement of cultivation. Bernier's argument that the jagir system was inimical to expansion and improvement of cultivation is not borne out by the evidence at our disposal.

### Rural Gentry or Zamindars

There was a great deal of discussion during the early part of British rule regarding the nature and position of the zamindars, and whether they were owners of the land or merely collectors of land revenue. Recent research has shown that the word zamindar which began to be used from the 14th century, and came in general use during the 17th century, covered a wide range of rights and privileges in different parts of the country. Etymologically, a person who owned the land or zamin he cultivated was a zaminidar. The word is still used in this sense in some parts of the country such as Punjab. But in Mughal parlance, the word was used to designate one who was the owner (malik) of the lands of a village or township (qasba), and also carries on cultivation. According to a modern author, Irfan Habib, zamindari was therefore, "a right which belonged to a rural class other than, and standing above, the peasantry." This is the sense in which the word zamindar was generally understood, although the Mughals sometimes used the word for autonomous rajas and chiefs also in order to emphasise their dependent status. While autonomous rajas paid a fixed sum in money and goods as peshkash, and were left free to assess and collect land revenue from the peasants in their area of control, the attempt of the state was to fix the land revenue directly with the peasants in the areas under central control. Thus, there was a constant effort to convert autonomous chiefs into kharaj collecting zamindars on the part of the state, and for the zamindars to shake off all imperial control.

The zamindars formed the apex of rural life. They had their own armed forces, and generally lived in forts or garhis which was both a place of refuge and a status symbol. The combined forces of the zamindars were considerable. According to the Ain, in Akbar's reign they had 3,84,558 sawars, 42,77,057 foot-soldiers, 1,863 elephants, and 4,260 cannons. But the zamindars were dispersed and could never field such large forces at any time or at one place. The figures perhaps also include the forces of the subordinate rajas.

The zamindars generally had close connections on a caste, clan or tribal basis with the peasants settled in their zamindaris. They had considerable local information also about the productivity of land. The zamindars formed a very numerous and powerful class which was to be found all over the country under



different names such as deshmukh, patil, nayak, etc. Thus, it was not easy for any central authority to ignore or alienate them.

It is difficult to say anything about the living standards of the zamindars. Compared to the nobles, their income was limited. The smaller ones may have lived more or less like affluent peasants. However, the living standards of the larger zamindars might have approached those of petty rajas or nobles. Most of the zamindars apparently lived in the countryside and formed a kind of a loose, dispersed local gentry. The zamindari right was both hereditary and saleable, and from the time of Akbar there are many examples of zamindari being sold in whole or part. There was no restriction on caste or religion in the sales, though in Maharashtra we have documents of the village community or patil agreeing to the sale. Zamindari could also be divided like any property.

The zamindari right implied both financial income and social prestige. The actual income of a zamindar from his zamindari was generally sought to be concealed, and local officials were always asked to ascertain and control it. Generally, the zamindars had the right to a share of the produce which was paid in cash and kind. Thus, in Awadh, the zamindari right implied a claim to take 10 sers of the crop for each bigha and one copper coin (dam) from the same area. The zamindar could also levy other cesses, such as impost on forest and water produce, tax on marriages and births, house-tax etc. The charges of the zamindars varied from area to area, being called biswi ( $1/20$ ), or do-biswi ( $1/10$ ), or satarhi ( $1/17$ ), or chauthai ( $1/4$ ). The attempt of the Mughal government was to fix the dues of the zamindars and consolidate them in the land revenue. In such cases, the dues of the zamindars were assessed at 10 per cent and called malikana. Malikana could be paid either in cash, or by grant of revenue-free land called nankar. But it would have been difficult to prevent the zamindars from making illegal exactions from the peasants including forced labour (begar) for transportation etc.

Sometimes, zamindars were allowed to collect land revenue from a tract beyond their own zamindari. This was generally called a talluqa. For this area, the zamindar was only a tax-collector, and was paid remuneration by way of nankar or revenue-free land. The attempt of the Mughal government to convert the zamindars who were traditionally considered the enemies of a strong central government into agents of the government in the rural areas was a step which had far reaching implications, but also one which bristled with difficulties. The zamindars had caste / clan or historical associations with the peasants, and had considerable knowledge about land and its productivity. The government wanted to utilize this knowledge to maximize their land revenue collections. Simultaneously, it tried to squeeze the zamindars by establishing direct contact with the cultivators, especially the owner-cultivators, or the malik-i-zamin. Since the zamindars were themselves an exploiting class, the state, to some extent, set limit on their extortions. But where the zamindars joined with the cultivators to resist the rapacity of the state, a position of confrontation was created.

It would not be correct to look upon the zamindars merely as those who fought for control over land, and exploited the cultivators in the area they dominated. Many of the zamindars had close caste and kinship ties with the land-owning cultivating castes in their zamindari. These zamindars not only set social standard, but also provided capital and organisation for settling new villages, or extending and improving cultivation. However, success in this field depended in large measure upon the help and cooperation of the khud-kasht cultivators who dominated the village community, owned the physical resources, and could provide manpower.

While the zamindars formed a numerous and powerful class, not all the villages were under the control of zamindars. Thus, the revenue records of the period divided villages, even within a pargana, into raiyati or non-zamindari and talluqa i.e. zamindari. In collecting the land-revenue from their talluqa, the zamindars had to follow the government rules. Nor could they expel a peasant from his land. In fact, in a situation where land was surplus, the zamindars had every reason for the cultivators to stay, and to cultivate as much land as possible. The peasants were not serfs, and were free to stay or to leave according to their wish, but local officials were asked to use every effort, including where necessary force, to prevent them from leaving.

## THE MIDDLE STRATA

There has been a lot of discussion whether during the medieval period, India had a middle class or not. The Frenchman, Bernier, said that in India there was no “middle state”, a person was either extremely rich, or lived miserably. It is, however, not possible to agree with this statement. The word “middle class” means traders and shop keepers. India had a large class of rich traders and merchants, some of them being amongst the richest merchants of the world at that time. These merchants also had their own rights based on tradition, and right of protection of life and property. But they did not have the right to administer any of the towns. Such rights had been acquired in Europe by the merchants in special circumstances. Also, these rights tended to be abridged whenever strong territorial states grow up, as in France and Britain.

If by middle class, however, we mean a class of people who did not receive a share in feudal property, but were paid for their professional services, we find a large class of professional and service groups in the towns which may be considered a part of the urban intelligentsia. The Mughal administrative system was such that it needed an army of accountants and clerks, for the state, as also for nobles and even merchants. Rich artisans could also live much above the standards of the poor.

Contemporary evidence suggests that certain categories of revenue officials formed a very prosperous group. Thus, amils and karkuns supplemented their income by defalcating land revenue through false account books, and by corruption and bribery. Since many of them were drawn from the khatri and bania castes, or were Jains, they undertook side business, such as cultivation, usury, speculation in commodities, horticulture, revenue farming, management of rent yielding properties in the towns etc. We have instances of karoris (treasurers) depositing cash collected by them with mahajans for long periods on interest. These sections were rich enough to buy good houses in towns. Some of them even led a life rivalling that of a high noble. In Aurangzeb's time, Abdus Samad Khan, atin and faujdar of Jahanabad, established a small town in the name of his son. The property included orchards, a sarai, and Turkish hamams.

An idea of the wealth accumulated by these sections is provided by the fact that in 1725, the political authorities at Ahmadabad were able to extort Rs.5,73,000/- from eight officials residing there. In general, revenue officials had a poor reputation, and had on occasions to suffer prison and other indignities to make them disgorge their ill-gotten gains.

Among the professionals, medical practitioners (tabib) catered not only to nobles, but to wide sections, including petty officials, merchants and traders, smaller mansabdars and urban professionals and rich artisans. While some of the tabibs were attached to rulers and high nobles, and received mansabs, many of them conducted private practice. Thus, the Italian, Manucci, tells us that when his service with Dara in the artillery department ended, he set up a private practice at Lahore, and that he soon earned a name so that people came from places distant from Lahore to visit him as patients.

Musicians, calligraphists and teachers also belonged to the section of professionals. Writers, historians, and theologians were often drawn from the same urban middle class intelligentsia though sometimes they received a rent-free land, thus bringing them nearer to the feudal classes. Thus, the ‘middle strata’ had different interests and was drawn from various religious and caste groups.

## THE COMMERCIAL CLASSES

The commercial classes in India were large in numbers, widely spread out and highly professional. Some specialised in long distance inter-regional trade, and some in local, retail trade. The former were called seth, bohra or modi, while the latter were called beoparis or banik. In addition to retailing goods, the baniks had their own agents in the villages and townships, with whose help they purchased foodgrains and cash-crops. The words bania (baniya) or baqqal (foodgrain merchant) were sometimes used for them. The bania also acted as a money-lender in rural areas, and hence generally had a poor reputation

for being grasping and extortionate. However, they did discharge a positive role in the economy by enabling food-grains to be transported from villages and mandis to towns, and to different regions in the country, and providing rural capital.

The trading community in India did not belong to one caste or religion. The Gujarati merchants included Hindus, Jains and Muslims who were mostly Bohras. In Rajasthan, Oswals/ Maheshwaris and Agrawals began to be called Marwaris. Overland trade to Central Asia was in the hands of Multanis, Afghans and Khattris. Traders in Bengal were called gandha-banik, though these seem to have been largely displaced later by Afghan and Muslim traders. The Marwaris spread out to Maharashtra and Bengal during the 18th century. The Chettiyars on the Coromandal coast and the Muslim merchants of Malabar, both Indian (Chuliyas, Mapillahas) and Arab, formed the most important trading communities of South India.

The trading community in India, especially in the port towns, included some of the richest merchants who are comparable in wealth and power to the merchant princes of Europe. The Portuguese merchant, Godinho, stated in 1663 that the Surat merchants were "very rich", some of them worth more than 50 or 60 lakhs of rupees.

They had fifty ships trading with various overseas countries. Virji Vohra who dominated the Surat trade for several decades owned a large fleet of ships. He was reputed to be one of the wealthiest men of his time. He bought opium and cotton from local merchants exchanged these for pepper in Malabar and South east Asia, and supplied them to English and Dutch traders. His capital at one time was reputed to be 80 lakhs of rupees. Other Gujarati merchants, who could each buy up an entire ship's cargo or supply the entire annual investment of the European companies are repeatedly mentioned in the sources. Abdul Ghafur Bohra left 85 lakhs rupees in cash and goods, and a fleet of 17 sea-going ships at the time of his death in 1718. Similarly, Malay Chetti of the Coromandal coast, Kashi Viranna and Sunca Rama Chetti were reputed to be extremely wealthy, and had extensive commercial dealings in India and abroad. There were many wealthy merchants at Agra, Delhi, Balasore (Qrissa), and Bengal also. Some of these merchants, especially those living in the coastal towns, lived in an ostentatious manner, and aped the manner of the nobles.

Regarding the living style of the merchants, there seemed to have been a considerable variation, based on circumstances. Bernier says that the merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid of being used like "fill" sponges", i.e. squeezed of their wealth. Nobles did sometimes abuse their position, specially during times of uncertainty, as happened at Jaunpur at the time of Akbar's death. According to the Jain merchant, Banarsidas, Princes sometimes extorted forced loans. But, on the whole, such cases appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Thus, the author of the book Mirat-i-Ahmadi, dealing with Gujarat, tells us that there were two suburbs of Ahmadabad which he call its "two golden wings". These were inhabited by wealthy Hindus who were "millionaire bankers."

European travellers mention the commodious and well-built houses in which the wealthy merchants of Agra and Delhi lived. The ordinary sorts lived in houses above their shops. But even these, according to Bernier, were "tolerably commodious within". In Delhi, some of the houses of merchants were double storeyed and had beautiful terraced roofs. Nor did all of them try to conceal their riches. We are told that at Agra, one Sabal Singh Sahu, was so "intoxicated with prosperity" that his court "resembled that of princes". However, social practices and traditions must also be kept in mind.

Tavernier speaks of the "extreme parsimony of shroffs and of all Indians in general," and describes how the banias "accustom their children at an early age to shun slothfulness" and to learn the arts of acquiring wealth.

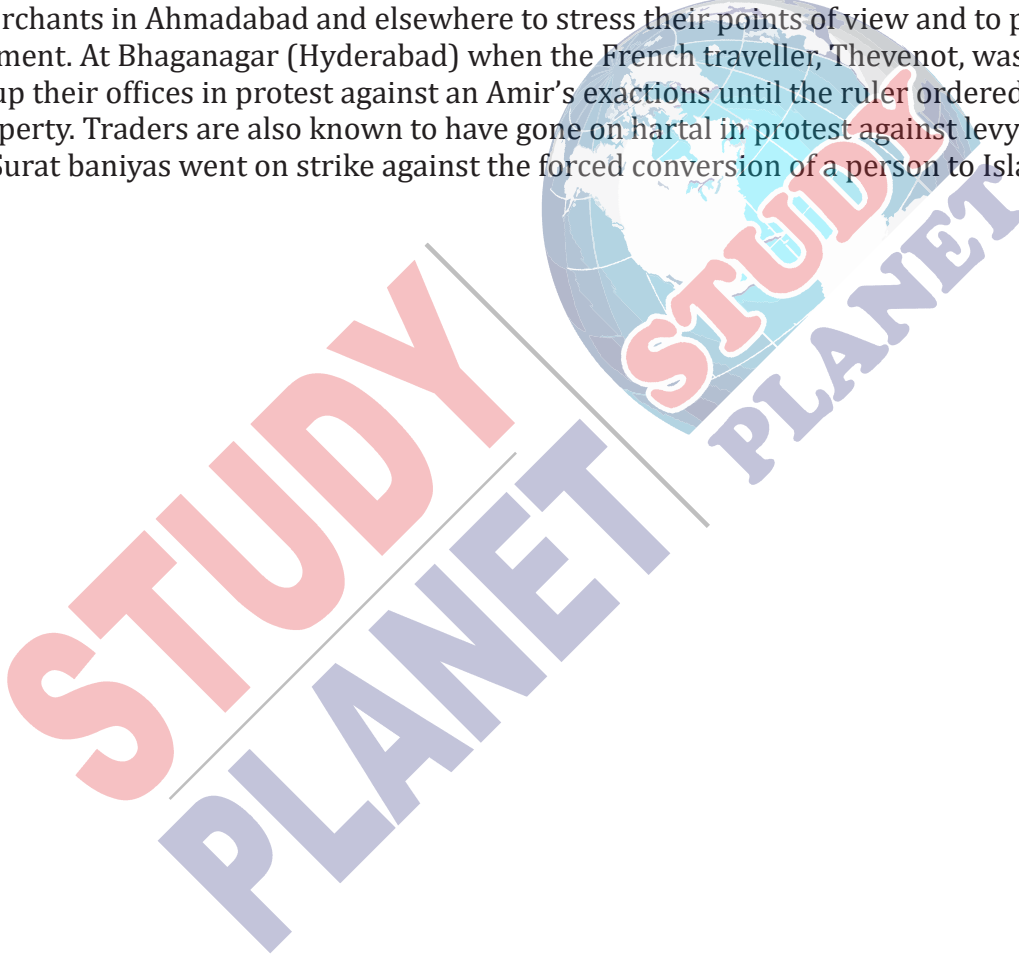
While merchants had to be prepared for some official harassment, the properties of the merchants, were generally not in danger. The law of escheat applied to the nobles did not affect them. Emperors from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws for protecting the property of the merchants. Jahangir's

ordinances included a provision that, "if anyone, whether unbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and effects should be left for his heirs, and no one should interfere with them".

Despite complaints by some European travellers, safety on the road was generally satisfactory.

Banarsidas who frequently travelled between Agra, Jaipur and Patna during the latter years of Akbar and under Jahangir, was robbed only once. Goods were also insured, and the low rates of insurance - from 1/2 to 1 percent from Surat or Ahmedabad to Thatta, Masulipatnam or Daman (but going upto 2 1/2%) shows that the risk was not considered high.

Means of transport were cheap and adequate for their needs. The means of travel with sarais at the distance of 5 kos on the principal highways was as good as in Europe at the time. Nevertheless, trade and the traders continued to have a low social status. The influence of the merchants on political processes is a matter of controversy. Merchants in India were not without influence in political quarters where their own interests were concerned. Thus, each community of merchants had its leader or nagarseeth who could intercede with the local officials on their behalf. We do have instances of strikes (hartal) by merchants in Ahmadabad and elsewhere to stress their points of view and to protest against official harassment. At Bhaganagar (Hyderabad) when the French traveller, Thevenot, was there, Hindu bankers shut up their offices in protest against an Amir's exactions until the ruler ordered restitution of the seized property. Traders are also known to have gone on hartal in protest against levying of jizyah. In 1668-69, the Surat banyas went on strike against the forced conversion of a person to Islam.





# UNIT-XXVII

## ECONOMIC LIFE –PATTERNS AND PROSPECTS

### INLAND TRADE

Both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors during the Sultanat period (13th-15th century) which we had described earlier, were further strengthened and expanded during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. This was reflected in the growth of towns and townships which we have already noted. Most major towns had several bazars, one of which was the chief bazar or market. According to Fryer, at Surat, for instance, between the custom house and the mint was a crowded bazar of all those who came to buy and sell cloth. Further on were "the High Streets, with shops on each side..." Surat's great bazar was outside one of the city gates, while at the entrance to the green was the market for horses and cattle. This would recall to mind that Alauddin Khalji had controlled the prices of different markets at Delhi. Most urban markets not only catered to the needs of local consumers, wholesale and retail, but were also storing centres or entrepôts from which dealers from other centres could get their supplies. Thus, there was a complex network between the towns, and between the towns and townships.

Supply of food-grains to the towns was an important feature of inter-local trade. Apart from food-stuffs, the villages also supplied raw materials, such as cotton, indigo etc. for many urban manufactures. This trade was in the hands of the village banīyas and the banjaras who transported the food-grains to the mandis or local markets at qasbas. Certain big villages or katras between a number of villages could also have mandis. At the mandis, the villagers not only sold their products but purchased salt, spices, metalwork and other commodities not available locally. The picture of village life presented to us by Hindi writers such as Surdas, suggests that the more prosperous sections in the villages bought, in addition, luxuries of various types, such as high quality cloth, jewellery etc.

Regional specialisation in certain types of products, including luxury goods led to a good deal of intra-regional trade. There was a special class of traders, the banjaras, who specialized in carrying bulk goods.

The banjaras were tribesmen who moved with their families over long distances, sometimes with thousands of oxen carrying foodgrains, pulses, ghee, salt, etc. trading on their own, or carrying goods for the bigger merchants. Sometimes caravans of 30,000 bullocks moved under state protection for the supply of food grains to the army. The more expensive goods, such as textiles, silks, etc., were laden on camels and mules, or in carts. But it was cheaper to move bulk goods through the rivers on boats. Boat traffic on waterways, and coastal trade along the seashore was then more highly developed than now. Waterways and coastal trade was used more for movement of heavier goods since transport on land was more expensive. The trade in food stuffs and a wide range of textile products were the most important components of inter-regional trade during the period. Bengal exported sugar and rice as well as delicate muslin and silk. The coast of Coromandal had become a centre for textile production, and had a brisk trade with Gujarat, both along the coast and across the Deccan. Gujarat was the entry point of foreign goods. It exported fine textiles and silks (patolas) to north India. It received foodgrains and silk from Bengal, and also imported pepper from Malabar. North India imported luxury items and also exported indigo and foodgrains. Lahore was another centre of handicraft production. It was also the distribution centre for the luxury products of Kashmir - shawls, carpets, etc. The products of the Punjab and Sindh moved down the river Indus. It had close trade links with Kabul and Qandhar, on the one hand, and with Delhi and Agra on the other.

There was a well organized trade network in semi-luxury and luxury goods, with Agra and Burhanpur being the two nodal points in north India. Later, in the 18th century, with the decline of Agra, Banaras

emerged as one of the nodal points. Lahore had the advantage of sending its goods down the river Indus, just as Delhi and Agra were connected by the Jamuna. The movement of silk and fine cotton textiles from Bengal to north India, and of fine cotton and specialised cloth from Gujarat has already been noted.

It will thus be seen that India's inter-regional trade was not in luxuries alone. The movement of these goods was made possible by a complex network, linking wholesalers with merchants down to the regional and local levels through agents (gumashtas) and commission agents (dalals). The Dutch and English traders who came to Gujarat during the 17th century found the Indian traders to be active and alert. There was keen competition for inside information, and whenever there was demand for goods in one part of the country, it was rapidly made good.

Inland trade was served by a network of roads which successive rulers from the time of Sher Shah tried to improve. The transport arrangements compared favourably to those prevailing in Europe, with sarais being set up at intervals of eight or ten miles on the principal routes. According to Tavernier, the facilities were "not less convenient than all the arrangements for marching in comfort either in France or in Italy". Pack-oxen and ox-drawn carts, as well as camels, were the chief means of transport, while horses were used as mounts. A palanquin, carried by four to six servants, with others to relieve would, according to Ovington, with ease carry one twenty or thirty miles a day. However, a normal day's journey was considered to be eight to twelve miles.

Movement of goods was also facilitated by the growth of a financial system which permitted easy transmission of money from one part of the country to another. This was done through the use of hundis. The hundi was a letter of credit payable after a period of time at a discount. The hundis often included insurance (bima) which was charged at different rates on the basis of the value of the goods, destination, means of transport (land, river or sea), etc. The sarrafs (shroffs) who specialized in changing money, also specialised in dealing with hundis. In the process, they also acted as private banks: they kept money in deposit from the nobles, and also lent it to traders. By means of hundis, they created credit which supplemented the money in circulation and financed commerce, particularly long-distance and international trade. Since the merchant could cash his hundi at the point of his destination, after he had sold his goods, movement of species or money which was always a risky enterprise could be reduced, especially when the rich traders such as Virji Vohra set up agency houses in different parts of India including Burhanpur, Golconda, Agra and in the Malabar and also in West Asia the port-towns of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and South East Asia. So brisk was use of hundis that in the Ahmadabad market merchants made their payments or adjusted their obligations almost entirely through hundis. Even nobles used the hundis for payment of salaries to the soldiers.

## FOREIGN TRADE

We have already noted the Asian pattern of trade, especially overseas trade before the arrival of the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century and their efforts to establish by force a Portuguese domination over the overseas trade, monopolizing certain articles of trade, such as spices, horses, armaments, species etc. for themselves, and exclude the "Moors" (Arabs and Muslims in general) from trade as far as possible. We have also seen how these had only a limited success, and a kind of an accommodation between the Portuguese and Asian traders had been reached by the middle of the 16th century. The Asian traders, conscious of the Portuguese domination of the seas, had to obtain from the Portuguese cartaz or passes for their ships on condition of payment of customs duties at a Portuguese controlled port. These passes were given liberally. In consequence, as the French historian Fernand Braudel points out, the Portuguese became customs officials, and customs revenue became a major source of the Portuguese enterprise. Thus, the Portuguese hardly changed the established pattern of trade.

Between the middle of the 16th and the middle of the 18th century, India's overseas trade steadily expanded, both in terms of the tonnage of the goods carried as also expansion into new areas, or areas which had been lightly touched earlier. This was due to some extent on account of the activities of the various European companies which came to India during the period, notably the Dutch and the English and later the French. Other European companies, the Austrian, the German, Danish etc., played only a limited role. Another important factor in the growth of trade was the rise of three powerful Asian states during the period, viz., the Ottoman, the Safavid and the Mughal. The role of the Ming in China also cannot be disregarded. These empires not only provided for law and order and conditions under which trade and commerce and manufacture could grow, but also aided the process of urbanisation and monetization of their economies. As might be expected, these were accompanied by conflicts and rivalries in the political field in which control over trade and trade routes played a definite role.

## ROLE OF FOREIGN TRADING COMPANIES

The arrival of the Dutch and the English trading companies to India towards the beginning of the 17th century and of the French towards the end of the century was a recognition of the importance of India in the Asian trade network, as also a reflection of the growing appetite of European countries for Asian goods, especially spices, and their expectations of large profit. From the beginning, the structure of the Dutch and the English East Companies was different from the Portuguese. Neither were royal monopolies, or hamstrung by close government control. They were joint-stock companies which have been called the precursors of the modern multinational, multiproduct business corporations in the sense that their trade was world-wide and implied a world-wide distribution and marketing system. Thus, they had greater freedom of action than the Portuguese. But that does not mean that they were independent of their governments. Both had received charters from their governments which gave them a monopoly of trade as against other merchants of their countries. Also, the companies expected and constantly received naval and other support from their governments, partly because the owners of the joint-stock companies were influential in their countries and their importance for the growth of their economies. Thus, the difference between the Dutch and the English from the Portuguese was more in form than in substance. The French company was, like the Portuguese, a royal monopoly.

There was also a great deal in common between the methods and the objectives of the various European companies. All of them believed in monopolizing trade, and using naval force to enforce it. They were also prepared to use naval force for extracting special privileges from native powers, to the disadvantage of the traders of those countries. Thus, freedom of trade and equal opportunity to all which was then the custom of Asia became acceptable to them only later when they felt they were, in a dominating position.

Both the Dutch and the English tried first to establish themselves in Java and Sumatra in order to control the trade in the finer spices, cloves, nutmeg and mace, and also pepper. From the last decades of the sixteenth century, both the Dutch and the English merchants started sending exploratory voyages to the Indies. The naval superiority of the Dutch fleets over the slower and bulky Portuguese carracks soon enabled them to establish trading outposts in Java. Thus, in 1605 the Dutch captured the Portuguese fort of Amboina. However, it took them another half a century to completely dislodge the Portuguese. They quickly realized that a profitable trade with the Indies could not be carried out without India. Hendrik Brouwer, later the Governor-General of the Dutch settlements in the East Indies, declared in 1612 that the eastern coast of India, the Coromandal, was the left arm of the Moluccas, i.e. the spice islands. This was because the type of textiles produced in the Coromandal were the most acceptable in the Indies. The spice islands were not highly monetized, and the textiles were exchanged for spices. The Dutch, therefore, first tried to set themselves up at the Coromandal. In 1606, they obtained a farman from the ruler of Golconda to set up a factory at Masulipatam, and to trade at concessional rates. Later, they obtained similar concessions from the ruler of Vijayanagar, and some of the nayaks, and set up their main base at Pulicat between the Krishna and Godavari rivers. This was the area from which much of the cotton cloth which was preferred in the Indies was produced.



The Dutch attempt to extend their trade to Gujarat met with stout opposition from the Portuguese, and was, at first, not welcomed by the Indian traders who had arrived at a working settlement with the Portuguese. But when the Portuguese tried to blockade Surat, both the Mughal rulers and the Indian traders welcomed the Dutch in order to break the Portuguese monopoly. The English, who had just won a naval victory against the Portuguese off the coast of Surat, were also welcomed for the same reason. The Dutch opened their factory at Surat in 1617. The English had set up a factory at Surat in 1613, but it was Sir Thomas Roe, appointed Ambassador at the court of Jahangir in 1615, who obtained a farman from Jahangir in 1618 confirming the English position at Surat.

We need hardly concern ourselves with the rivalries and naval conflicts of the various European powers represented by their trading companies. The Dutch were determined to replace the Portuguese in the Asian trade and establish a monopoly in fine spices. For this it was necessary for them to capture Malacca which they finally succeeded in doing in 1641. They completed their control of the pepper trade by capturing Colombo (1655-56) and Cochin in Malabar after a long siege (1659-63). To bring to an end the Portuguese control over the West Asian trade i.e. the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, the Dutch blockaded Goa for ten years from 1663 in the trading season. While ousting the Portuguese from the Spice Islands the Dutch were not likely to be prepared to share them with the English, as the English soon discovered.

Their toehold in the Indies ended with the so called massacre at Amboina in 1623 when ten Englishmen were tortured and executed. This warning forced the English to concentrate on India, and on the trade with the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. In 1622, a joint Anglo-Persian force ousted the Portuguese from Hormuz. The trade now shifted to Gombroon or Bandar Abbas. These developments were of direct benefit to the Indian traders who were no longer forced to buy Portuguese cartazes for trade in the area. The Portuguese remained at Goa, Daman and Diu but their overseas trade declined continuously, and was insignificant by the end of the century.

Deprived by the Dutch of a share in the spice trade, the English tried to develop the export of indigo and Indian textiles into Europe. It was found that indigo was a superior and cheaper means of dyeing than woad which had been used in Europe earlier for colouring woollens. The best indigo was found in Bayana, Gujarat and the Coromondal. Indigo remained an important item of export but from the 18th century it had to face stiff competition from cheaper export from the West Indies and Spanish America. It had ups and downs in trading till the 19th century.

The principal item of India's trade to Europe which the English promoted was textiles. To begin with, the most favoured items were the white fabrics and painted calicoes of Gujarat. The white fabrics were used in North Africa and the Levant, and also for slave trade in West Africa. According to Kirti Chaudhury, "The success of Indian cotton fabrics in Europe during these early years was undoubtedly due to their relative cheapness as compared to non-woollen cloth produced at home.... By the third quarter of the century the popularity of Indian textiles had become sufficiently established as to extend their use to the luxury end of the market." The number of pieces exported by the English and the Dutch went up dramatically during the second half of the 17th century. Thus, the pieces exported by the East India Company went up from 750,000 in 1664 to 1.5 million pieces in two decades, and formed 83 percent of the company's foreign trade. The sale of the Indian textiles by the Dutch East India company (VOC) in 1684-9 came to 1.12 million pieces. During the period the character of the trade also underwent a change. At first, Gujarat exported only calicoes of a cheap variety which must have appealed to people in the lower income bracket in Europe. As the fashion grew, Bengal muslins and the Coromondal chintz were in wide demand for aristocratic wear. By 1640, the export of textiles from Coromondal was equal to that from Gujarat, and by 1660 it was three times. The Dutch also exported indigo and textiles from the Coromondal. In course of time, Bengal and Orissa exceeded the exports from the Coromondal. The growth of Indian textiles into Europe threatened the French, German and Scottish linen production, and also effected woollens.

Attempts in the 17th and 18th centuries to put a high duty on import of Indian textiles into Britain and even to ban import of painted cloth had little effect. By 1720, in place of painted cloth the imports of white Indian calicoes rose to 2 million pieces. However, this was probably a saturation point, and the



demand did not grow further. Meanwhile, it is significant that the early efforts to revolutionise spinning and weaving by new machines which was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Britain was motivated by the desire to undercut the imported Indian textiles.

Another item of export which the English developed was the export of raw silk from the Kasimbazar area. This was meant to be a competition to the silk industry in Persia, as also that in Italy and France. The export of raw silk rose rapidly after 1650 and in the eighteenth century it was the most profitable item of export next to textiles.

Another item of export which was developed by the European companies during this period was saltpetre which was extensively used by the munitions industry, especially the artillery in Europe. It was also used as a ballast for the ships going to Europe. The best quality saltpetre was found in Bihar, but was also produced in modern East U.P. and Gujarat.

Thus, by the end of the 17th century, the European trading companies had penetrated the Indian markets over the length and breadth of the country. The English also explored Lahri Bandar at the mouth of the river Indus through which they could draw upon the produce of Multan and Lahore by transporting goods down the river.

The English and Dutch could penetrate the markets of India so quickly not only because of their organisational skill, and the goodwill of the rulers of the country, but because of the developed state of the Indian economy. Due to the well organized financial and credit system in the country, and the transportation system, the European traders were able to move money and goods across the country with ease, and also borrow money when necessary. Their major problem was that the export of goods to Europe from India had to be paid for largely in gold and silver because there was hardly any demand in India for goods produced in Europe, except some metals and the finer spices from the Indies which were paid for by textiles. The Europeans were able to succeed because of the availability of gold and silver brought from America mainly by the Spaniards. In the words of Fernand Braudel, this gave Europe "a stranglehold" over the economies of the Far East, and "placed them in position of strength." But it was not so seen at the time. According to the prevalent mercantilist theory, export of gold and silver was considered a drain on the strength of a country. There was, for the reason, a constant hue and cry about the export of gold and silver to India by the trading companies. The problem was considered more serious by the English because the Dutch could meet a part of the cost of their exports by the revenues from the Dutch East Indies. In 1686, Sir Joshua Child wrote to the Madras Council:

"...without (revenue) it is impossible to make the English nation's station sure and firm in India, upon a sound Political Basis and without which we shall always continue in the state of mere merchants subject to be turned out at the pleasure of the Dutch and (at) the discretion of the Natives."

Thus, the English, like the Dutch and earlier the Portuguese, were not prepared to abide by the rules and regulations of trade which governed the native traders and Asians, and which allowed them full freedom of trade in the country. They tried first to convert some of their trading posts or factories into forts where they could not only enjoy autonomy, but be in a position to defy the rulers of the region or country, or at any rate, the local administrators. It was this attitude which had led to the conflict between the Portuguese with Shah Jahan at Hugli in 1633, and with the English during the reign of Aurangzeb in 1687. But that was only the first stage in the ambitions of the English, and of the French. They wanted conquest so that the revenues of the area could be used to finance their exports, if not wholly at least to a considerable degree. This was an ambition in which the European companies could succeed only when the Mughal empire had disintegrated, and rivalries and internal discords of the successor states enabled the English and the French to intervene in the politics of the country.

Thus, the European trading companies became a means and instrument of conquest, not only in India but elsewhere in Asia.

## POSITION OF INDIAN MERCHANTS

The earlier belief that due to the activities of the various European trading companies, their domination of the Indian Ocean and the “continental aloofness” or “absent mindedness” of the Indian state about the interest of the traders and the skill and resourcefulness of the Europeans, Indian traders and Indian shipping had been largely displaced from the seas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has now been largely discarded. Recent research shows that far from ousting the Indian traders from overseas trade, the share of the foreign companies in various regions of India, specially Gujarat, Coromondal or Bengal remained a fraction of the total, and that Indian trade and Indian shipping declined, and made way to European carriers only after the establishment of colonial rule in the country. Thus, Ashin Das Gupta in his *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat 1700-1750*, calculates that at the end of the 17th century, Surat's annual turnover was Rs.16 million annually, of which the European share was only Rs. 2 million or one-eighth of the total. Such estimates are only indicative because of the absence of statistics about Indian trade. Historians are therefore obliged to rely on European statistics which do not generally include the private trade of their agents which was not small, or the trade of the Indian merchants including coastal trade which was substantial.

We have already mentioned the entrepreneurial skill and organizing capacity of the Indian traders in different parts of the country. However, information about Indian overseas traders is scanty. Indian overseas traders have been divided into several economic categories. The backbone of India's sea-borne trade was provided by ship-owners and operators whose primary activity was long-distance and coastal trade. The ship-owners themselves fell into several categories. At one end were magnates who owned a fleet of ships which were based on one big entrepot port, such as Surat or Masulipatam, or a cluster of ports such as in south and central Coromondal, or Bengal and Orissa. Examples of such traders were figures such as the Abdul Ghaffur of Surat, Mir Kamaluddin of Masulipatam, and Astrappah Cherry of Pulicat (S. Coromondal). Abdul Ghaffur was the largest merchant of the seas during the latter part of the seventeenth and the early decades of the eighteenth century which was a boom period in trade. He is said to own 20 ships with a total dead-weight of carrying capacity of well over 5000 tons. Thus, he could easily challenge comparison with any of the European concerns at Surat. He traded from Manila to Mocha, and exercised strict control over all his managers of ships (nakhudas). These nakhudas would not deviate in the slightest from the trading and sailing directions they received at setting out from Surat. There were other ship owners who had between five and ten vessels each. There were also single owner-operated ships which did regular overseas trips. Joint ownership of ships was not common and ship owning was a specialized activity. While many of the owners of ships were Muslims, Hindus did not by any means stay away from this field. The larger fleet owning houses were controlled by the head of the family who resided at a major port. Apart from members of his family assisting him or sailing his ships, he would have paid servants, and regular agents in major producing centres and towns to supply his ships with export goods. These merchants would also have servants or agents at major overseas ports where their ships called to process the trade and to provide information about the market. Thus, Indian shippers had agents in such places as Bandar Abbas, Basra, Malacca, Acheh, Bantam etc. The Owners of single ships often travelled on the ships with their cargoes. They were attended by servants and expected and received special attention on the ships and at ports. The nakhudas or manager-cum-captains were a privileged lot, often being substantial merchants themselves. They also enjoyed special privileges on board the ship, and in the ports.

A second category of overseas merchants who were considerably larger than the first were those who did not own ships, but hired space on ships of others for their own trade and the trade of others. The bulk of India's overseas merchants during the period belonged to this category. It was the pressure of demand from them for shipping space which led to the construction of new ships including construction of large carrying capacity ships of upto 1000 tonnes, during this period. We are told that the number of ocean-going ships in Surat in 1650 was 50. The Mughal Emperor ordered in 1650 that six to eight well built ships be built every year. This continued till Aurangzeb discontinued it. However, at the turn of the seventeenth century Surat alone had 112 sea-going vessels.

A third category of overseas merchants were kings, princes, other members of the royal family, administrators and military officials and nobles who took to trade. Besides the Mughals, there were officials from the states of Bijapur and Golconda, and from the smaller Hindu states of the south - Ikkeri, Tanjavur, Madurai etc. The rulers of Malabar states - Calicut, Cochin, Cannanore, Travancore had a tradition of engaging themselves in trade. But most of them used established merchants for pursuing their trade. It is known that they invested heavily in ship-building, and used their ships for freight. Rulers of some of the neighbouring states - Ayuthya, Arakan, Acheh, Johore, Bantam, etc. also regularly traded with Indian ports in their ships, the rulers of the two sides helping each other in procuring cargo for the ships on return.

In addition to these sections, there was a vast group of merchants who operated in the ports and their hinterlands. Many of them were wholesalers who operated on a large scale in the import and export of commodities. They purchased in bulk from ships, sometimes contracting for an entire ship load. They had their own ware houses for storing goods to be sold in small lots when the price was right. These merchants had agents in hinterland markets to dispose of their purchases. They were bulk buyers of commodities brought by European traders, such as spices, copper, tin, broad cloth etc. Thus, Virji Vohra of Surat was a large scale importer of pepper from Malabar and Kanara. Similarly, Ahmad Chellaby of Surat, Malay Chetti, Kasi Viranna and Sunca Rama of southern Coromondal were masters of extensive commercial empires. These merchants were comparable to European's merchant princes in wealth and power. The other categories we have discussed are brokers and middle men, and financiers, shroffs, etc.

The Dutch historian, Van Leur, called the Indian merchants engaged in over-seas trade as pedlars, i.e. merchants who carried with them goods from market to market for sale. As we have seen, this could apply to the large number of small merchants, sometimes 500 in a ship, who carried their cargoes with them. It has been argued that the term pedlar applied to all Indian merchants because of their isolation, and their "basic dependence on forces (they) could do nothing to control." (Ashin Das) The European trade companies, with their warehouses and network of agents is said to have established "transparency" in the market, or a better control over movement of prices. But establishing warehouses was the basis of all large scale foreign trade which may Asian traders possessed, as also or agents for providing information about the market. But the market remained volatile, and even the European companies were not able to fix prices except by compulsion on the producers later on.

We have seen in an earlier volume that the commodity structure of the Asian trade hardly changed as a result of the coming of the Portuguese. As the contemporary, Tom Pires, has pointed out, "the arms of Cambay stretches two arms - one towards Aden and one towards Malacca". This pointed to the centrality of India in the Indian Ocean trade, and the role of Gujarat in the trade both with the East Indies and Western Asia. The Portuguese attempt to engross the spice trade, and drive the Indians, Arabs, Javanese and others from the Asian trade failed, and Gujarati merchants remained active in South-East Asian and West Asian trade. Malabar traded with Goa, Cambay and Red Sea ports, which were under Arab control following the failure of the Portuguese to capture Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea. Coromondal traded with the Spice Islands in the East Indies, and with Malacca, Siam etc. But the overseas trade of Bengal was hampered by the Magh and Portuguese pirates.

As Steensgaard has noted, if we consider the trading network of the Indian Ocean around 1600, the continuity is remarkable. "Gujarat retained its central position.... (it) still stretched out its arms towards the Red Sea and South East Asia." It has been argued by historians that with the Dutch control of the East Indies, and their determination to control the finer spices, Gujarati trade with South East Asia came to an end. However, recent research shows this to be erroneous. With the establishment of the Dutch factory at Surat, the new Imperial port of Gujarat, and the growth of their textile and indigo trade, it was soon realized by them that the attempt to exclude Gujarat traders from south-east Asia by forcing them to take cartaz by paying ten to twenty per cent duty on their goods, or to exclude them altogether, will cost the Dutch their Surat trade which was more profitable than the realizations from South-East Asia. Hence, from the middle of the seventeenth century, the Gujarat arm towards South East Asia was again



stretched out, but it remained a weak arm. With the Dutch conquest of Colombo and Cochin, the Malabar trade to the Red Sea and to Goa also suffered. Coromondal ports of Nagapatam, Pulicat etc. expanded their trade towards Acheh (North Sumatra), Arakan, Bantam, Bengal, Pegu and Malacca (Burma), Manila (Philippines), and the Malay Peninsula. With the removal by Shaista Khan of the Magh and Portuguese piracy at Chittagong and the coastal areas, Bengal trade towards Arakan, Burma, Siam, etc., and towards the Persian and Red Sea ports also grew.

The main development of the period however, was the growth of India's trade towards the West Asian ports. Although following the accommodation with the Portuguese, permits for West Asian trade were given freely to Indian traders, Portuguese domination of Hormuz had kept them away from Basra. To weaken the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch freely loaded Indian goods to West Asian ports. The trade with the Gulf became even more open with the capture of Hormuz by an Anglo-Persian expedition in 1622. Trade from Hormuz now moved to Gombroon, which was re-named Bandar Abbas.

Indian traders were well established at Aden from where they traded with the Red Sea, and the East African ports of Masswa, Mogadian etc. During the period, trade moved from Aden to Mocha (or Mokha) on the Yemen coast. The safety of roads brought about by the Safavids in Iran, and by the Ottoman Turks in Arabia, Egypt and Iraq were factors in the growth of Indian trade, mostly textiles, in the region. Traders from Masulipatam the chief port of the kingdom of Golconda, which had good relations with the Safavids, also started trading with West Asian ports, in addition to their trade with the islands and mainland of South East Asia.

Two developments seemed to have furthered the trade with West Asian ports. Surat emerged as the principal port of Gujarat which had a rich hinterland extending upto the Gangetic plain. It could also draw textiles from Sindh and Punjab which were much in demand in West Asia. These textiles came down the river Indus to Lahiri Bandar. The growth of haj traffic gave an opportunity to Indian traders to trade in the Hejaz upto Mecca. A second development was the export of coffee from Yemen. The Turkish and Arab merchants who came to Mocha for coffee, exported it to Europe and distributed it in the far flung Ottoman empire. Although the Indians did not buy much coffee, they came to Mocha for selling their textiles. The growth of Indian shipping at Surat was primarily to cope with this growing exports to West Asia.

There were several reasons why the Indian traders successfully coped with the competition offered to them by Dutch and English traders in South East Asia and West Asia. The Indian traders expected a profit of only 10 to 15 per cent whereas the Dutch and the English were not willing to work on a profit of less than 40 per cent and hoped for more. Freight charges on the Indian ships was also lower, sometimes half of what was charged by the Dutch and the English. The reason for this was partly because of the high over-heads by way of factories, maintenance of war ships and forts etc. by the Dutch and the English. The Indian spent much less on equipping their ships, and on their establishment. The Indian also knew better the ins and outs of the markets where he bought and sold his goods, and also the local preferences, customs, arrangements, etc.

Ashin Das Gupta says that the Indian merchants could not charge more because of the fierce competition from the large number of small merchants. "The small men, because they were small, investing little and profiting less, could never be driven out of business, and the power of the great was circumscribed by the ubiquity of the small" (Cambridge Economic History of India).

Such arguments could, however, be put forward for all trade before the growth of the system of Monopolies.

During the seventeenth century which has been described as the "golden period of Indian maritime trade as well as trade in textiles," Indian merchants were found to be settled all over South East Asia, West Asia and the east coast of Africa. Thus, Gujarat merchants, principally it would seem banias from Kathiawar, were settled in all the Yemeni towns and had a controlling influence over trade in the area.



At Mocha, the bania had devised the Yemeni dollar, and devised a system of deferred payment after Nauroz. They were also settled at Jedda (near Mecca) and other Islamic towns like Zahid and Tais. A small group of Gujarati merchants controlled the trade at Massowa, the principal port on the African coast. This Indian diaspora in the Islamic heartland showed that trade was not circumscribed by religious prejudices. Gujarati banias had also settled in all maritime towns of Persia and also in the interior towns in the interior. Armenian traders were also active in the trade between Persia and India. The position of kalinga (or kling) (Orissan and South Indian Hindu merchants) had a strong position in South East Asian ports. A kaling was the shahbandar of the port of Bantam and another in charge of Sultan's shipping fleet. They were also active at Maccasar, and in Malaya and the Gulf of Siam. But their position in the Islands weakened with the growth of Dutch power, and their successful attempts at monopolization of trade. Hence, many of them moved northwards to Burma, to the port and capital of Ayuthya in Siam, and Kedah, Johore etc. in Malaya.

There was hardly any change in the pattern of intra-Asian trade during the period. The major item of export for India were undoubtedly textiles. The textiles catered both to the needs of the aristocracy, and to the mass of the people for whom the coarse variety of textiles were produced and exported from Gujarat. India also exported foods, such as rice and pulses, wheat, oil and ghee. There was much demand for these items in South East Asia islands, and also at Hormuz and Aden for West Asia. Bengal exported sugar and raw silk, Gujarat exported raw cotton, and Malabar sent its pepper to the Indian Ocean markets. There was also coastal trade in India for these items. The Coromondal ports and Gujarat exported indigo and the Coromondal exported tobacco.

It is thus clear that India's export trade was not in luxuries alone. For its imports, India's principle item of import was horses which came both by sea and over-land. It has been estimated that 21,000 horses were imported into India annually. There was a considerable demand for spices in India which were exchanged for textiles at Malacca or Acheh, or at Bantam. There were other minor items like tin from Malaya, ivory from East Africa and dyewoods from Persia. There were many other items such as wines, fruits, almonds, rose water, medicines etc., at various ports but these were minor items. For some time, the Dutch brought copper from Japan.

India had an overwhelmingly favourable balance of trade with West Asia which was paid for by bullion. Thus Mocha was considered the treasure house of the Mughals. Silver also came from Persia. With the rise of the Dutch, spices porcelain etc. from east and South East Asia were paid for sometimes in bullion. According to Ashin Das Gupta, while the pattern of Asian trade did not change and trade remained largely in the hands of Indian merchants, European intervention in the Indian Ocean area led to changes in the deployment of Indian shipping from time to time. Fortunes of Indian ports and their hinterlands fluctuated sharply, and Indian maritime trade waxed and waned. The Indian traditional structure was enriched and strengthened through European skill and enterprise. However, some historians are of the opinion that the impact of the European intervention was far deeper than this. They think that the influx of South American silver into India via the Cape of Good Hope and the Philippines had a dissolving effect on the traditional Indian and Asian economies. This, and the rapid expansion of India's trade during the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century also formed the first steps towards the incorporation of India into the capitalist world market

## INDIA'S OVERLAND TRADE

Side by side with India's overseas trade, India's over-land trade also grew during the seventeenth century. The mainlines of trade between the great Asian civilizations had been set out in antiquity, and continued to operate during the seventeenth -eighteenth centuries. The routes all converged on Baghdad. Caravans coming from Iran, India, Central Asia and China met at Baghdad. Baghdad was also linked by sea via Shiraz which reached the port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf. The main highway forked, at Nishapur, one going via Merv and Bukhara to China, and the other via Herat and Qandahar to Multan. Recently, only one of these, the road going to China has been in focus. It has been misnamed the Silk Road,

although silk was no longer the main article of conveyance over it, silk being grown in Iran and India. Horses, jade, some silk and some porcelain were the main articles of trade over this road. The southern route, the route going to India, was one which Kirti Chaudhury says could well have been called the cotton road, because it was along this road that Indian textiles reached West and Central Asia, and later, even Russia. This road terminated at Aleppo in Ottoman Turkey which was such a mart of Indian goods that it was called "Little India". Many Indian merchants were also settled there.

Indian merchants had settled in this entire region from China to Constantinople. With the decline of Buddhism, the route to Sinkiang had come under the control of Iranians, Turks and Mongols. However, isolated pockets of Indian merchants could be found at Yarkand and Khotan till the 19th century, to look after the trade from Punjab to Central Asia and China across Ladakh and Kashmir. Indian merchants were to be found all over West Asia, in port towns such as Bandar Abbas, Mocha etc., as also in inland caravan centres, such as Constantinople, Baghdad, Aleppo, etc. The largest group of Indian merchants during the period however, seem to have lived in Persia. According to a Russian observer, Suter, 10,000 Indian merchants lived in the Safavid dominions during the seventeenth century. We are told that the Safavid ruler not only allowed them to profess publicly their religious beliefs, but he even allowed them to have a priest to officiate over their ceremonies.

From Iran, the Indian merchants spread to Balkh, Bukhara and Samarkand. More than 200 Indians, including merchants, their servitors, brokers etc. were settled in 1712 at Astrakhan at the mouth of the river Volga in South Russia. A colony of Indian merchants was also at Baku where they worshipped the sacred flame. Russian historian, V.I. Pavlov, says that from Astrakhan, Indian merchants played an active role in trade along the Volga and were frequent visitors not only to Nizhni Novgorod and Jaroslavl but also Moscow. In fact, we are told that the Indian merchants were prepared to extend their activities from these centres into Poland. But before this could happen, the break-up of the Safavid empire, followed by the break-up of the Mughal empire, and the growing debasement of the currency caused a serious setback to the Indian traders abroad.

The point to note is that everywhere the Indian merchants carried forward their own net work which was largely though not entirely based on the family. A few outsiders were sometimes inducted into the family. Relations, cousins, nephews etc. were set up at various places. They traded with each other sometimes helping each other financially, and also helping to distribute the Indian goods, and arrange for imports. They kept liaison with the main family back in India, sometimes by visits back and forth. These family units also provided information about the market, and also helped in the movement of money since there were no banks. The Indians formed partnerships for trade. They also entered into commenda agreement with local merchants who undertook the task of transportation and distribution of Indian goods to different regions, the capital being provided by Indians. The profits were agreed to be shared in the proportion of two to the Indians and one to the local merchants. In capital starved regions, it was a useful device for developing a local trade net-work.

The Indians prospered because they were skillful in their business, and were frugal. They also had the advantage of dealing with Indian textiles which were cheaper and often superior in quality compared to local products. Thus, the French traveller, Chardin said that the Persians "also make Calico Cloth very reasonable but they make none fine, because they have it cheaper out of the India's than they can make it... (and) they understand also the painting of Linnen but not so well as the Indians..."

In consequence of this advantage the Indian merchants made money, part of which they remitted to India, and part lent on credit. The interest on credit varied from 3 to 4 per cent per month, but was higher on smaller loans which could not have been secured from property. Hence, Indian merchants were often accused of being usurers.

The exports from India, apart from textiles, included indigo, spices and sugar. The imports included horses, carpets, furs, dry fruits, and species. Horses accounted for the largest item of imports. While horses from Turan had to be paid for by export of cloth and some silver, India's trade with Persia, Syria and Russia had a favourable balance of trade, which was met by export of species mainly silver.

Thus, it is clear that the ban on Indians not settling where the munja grass did not grow or losing caste if they crossed the salt sea hardly worked. The merchants settled abroad included Multanis - a general term which covered Marwari banias and Oswals, Jains, Sindhis, Gujaratis, and Khatri from Punjab. Afghans were also active, as horse traders and carriers of goods.

It is difficult to estimate the quantum of goods across the overland Mughal frontiers. According to an estimate, Mughal mints from the northwest parts of the empire - Kashmir, Kabul, Lahore, Multan and Thatta together issued the largest number of coins of all the Mughal mints amounting, taken together, to 36.7 per cent. Apart from Thatta which was a river port, the mints of Kabul, Lahore and Multan would have issued coins out of the silver imported from Iran and Turan.

## THE MUGHAL STATE AND COMMERCE

Discussion about the attitude of the states, especially the Mughals, and the bigger states of the times, Bijapur and Golconda, towards commerce brings us to the question of the nature of the state. The coastal states of Malabar and the Hindu Nayakdoms of South India as also the Marathas fall into a different category. They were more conscious of the importance of trade for their economies and interacted closely with traders, or even tried to monopolize the major items of export such as pepper.

However, they formed a special category and did not influence the course of events in the rest of the country. The Marathas, specially Shivaji, were more conscious of the importance of the navy than any other Indian power. But continuous embroilment of the successors of Shivaji with the Mughals put a stop to their efforts to build a navy.

It is wrong to consider that since the Mughals came from Central Asia they were indifferent to trade. Recent research shows that since Central Asian states were located in steppe lands with limited land for agriculture, they were even more conscious of the importance of the roads - east to west, and south to north which criss-crossed their lands, and upon which cargoes moved. The control of such roads in order to tax the customs was, thus, an important part of Timur's empire building. The Mughal attempt to conquer Gujarat, Bengal and Sindh — three commercial regions of the country, and their attempts to keep their control over Kabul and Qandahar, two of the principal over-land trade marts is comparable to Timur's attempt to control the important Central Asian trade routes.

In the rich fertile plains of north India, the state's share of the agricultural surplus was far greater than the tax on trade. However, as commerce expanded, the rulers as well as the nobles began to look upon trade as a supplementary source of income. This type of an approach had both negative and positive aspects. Negatively, both the rulers and nobles holding administrative charges tried to distort trade for their personal profit. Thus, in 1633, Shah Jahan gave to a Gujarati bania, Mohandas Danda, the sole rights to buy indigo grown in the kingdom. He was to return rupees eleven lakhs in three years time out of his profit, including rupees five lakhs which were advanced to him from the royal treasury. The object was to raise the price of indigo for the Dutch and the English. The scheme failed after a year because of the refusal of the Dutch and the English to buy except at their own prices.

Another commodity which was frequently sought to be monopolized was saltpetre. When Mir Jumla was the Governor of Bengal, he tried to become the sole supplier of saltpetre to the English. Shaista Khan who succeeded Mir Jumla, tried to monopolize salt, bee's wax, and the purchase of gold.

Although the foreign traders protested indignantly at such monopolies, such monopolies were not at all unusual, the Dutch and the English East India Companies, themselves enjoying the monopoly right of trade in the East. After the Dutch monopolization of the trade in spices and their conquest of the pepper producing areas of Shri Lanka and Malabar, the price of pepper rose three times.

More objectionable was the attempt of some officials to monopolize trade in their areas in order to sell them more profitably to other traders. Thus, Prince Azim-ush Shan declared the entire import trade of Bengal as his monopoly - calling it sauda-i-am-o-khas. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Lahore, made great



profit because he got a commission on everything which was bought or sold at Lahore. However, such practices were frowned upon. Aurangzeb wrote a sharp reproof to Azim-ush-Shan when he heard about his attempts at monopolization.

More common was the practice of rulers, members of the royal family, and even some leading nobles having their own ships which made regular voyages to the Red Sea ports and to Southeast Asia. Thus, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram had ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. When Khurram was Governor of Gujarat, his ships carried on an extensive trade with Mocha. Shah Jahan was a major participator in shipping which extended to queens, princes and princesses of the realm. From 1640, for over a twenty year period, there was a brisk activity of ship building in the Gujarat dock yards. They were generally big ships upto 1000 tonnes ordered by members of the royal family. Prince Dara and Aurangzeb had their own ships which traded with Acheh and Bantam. Jahanara also traded in her own ships, and on the ships of the Dutch and the English. This extended to the Deccan kingdoms. Thus, as a leading noble at Golconda, Mir Jumla had a large fleet of ships which traded with Bandar Abbas, Red Sea ports and Southeast Asia. We are told that shipping in Bengal was generally owned by leading Mughal nobles.

These activities cannot be considered harmful to trade. They created additional carrying capacity which also helped the Indian traders. On occasions, however, restrictions were placed on the loading of Dutch and English ships at Surat till the royal ships were fully laden.

Competition for freight traffic had arisen because the English had entered into it in a big way, and the Dutch joined in reluctantly when they were not doing so well in West Asian markets. Royal pressure was one way to off-set the advantage the English and the Dutch had in providing better security against piracy and the better reputation for seamanship they had in the Indian Ocean. Indian traders generally split their risks by trading both on Indian ships, and the ships of the Europeans.

Of more direct benefit to the traders was the investment of members of the royal family in lending money to the merchants for trade, or even advancing money from time to time from the royal mint. In 1646, the English factors complained of shortage of money at Surat, for as soon as money was coined, the merchants at Surat paid it to the king's diwan in satisfaction of the advances made by him.

In this way, a part of the agricultural surplus extracted by the ruling class was converted into commercial capital. Of greater significance was the fact that as a result of their direct involvement with trade, the king and his leading nobles became more aware of the concrete problems facing the merchants.

According to the prevalent philosophy which can be called the Islamic or Asian philosophy, all communities were free to regulate their internal affairs according to their own laws and customs. This applied equally to the traders. The traders in every major city were generally organized on a religious-cum-caste basis. Thus, at Surat, the Jains had their own organization headed by a major seth. Likewise, the baniyas and the Muslims. These organisations constantly interacted with the local port administration, and also had access to political power at the intermediate / provincial level, and the highest central level. They peddled influence and played politics with the various organs of government. Merchants had access to the highest provincial officials to defuse an impending crisis, or to sort out a problem before it got out of hand. Merchants also employed vakils or agents in the courts of emperors and powerful princes through whom representations were made to redress grievances or make complaints. Thus in 1616-19, the Indian merchants first persuaded the Emperor not to allow English ships to Mocha, but when the English blockaded Surat the merchants were the first to make representations to the emperor to solve the dispute. In the 1680s and 1690s, when the English were pressurized to protect Surat shipping in the Arabian Sea from English pirates, an order of the Surat shippers to obey the orders of the Dutch convoy vessels was signed by the three bania brothers, Kishandas, Bhagwan Das and Trikam Das, and countersigned by the mutasaddi of Surat.



In general, neither the Mughals, nor the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda believed in administrative trade, though silk was a royal monopoly in Persia under Shah Abbas, and the rulers of Acheh, Ayuthya, Arakan, Pegu etc., often made tin, rice etc. royal monopolies. In Travancore also the entire pepper trade was a royal monopoly. The major effort of the Mughal state was that trade was kept free and the sea routes open to their merchants. The Mughals lacked a navy and both their ports and shipping on the high seas were vulnerable to the threats or pressure, first of the Portuguese, and then of the Dutch and the British. However, the Mughals used their power to decide whom to allow to trade in their territories, and to set up their trading establishments. To ensure freedom of trade to the Indians, they also did not allow the foreigners to set up forts or armed settlements in their territories. This was a delicate balance which the Mughals maintained in their territories till the empire itself disintegrated. In the first three decades of the century, the Mughals had to do some tightrope walking to deal with a difficult situation facing trade at Surat. They had to deal with three aggressive European trading powers, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English, each of which desired domination of the seas. Skillfully utilising their differences, they ensured that Surat was more free as a trade centre than ever before. The ousting of the Portuguese at Hugli by Jahangir not only opened Bengal to the Dutch and the English but was an object lesson to all that they would not be allowed to build fortifications within Mughal territories.

The biggest crisis that faced the Mughals in respect of freedom of navigation was in the 1640s, when the Dutch attempted to take on the mantle of the Portuguese to control and redirect Indian Ocean trade. The Dutch denied passes to Indian ships leaving the ports of Gujarat and Bengal to sail to Southeast Asia ports, on the ostensible plea that they were at war with the rulers of Acheh, Perak and Kedah. Their long term aim was to discourage Indian ships from trading eastwards so that they could engross all the markets for themselves and be the sole suppliers of Indian goods. Despite the opposition of the Dutch merchants in India who understood the implications of this policy for their trade in India, this policy was sought to be operated for a number of years. The Dutch showed that they meant business by blockading Surat, and seizing ships as prizes. The Mughals retaliated on land by seizing all the Dutch factories, and arresting their agents. This led to hostilities which continued between 1648 and 1652. Since the trade of Surat was being harmed, Shah Jahan had to agree to Indian ships going to Southeast Asian ports paying duty at Batavia. But the Dutch soon realized that this would harm their lucrative trade in Bengal and India. Imperial directives were sent out to obstruct Dutch trade. With Indian ships and their cargoes held up, and sailing of ships from Surat disrupted, both sides were keen to come to a settlement. Shah Jahan granted a farman to the Dutch in which he assured them that Surat ships would not sail for Acheh. But once the Dutch blockade of Surat had been lifted, officials put pressure on the Dutch to grant passes to the Indian ships. By 1652, the Dutch had given in and passes began to be given freely. Indian trade with Southeast Asia resumed.

The Mughals came into clash with the English East India Company in 1687. Although their main complaint was about customs, it should be remembered that the Mughals customs were exceedingly low, between two and a half to five per cent. In addition, road-tolls (rahdari) though officially prohibited, was charged by local rulers and jagirdars. Presents had often had to be made to customs officials. But these were parts of a system which were equally applicable to Indian traders. The European traders, unable to compete with the Indian traders on a basis of equality or because of their psychology of establishing a special position or monopoly, always sought special concessions. Such concessions were often given by the Mughals and local rulers to encourage European trade. Thus, in 1650, Shah Shuja, the Governor of Bengal, gave a nishan to the English to trade in Bengal without paying customs duty on payment of a lump sum of Rs.3,000 annually. Successive governors could not be bound by this order, especially when English trade in Bengal had gone up by leaps and bounds since 1650. In 1680, Aurangzeb gave a farman permitting the English to trade in all parts of the country on payment of customs duty at Surat. The interpretation of this farman also led to disputes, the English claiming the right of duty free imports and exports from all ports by paying customs at Surat. This led to English attacks on Hugli and Chittagong in 1686-87, sacking of Balasore, blockading of Surat and seizing Indian ships at sea. The English had apparently over-estimated their power, and seizure of their factories all over the empire and arrest of their agents soon brought them to the negotiating table. As in the case of the Portuguese

earlier, the Mughals had no desire to banish the trade of one Europe power, and become completely dependent on the other. Hence, Aurangzeb pardoned the English on a payment of a fine of Rs.150,000, and restored the order of their trading in Bengal free of customs on a payment of an annual sum of Rs.3,000.

A third crisis which the Mughals faced towards the end of the seventeenth century was the growth of piracy, both by Europeans and Omanis. The most notorious pirate was Captain Avery who captured several Surat ships, including those belonging to the royal family. His prize catch was the Mughal ship Ganj-i-Sarwar, which reputedly had goods worth Rs.52 lakhs.

The Mughals sought to meet this situation by pressuring the three European companies to convoy Indian ships. Simultaneously, the number of cannons the Indian ships carried was steadily increased from twenty-four to forty and then to fifty, like their European counter parts, and their hulls strengthened to bear the strain of firing. We are told that by the end of the seventeenth century, ship-builders of Surat were building ships that looked like European ships. Thus, Indian ships were improving in design and armaments. But because of navigational weakness, not placing the cannons properly, and lack of experience they were unable to meet armed European ships. But developments showed that the Indians were slowly catching up. The navy of Kanhoji Angria was fitted with long range guns with which he could batter his opponent's ships while remaining beyond the range of their guns. The Omani men-of-war which were built at Surat had a formidable reputation in the Arabian Sea. The Muscat Arabs had begun to fit out large warships, and in 1695, the French ship, Legier, of forty guns, ran into two Muscat ships of sixty and eighty guns respectively, off Goa and was promptly engaged. The cannonade continued till nightfall when the French ship managed to get away under cover of darkness. It arrived at Goa in a shattered condition, its Captain killed.

Thus, technical differences between European and Asian ship building and their armaments were being narrowed down. According to Manucci, Aurangzeb had considered building war ships and an experimental model ship was constructed by European craftsmen on Aurangzeb's orders. The European artillery men in the Europeans' service gave a highly effective demonstration of the model ships capacity to fire in all directions. But the Emperor decided against the project. We have a curious comment on this in Aurangzeb's letters where, upon the European seizure of some Indian pilgrim ships, the Emperor discussed various ways as how to deal with the continuous European threats. After discussing the project of building a navy to counter the European threats, Aurangzeb decided that it would be cheaper to compromise with the European trading companies rather than to try to challenge them on sea. Maybe, if the Mughals had been able to consolidate their hold on the Deccan, and its vast coast-line, they might have felt impelled to build a navy.

### TREND OF INDIA'S ECONOMY DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

We have shown that although the Mughal state was a class state in which the ruling classes exploited the fruits of the labours of the working peoples, it was not "an insatiable Leviathan" with an unlimited appetite for resources as Tapan Ray Chaudhuri has argued. Nor was it a mere "conquest state", all pre-modern states being the result of conquest. Both the earlier Hindu and the later Islamic states had a definite philosophy of development of agriculture and protection and encouragement of trade and manufactures. For both, sovereignty implies protection of the people. They were conscious of the importance of commerce and traditionally made a distinction between the ordinary shopkeepers, and the big business houses which were involved in wholesale and foreign trade. Members of such families were considered almost social equals with the rulers, and could be called upon for extra help in times of need. Both the Panchtantra and the Mirrors of Princes testify to this.

It has been argued that this philosophy did not bridge the gap between the interests of the rulers and his officials who were often found to be grasping. This may be true to some extent. However, the Mughal centralization, including building of communication facilities, establishment of law and order, a uniform currency of high purity, and the administrative processes which emphasised money as the main medium of transaction, including the collection of land revenue which provided the bulk of the

resources of the state, led to a quickening of the economic processes. These processes did not come to an end with the rapid disintegration of the Mughal empire in the first half of the 18th century. Nor did the establishment of new states, including break away provinces or riyasats, and the warfare between them and the rising Maratha, Jat, Afghan and Sikh states lead to a breakdown of law and order or seriously undermine the working of the economy. The new ruling classes aped the life style of the shrinking Mughal ruling elites, and promoted agriculture and commerce in their territories. A proof of this is that neither the English, the Dutch or the French trading companies found any difficulty in procuring the cotton, silk and other commodities needed for their growing exports to Europe. There was a decline of some of the "sun" cities, such as Delhi and Agra but this was compensated by the expansion of new cities such as Faizabad and Banaras, Poona, Hugli etc. Thus, overall the first half of the 18th century cannot be considered a period of growing deurbanisation or decline of trade and manufacture.

Not only was the first half of the 18th century not a period of de-urbanization, it was a period during which the money nexus penetrated further into the countryside. To some extent, it was due to the growth of cash crops, such as cotton, indigo, tobacco, etc, as also to cater to the growing demand for export of textiles to Europe, and tobacco to some of the neighbouring countries. War-fare needed cash which was provided either by taking loans from the sahuks (merchants-cum-bankers), and or by letting land out on farm (ijara). The growth of the practice of ijara during the period was an index of both a growing weakening of centralized control over the countryside as also the ruler's need for ready cash. Sometimes, sahuks were given lands on ijara to pay back the money taken from them on loan. In some cases, sahuks themselves competed for obtaining villages on ijara. Thus, in 1767, Mohan Ram Inder Chand secured the ijara of two talluqs of pargana Khandela in the erstwhile Jaipur state for a sum of Rs.60,000/-. He had estimated the jama of these villages to be Rs.1,00,000/-.

Commenting on the internal state of Central India dominated by Holkar and Sindhia during the 18th century, an acute British observer, Malcolm, in his *Memoirs of Central India*, noted:

"The land of the Maratha princes are usually rented, and as many of the renters are either bankers or men supported by that class, they have acquired and maintain an influence, both in the Council of the state, and the local administration of the provinces that give them great power, which they use solely direct to the object of accumulation."

He goes on to say that the Maratha rulers often demanded one or two years' advance payment of a year's revenue to some of the bigger grantees who took money on loan for the purpose from the bankers at an interest of one per cent per month.

However, we are unclear how widespread was the practice of giving ijara to city based sahuks. It would appear that the largest holders of ijara were people connected with the rural areas, i.e. zamindars, jagirdars, local well-to-do peasants including mahajans, patels, etc. The taking of long term ijara of lands which had been assigned to Mughal mansabdars by the Amber and other rulers was a means of strengthening and expanding the territorial jurisdiction of the states. The major involvement of the sahuks in the working of the system was their standing forth as malzamins or guarantors of the contracts entered into. Sometimes, even zamindars sought loans from sahuks for the payment of the land-revenue due. Thus, we are told that in Awadh, it had become a practice that the land-revenue when it was due, was paid by the family bankers. If the zamindar or talluqedar (a new category of people who undertook the responsibility of paying land-revenue from a talluqa or region contracted by many zamindars) were not able to supply the banker with sufficient funds, the banker would advance it out of his own resources, and recoup it when the rents came in, charging an interest of one per cent per month, which could go up to three per cent.

Another institution whereby the banker-cum-merchants became closely involved with the administrative processes, was the use of the bima-hundi method for the movement of money-cum-land revenue or other payments over distant places. Thus, the surplus of the land-revenue from Bengal or from khalisa lands amounting to over a crore of rupees, was sent in the middle of the century by Jagat Seth by a hundi.



It is not clear whether the monied elements began to interest themselves in the purchase of zamindaris. While we have evidence of many more sale of zamindaris during the period, these were generally small zamindaris. The sale price of the zamindaris, amounting to about two and a half times the land revenue also suggests that the income from these zamindaris was not sufficient to attract substantial bankers. The noted exception was the acquisition of Burdhan raj by a Punjab khatri trader.

The big zamindaris grew because of the weakening of the jagir system enabling powerful people to carve out spheres of influence. Thus, able and competent men who could command a following or jamiat forged ahead. At the lower level, madadd-i-maash holdings ceased to be subject to confirmation by successive rulers, and became zamindaris. These small zamindars lived in the villages, and constituted a petty landed gentry which lived at a slightly higher standard of living, and hence had an appetite for city goods. This was another aspect of the penetration of urban goods into the countryside.

Price rise could have been another factor in the strengthening of the position of the traders, and the further monetization of the economy. A modern historian, Irfan Habib, has argued that prices in the country doubled by 1670 as compared to prices at the end of the sixteenth century. After a lull, prices rose again during the period after 1710, and doubled by the middle of the eighteenth century. Some other historians have questioned the price rise during the seventeenth century on account of insufficient data, specially data regarding agricultural prices. Thus, Om Prakash has argued that there was no price rise in Bengal on account of rapid expansion of manufactories, thus counteracting the effect of the influx of Spanish silver into India to cater to the growing European taste for oriental goods. The price rise during the eighteenth century is supported by a continuous series of documents belonging to Eastern Rajasthan, on the basis of which the prices of agricultural commodities including different crops during the period have been worked out. However, bearing in mind that there was no national market in food-crops during the period such a price rise can only be considered tentative till there is corroborative evidence from other regions of the country. Not only traders even peasants connected with the production of market oriented products - such as raw silk, indigo, sugar, oil, saltpetre etc. who were often part time traders, benefited from this price rise at least in the central region.

Another aspect of the situation was that the growth of trade and manufacture for domestic and foreign markets led to the increasing control of the merchants over production and over the producers. The means of this was the dadni or letting out system where by advance of cash and raw materials were made to the artisan. Although the system was not new, it seems to have grown further during the 18th century. By this system attempts were made to tie the artisan down to certain merchants. The European companies also followed this system, generally operating through Indian agents or gumashtas. Much of the textile production in South India was located in villages. Although the artisan was theoretically free to sell his products to whom he liked, attempts were made through advance of loans to bind him hand and foot to an individual merchant. Thus, as we have noted, in the 1670s, Kasi Viranna and his partners had such control on the entire coast of Madras to Armagon that the settlements of the weavers were called "Viranna villages". This system was gradually extended to all products such as saltpetre, indigo, even Kashmiri shawls. However, in general the artisans continued to own the implements of production. Nor did it lead to any changes in the system of production, although the Europeans companies in particular tried to lay down strict conditions about the size, quality and design of the textiles. In only some cases do we find workers working under common supervision, as we have noted. Although the financial control of the merchants over the artisan was such that the loans or advances made to them are sometimes referred to as wages, the dadni system by itself could not change the system of production. The Dutch did set up their silk reeleries with winders working on a wage basis. But such efforts were few and far between.

A more significant feature was the effort of independent artisans to set up their own producing and marketing units. Thus, in mid eighteenth century at Lucknow there were master artisans who had upto 500 apprentices. In Bengal there were affluent weavers who employed their own capital for production, and sold their goods freely. In Kashmir, the shawl industry, a large workshop upto 300 looms which was the property of the master craftsman whose profit was one fifth of the net profit.



These are indicative of potentialities of development in eighteenth century India. Another aspect which is important in this respect is the continuous growth of commercial capital in the country. We have already discounted the idea that merchants could not accumulate profit for fear of administrative interference. As Irfan Habib says... "merchant capital was considerable in size and an efficient system of credit not only enlarged it, but also gave it mobility."

It has been argued that high rate of interest prevalent in India as compared to Europe is indicative of a shortage of capital. There was some fall of interest rates in the middle of the 17th century. Thus, in North India, the rate fell from about 1 to 1 1/2 per cent per month to 3/4 per cent or even to 1/2. In the Deccan it fell from 2 per cent per month to 1 1/2 percent and below. Even then these rates were higher than in England. The reason for this is not quite clear: Perhaps, traditionally in India interest gave a higher rate of return. But there is enough evidence to suggest that there was no shortage of capital in the country. There were extremely wealthy traders in different parts of the country who, it is known, financed the country trade of the European companies off and on. The expansion of productive resources in the country to cope with increased demand for exports without a sharp increase in prices would not have been possible in a situation of shortage of capital.

It does not of course mean that growth of commercial capital would have automatically led to the growth of industrial capitalism. The use of machines which displaced labour and increased productivity or machinism was hardly wide spread in India. Nor was there a strong basis of science and technology. It should be borne in mind that the development of industrial capitalism in South England was a unique phenomenon which could not been replicated anywhere else in the world at the time. But once such a development had taken place, it could have been replicated elsewhere, as happened in the case of France, Germany and Japan later. The point to note is that with plenty of merchant capital, a group of skilled financiers and entrepreneurs and skilled craftsmen, India could also have moved in this direction if colonial intervention had not completely distorted its economy, and in place of its being the leading manufacturer of the Asian world, reduced it to the position of a raw material producing periphery of the capitalist world.

It has been argued that before the rise of a capitalist world economy in the 19th century, there were a series "world economies" in existence, and that India and the Indian Ocean region formed one such economy. Fernand Braudel defines a world economy as "an economically autonomous section of the planet able to provide for most of its own needs, a section to which its internal links and exchanges give a certain organic unity". He argues that India was one such centre having "turned the Indian Ocean into a sort of private sea, from the east coast of Africa to the islands of the East Indies." As we have seen, the coming of the Europeans did not change this reality at least till the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Braudel, each such region invariably had a centre, with a city and an already dominant form of capitalism, whatever form that took. Steensgaard argues that with India as its hinterland, Surat emerged during the 17th century as such a centre, like Amsterdam in Europe, having abundance of capital and a large number of industrious and capable bankers and entrepreneurs, free access to all ships and a large shipping fleet which could reach every corner of the region within one season.

Although the Dutch tried to make Batavia an excentric centre, they could not succeed primarily because of the Dutch attempt at monopolization rather than free trade as practised by the Mughals, and other Asian states. However, during the eighteenth century, the position of Surat was undermined. The disintegration of the Safavid empire led to a reduction of Indian exports to the region and due to the weakening of the Mughal empire, the Surat traders were not able to withstand the pressure of the English and the Dutch, and their constant efforts at monopolization of trade. In consequence, there was a sharp fall in Indian shipping at Surat. From 112 in 1701, arrival of Indian ships at Surat declined to 32 per year between 1716 and 1733, and to 19 between 1734 and 1741. The other Indian traders were effected more gradually, loading their goods on European ships, and gradually becoming more dependent on the European companies rather than being traders in their own right. The breaking of

links with the productive centres in the Gangetic Valley following the decline of the Mughal empire and anarchy in Gujarat following the Maratha incursions did create temporary problems but can hardly be considered the major factor for the decline of Surat, as Ashin Das Gupta has argued. The simultaneous decline of Asian trade, and the growing European trade which was carried by European companies in European ships - Steensgaarde believes that during the eighteenth century India's trade to Europe was more than half of its overseas trade - gradually reduced the Indian traders to a secondary position, and led to the incorporation of India in the capitalist world economy. However, the basis on which this incorporation took place - the ruination of Indian handicrafts by economic and political pressure, and making India a mere supplier of raw materials belongs to a separate phase of Indian history.



# UNIT-XXVIII

## RELIGION, FINE ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### RELIGION-HINDU RELIGION, SIKH RELIGION AND ISLAM

Conflicting trends of liberalism and catholicity on the one hand, and rigid exclusiveness and conservatism, on the other, were noticeable both within the Hindu religion and Islam during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nanak, whose teachings led to the establishment of the Sikh religion, had many similarities with the nirguna saints in opposing the caste system, and was a part of the liberal, syncretic tradition.

#### Hindu Religion

Some of the Vaishnava and Nirguna bhakti saints and Tantrik teachers proclaimed the right of women and shudras to participate fully in the spiritual sphere. They welcomed the aboriginals and hill tribes into the Hindu fold, and also accommodated those Muslims who were prepared to accept Hindu ways of life and thought. There was vehement opposition to these trends by the large body of brahmins, and by the writers on the Hindu Dharmastras who laid the greatest possible emphasis on maintenance of ceremonial purity against contamination by people considered unclean. This implied drawing into a shell in order to keep away from contact with the powerful Muslim community. Hence, they tried to regulate the lives of the Hindus by insisting on the fulfilment of the minute details of the caste system. The most notable person representing this trend of thinking and the most influential was Raghunandan of Nadia.

He wrote as many as twenty-eight works on different aspects of the social and religious life of the Hindus. Raghunandan asserted the privileges of the brahmins stating that none other except the brahmins had the right to read the scriptures or to preach. He ends up by saying that in the Kali age there were only two varnas, brahmins and sudras, the true kshatriyas having disappeared long ago and the vaishyas and others having lost their caste status due to the nonperformance of appropriate duties. He also prescribed different penalties for reviling the brahmins, and people of different castes.

Some brahmins, such as Tulsidas of Varanasi, while upholding the duties prescribed by the scriptures, were prepared for a compromise. Tulsi postulated salvation for the lowliest if he constantly repeated the name of Rama, and accorded him a status equal to the brahmins. At the same time, Tulsi regretted the attempts of the shudras to usurp the privileges of the brahmins, and to set themselves up as teachers. He defended the caste system, but postulated a caste system based on individual merit rather than birth.

While he was reviled by the orthodox brahmins of his times, Tulsidas had enormous influence on the succeeding generations in North India. Worship of Radha and Krishna, put forward by Mira and Surdas, continued to be popular, even more among women than among men.

In the South, Saivism continued to hold sway, but we do not find any new or significant philosophical or sectarian movements arising during the period.

In Eastern India, the followers of Chaitanya carried forward his tradition of making no distinction among his devotees on the basis of caste, religion or sex. However, the Goswamis of Vrindavan who edited and commented on Chaitanya's works did try to put forward an orthodox gloss on his thoughts. Tantrism which did not make much difference between brahmins and non-brahmins in the spiritual sphere remained widespread, as also Shakti worship or worship of female deities. The disciples of Shankaradeva, such as Madhavadeva, influenced many tribal people to give up human sacrifice, and embrace Vaishnavism in eastern India. Madhavadeva led the life of a householder, but his successors were ascetics.

In Maharashtra, the most influential and the supreme exponent of bhakti was Tukaram, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century. His songs or abhangs breath a spirit of love and devotion to Vitobha, an incarnate form of Vishnu at Pandharpur. Tukaram says of himself, "I was born in a shudra family, thus was set free from pride." The orthodox section in Maharashtra was represented by Guru Ramdas who put forward a philosophy of activism, but was equally vehement in asserting the privileges of the brahmans. He set up large numbers of maths attached to temples to propagate his ideas. Shivaji became his disciple and gave some donations for the maintenance of the maths.

There was a tendency for the brahmans preaching orthodoxy and the Hindu rulers to come together. Both upheld privileges, though the rulers were conscious of the need not to alienate the powerful Muslim community, or the non-privileged Hindus. Both emphasized social stability which implied keeping the "neech" or the lower orders in their proper place.

Kabir's tradition of emphasizing the fundamental equality of man and rejecting differences based on caste, race or religion, his opposition to scriptural knowledge and adherence to empty rituals was carried forward by Nanak in the Punjab and by Dadu in Rajasthan. Rejecting all external forms of religion, Dadu proclaimed that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, nor did he have any faith in scriptural values (shat-darshari). He advocated the path of nipakh or non-sectarianism. His successors were Sundardasa and Rajjab. Rajjab advocated, above all, a philosophy of devotion and labour: a man who did not labour could not only not feed his family, but had no right to repeat the name of Rama.

The traditions of liberalism and orthodoxy continued side by side during the eighteenth century. Thus, Prannath who acquired great influence with Chhatrasal, the ruler of Bundelkhand, put the texts of the Quran and the Vedas side by side to prove that their tenets were not fundamentally different. He allowed his Hindu and Muslim disciples to follow the rituals and laws of their own religion. But both dined together at the time of initiation.

## Sikh Religion

The Sikh movement had its origin in the preachings of Nanak. But its development is closely linked with the institution of Guruship. The first four Gurus continued the tradition of quiet meditation and scholarship. The fifth Guru, Arjun Das, completed the compilation of the Sikh scriptures called the Adi Granth or Granth Sahib. To emphasize that the Guru combined both spiritual and worldly leadership in his person, he began to live in an aristocratic style. He erected lofty buildings at Amritsar, wore fine clothes, kept fine horses procured from Central Asia and maintained retainers in attendance. He also started a system of collecting offerings from the Sikhs at the rate of one-tenth of their income.

The religious ideology of Guru Nanak was reinforced by the Gurus in a manner that "added a new dimension without minimizing the importance of his basic ideas". (J.S. Grewal). The concept of the unity of Guruship was combined with the concept of the office of the guru being more important than the Guru, and his decisions became as legitimate as the decisions of the founder. At the same time, the collective body of the congregation (sangat) was given even greater importance. It were these concepts and the growth of a separate set of rituals that bonded the Sikhs together as a separate community, and enabled them to take a stand against all forms of injustice. We have already discussed the factors which led to a clash between the Sikhs and the Mughal state during the seventeenth century.

## Islam

The struggle between the trends of liberalism and catholicity and rigid exclusiveness and conservatism was even more intense among the Muslims than the Hindus. The strife between shariat (Muslim Law) and tariqat (sufism) which had started in West Asia with the rise of sufism was very much in evidence in India also. The official ulama who held important and lucrative posts at the court was hostile to any religious movement which in their opinion, was "calculated to mar the pristine purity of Islam and to open a way towards conciliation between kufr (infidels) and iman (faith)". (M. Wahid Mirza). Belief in the concept of Wahdat-al-Wajud, (unity of being) supported by Akbar was accepted by many sufi saints, but a group of orthodox thinkers objected to it on the ground that it abolished the distinction



between the Creator and the created and opened the door to pantheism. Saints like Shaikh Abdul Haqq of the Qadiriyya order strongly supported the reinvigoration of sharia. The lead in organizing a movement against the liberal, eclectic policies of Akbar was taken by Baqi Billah who belonged to the orthodox Naqshbandi sufi sect which had been popular in Turkistan. Baqi Billah settled near Delhi and many leading nobles from Akbar's court became his disciples. His spiritual successor was Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind.

Shaikh Ahmad took a stand against the concept of Wahdat-al-wajud. He tried to purge from sufism all such practices and beliefs which he considered un-Islamic. Thus, he opposed listening to religious music (sama) as a means of spiritual ecstasy, long vigils, going to the tombs of saints, etc. He denounced the practices and ceremonies which were derived from Hinduism, and advocated keeping no social intercourse with the Hindus whom he considered worse than dogs. Shiites were worse than infidels. He was a bitter critic of the indulgence shown by Akbar to the non-Muslims, and wanted that jizyah should be reimposed and cow-slaughter resumed. He wrote letters to various nobles to implement his policies and set up centres to propagate his ideas. He also condemned the worldly ulemas and sufis, considering them responsible for the rulers departure from sunni orthodoxy. "He believed that he was the renewer (mujaddid) of the first millennium of Islam and had been sent by God to restore Sunni orthodoxy to its pristine purity."

He fell foul of the orthodox elements whom he had denounced. They argued that he claimed a status equal to the Prophet because in a letter he said that he was God's disciple and His will. This was the charge on the basis of which Jahangir imprisoned him. Shah Jahan paid little attention to his sons. Although Mujaddid's sons supported Aurangzeb's policy of eradicating all non-orthodox practices, Aurangzeb did not support the Mujaddid, despite being enrolled in the Naqshbandi order in 1665. Many ulama in the Punjab and other places wrote fatwas declaring the Mujaddid's letters as sacrilegious. In 1682-83, the Sherif of Mecca wrote to Aurangzeb that the ulama there were agreed that Shaikh Ahmad was an infidel. Hence, the Emperor was forced to ban the teachings of the Mujaddid's letters at Aurangabad which seems to have been the principal centre of the anti-Mujaddadiya movement in India.

The Qadiriyya order had been popularized in the Punjab by Shaikh Abdul Qadir (d. 1533). His sons were close supporters of Akbar and Abul Fazl. The Qadiriyya order strongly supported the doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wajud. Miyan Mir (d. 1635) emphasized the mystical element in sufism. After many sojourns in jungles for ascetic practices, he had settled at Lahore, and attracted great admiration. The most famous disciple of Miyan Mir was Mulla Shah Badakhshani. Dismissing the attempt of the orthodox elements to paint the infidels, i.e. Hindus in negative terms, he declared that the infidel who had perceived the Reality and recognized it was a believer, and a believer who did not recognize Reality was an infidel.

In 1639-40, both Dara and Jahanara enrolled as disciples of Miyan Mir. Dara, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, was by temperament a scholar and a sufi who loved to discourse with religious divines. With the help of brahmanas of Kasi, he got the Gita translated into Persian. But this most significant work was the Majma-ul-Bahrain, an anthology of the Vedas in the introduction to which Dara declared the Vedas to be "heavenly books in point of time" and "in conformity with the holy Quran", thus underlining the belief that there were no fundamental differences between Hinduism and Islam. It was on this basis of equating Islam with infidelity that the ulama decreed Dara's death after his capture by Aurangzeb. With the accession of Aurangzeb, greater emphasis was given on theological studies. A manifestation of this was the compilation of the Fatazva-i-Alamgiri by a board of theologians, bringing together fatwas issued on various points both in India and outside.

Although the Naqshbandi order is often considered orthodox, and the Qadiriyya liberal, no such hard and fast distinction can be made. Thus, we have seen that Shaikh Abdul Haqq, though belonging to the Qadiriyya order, was orthodox in his thinking. After Aurangzeb, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, belonging to the Naqshbandi order, came to the conclusion that the Vedas were the revealed books, and the Hindus therefore possessed the status of the ahl-i-kitab, and could not be treated like the kafirs of Arabia.

While theological studies forged ahead under Aurangzeb, it is wrong to think that it saw the decline of the concept of wahdat-al-wajud. Both the liberal and the orthodox trends in sufism continued during the eighteenth century. The Chishtiyya order staged a come back under Shaikh Kalimullah. Many people joined more than one order, thus making for a good deal of eclecticism. Even the sons of Aurangzeb were deeply interested in liberal sufism.

The recurrent cycles of liberalism and orthodoxy in Indian history should be seen, in part, against the situation which was rooted in the structure of Indian society. It was one aspect of the struggle between entrenched privilege and power on the one hand, and the egalitarian and humanistic aspirations of the mass of the people on the other. But liberal and orthodox thinking influenced the elites as well as the non-privileged sections of the people.

## FINE ARTS-ARCHITECTURE, PAINTING, LANGUAGE, LITERATURE ETC

The Mughal period saw an outburst of cultural activity in the fields of architecture, painting, music and literature. The norms and traditions created during this period set standards which deeply influenced the succeeding generations. The Mughals brought with them Turko-Mongol cultural traditions which mingled with the rich cultural traditions existing in the country. As we have seen, the Sultanat period and the provincial kingdoms which grew up during the fourteenth and fifteenth century saw many-sided cultural developments. The Mughals absorbed these rich cultural traditions, so that the culture which followed was the contribution of peoples of different ethnic groups, regions and faiths. Such a culture could be called Indian or national in a broad sense.

### Architecture

The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings including sarais, hamams, mosques, baolis (water tank or well) etc. They also laid out many formal gardens with running water. In fact, use of running water even in their palaces and pleasure resorts was a special feature of the Mughals. Babur was very fond of gardens and laid out a few in the neighbourhood of Agra and Lahore. Unfortunately, only a few of the Mughal gardens, such as the Nishat Bagh in Kashmir, the Shalimar garden at Lahore, the Pinjore garden in the foot-hills near Kalka and the Arambagh (now called Ram Bagh) near Agra have survived. These terraced gardens give us an idea of the Mughal concept of gardens. Babur the founder of the dynasty, had a fine aesthetic taste, though he did not find enough time to build many buildings in India. Most of what he built has not survived. For Babur, the most important aspect of architecture was regularity and symmetry which he did not find in the buildings, in India. Perhaps, his dissatisfaction was directed at the Lodi buildings which he saw at Lahore, Delhi and Agra. The mosques at Ayodhya and Sambhal attributed to him, were adaptations of earlier buildings, and do not therefore give an idea of his architectural concepts.

The most notable buildings of the period were undoubtedly the ones built by Sher Shah at Sasaram and Delhi. The ones at Sasaram are a series of mausoleums, modelled on the octagonal Lodi tombs at Delhi. The outstanding amongst the tombs at Sasaram is the mausoleum of Sher Shah. It was built in the centre of a large pond, "Its reflection creating an illusion of movement at the same time duplicating its bulk" (Percy Brown). The massive building which is octagonal in shape, gains height and solidity by being based on a high square platform which is linked to the main building by graceful kiosks at the corners. A terraced effect is given to the building by an arched verandah around the building, and the massive dome which rises in stages. The neck of the dome is covered by a wall over which are placed a series of graceful kiosks. The massive dome is covered by a lotus finial. It will be seen that many features in the mausoleum of Sher Shah are carried forward, with modifications to the Taj Mahal. But while the Taj Mahal gives an illusion of being light and airy, Sher Shah's mausoleum gives the impression of strength and solidity which are considered important features in architecture, and are appropriate expressions of Sher Shah's character.

The “Purana Qila” or “Old Fort” built by Sher Shah which may have been a part of Humayun’s Jahan Panab, is a massive structure with walls of grey stone and an impressive gateway of red sandstone with white marble inlay and occasionally inset with blue glaze. None of the palaces and public buildings of Sher Shah have survived. The mosque-cum madarsa called Khair-ul-Majalis, outside the fort with a magnificent gate was built by Maham Anaga in 1561. The only building inside the fort to have survived is the royal chapel, called Qila-i-Kuhna mosque. The main feature of the mosque is its pleasing treatment of the facade which consists of five arched entrances of graceful proportions. Each of them is set within a rectangular frame. The central archway is larger than the ones flanking it on each side. The three central archways have graceful oriel windows reminiscent of the Rajasthan style of architecture. The decorations are kept simple, consisting of white marble inlay, and inset patterns of coloured glaze. The narrow turrets on two sides of the central bay and at the corners at the backwall of the mosque give strength to the building, and balance the single Lodi style flat roof.

These buildings may be considered the climax of the Lodi style of buildings, and the beginning of a new phase.

The real phase of Mughal architecture began with Akbar. Akbar had the means as well the strong desire to undertake construction on a large scale. Like Babur, he not only had a fine aesthetic taste, but was personally interested in the construction of building which he not only supervised, but sometimes himself engaged in the work. He was concerned, above all, to bring together the fine architectural traditions existing within the country.

During the reign of Akbar, we find two traditions of architecture working simultaneously. One was the Persian tradition with which Humayun had become familiar during his stay at the court of Sha Tahmasp. The Persian tradition is reflected in the mausoleum of Humayun, started by his widow Haji Begum perhaps in 1564 and completed in eight years’ time. This square building of red sandstone was placed on a high platform and was topped by a white marble dome of graceful contours. The dome had a slightly constricted neck, and rose high in the sky. A modern historian, S.K. Saraswari, thinks it was derived, though not exactly copied from Timurid architecture. Percy Brown thinks “it represents an Indian interpretation of a Persian conception.” The Persian features were the true double dome which had appeared in India in the tomb of Sikandar Lodi, but had not fully matured. It had been familiar in West Asia for long. The double dome enabled a pleasing sky-line, and an interior roof in keeping with the enclosure inside.

A second feature of Persian influence was the arrangement of the rooms inside. Instead of one enclosure, there were separate rooms in the corridors linked by passages. However, such an arrangement can be found in earlier, pre-Turkish buildings.

The Indian feature was the entire building being placed in a formal garden with a large gate. The dome was supported by slender minarets which was a feature of the Gujarat style of architecture. Graceful kiosks were a familiar feature in Rajasthan. The arches on all sides, and the fine white inlay work added to the pleasing effect of the building.

While Humayun’s tomb was being built at Delhi, Akbar was busy building his magnificent fort at Agra, and laying the foundation of a new city and palace complex 26 miles away at Sikri. The fort at Agra was started in 1565 and completed in eight years’ time. The Agra fort, with its massive battlements and crenelated walls, its gates consisting of two octagonal towers of dressed red sandstone linked to each other was the pattern of the forts which were built at Lahore, Ajmer and Allahabad later by Akbar. The Red Fort at Delhi built by Shah Jahan was also patterned on the fort at Agra. According to Abul Fazl, within the Agra fort, Akbar built “upward of five hundred edifices of red stone in the fine style of Bengal and Gujarat.” Although most of these buildings were swept away by Shah Jahan to make way for his own style of buildings, the surviving portion of the Akbari Mahal and the Jahangiri Mahal give us an idea of the type of architecture put up. The roofs of these palaces were flat, and supported by exquisitely carved pillars. The palace is said to have been based on the Man Mandir in Gwalior fort, and has many Rajasthani features,



such as the heavy red sand stone brackets and balconies, carved with peacock and serpent motifs. The walls and staircase carry geese, flamingoes and lotus carvings, as also figures of mythical animals, such as winged dragons, half elephants, birds etc.

The building at Sikri, which was later named Fatehpur after the victory at Gujarat, were commenced in 1568-69 when the Kachhawaha princess was expecting Salim. Many palaces and public buildings were put up during the next fifteen years. The whole complex was on top of a hill by the side of an artificial lake. The city was circled by a wall built on the plains below where most of the building have disappeared. Not noticing this, Percy Brown confused the palace complex with a city and remarked that it did not show any regular system of city planning - a mistake repeated by B.S. Saraswati. Entering the palace complex through a gate with three arches, called Naubat Khana, with the royal karkhanas and the mint on the right, now in a ruined condition, one reaches the vast courtyard which formed the diwan-i-am. Behind the diwan-i-am on the right towards the west was building called the diwan-i-khas and by its side the treasury meant mainly for precious stones. The courtyard behind the Diwan-i-Am led to the Emperor's double storeyed palace or khwab-gah which was screened off from the public buildings by a wall which has been demolished. In front of the Emperor's palace was the Anup Talao with a platform in the centre. This was the place where Akbar sometimes held philosophical debates or organized musical parties. It was to the double-storied palace to which some philosophers were drawn up on a cot from which they discoursed. At a corner of the Anup Talao is a small square building of red sand stone the walls of which are beautifully carved, as if made of wood. This is mis-called the Turkish Sultana's house for no queen could have lived in such a public place. The royal haram was on the side of the Emperor's palace. It has a guard-house, and a high wall to separate it from the public buildings. This wall, too, has disappeared. Further, behind the palace was the Jama Masjid which also had an access from the city below on the plain.

Thus, the palace complex had a plan. Water from the lake below was lifted up to provide for running water and the fountains. The buildings at Sikri have been divided into two -secular and religious. The secular buildings are generally of a trabeate character. One of the palaces within the haram is called the Jodha Bai Palace though Jodha Bai was the daughter-in-law of Akbar, not his wife. This palace may have housed the Emperor's Hindu wives. This was a large palace with suites of rooms around a courtyard - a traditional design which continued in residential buildings till recent times. The bases, columns, and capitals are borrowed from the traditional type of temple pillars. It also has a chapel or puja room.

Within the haram complex, three other buildings are noteworthy. One is the palace wrongly ascribed to Birbal. This is a double storeyed building. The entrance porches on the ground floor have angular roofs with glazed blue tiles. According to modern critic, N.K. Saraswati, it is "a superb example of residential structure, remarkable for its balance and design. Structural and decorative elements also are in beautiful harmony with each other".

The second is the small but highly decorated palace ascribed to Akbar's mother, Mariyam. It is remarkable in many senses. The interior of the suite of rooms were embellished with large mural paintings, some of which have been partly restored. On the northern side of the bracket there is a carving of Rama being worshipped by Hanuman. Other brackets show carvings of life -geese, elephants etc. which were anathema to the orthodox.

The third building is the Panch Mahal which was just inside the haram complex. However, the wall separating it from the public buildings has disappeared. It was a five storeyed building with receding terraces, each with a flat roof supported by intricately carved pillars, each of a different design. It was meant to be a place where the women of the haram could take air after all outsiders had been excluded.

It will be seen that these buildings were of an innovative and experimental type. The most interesting building from this point of view is the building generally called the diwan-i-khas. The diwan-i-khas is a single hall which has a large and substantial pillar supporting a circular stone platform. From this central platform, stone bridges radiate to each corner to connect with the hanging galleries. The central pillar,



with various patterned shafts and brackets supporting the central platform appears to be based on a wooden Gujarati derivative. Once again, mythical animals can be seen on the friezes outside.

The most magnificent building at Sikri is the Jama Masjid with an interior courtyard of unusually large proportions. The main-sanctuary had arched entrances, domes with pillared kiosks all along the parapet, and a cloister along the courtyard where various types of pillars and decorative devices are used. Percy Brown says: "It is the masterly manner in which this sanctuary has been formulated and executed that gives this mosque its fine character." In the courtyard is the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti with exquisitely carved stone screen. The marble verandah outside was added by Shah Jahan later.

On one side of the mosque is a massive gateway leading up to a flight of stairs. This is the Buland Darwaza started by Akbar in 1573 to commemorate his victory at Gujarat. The gate is in the style of what is called a half-dome portal. What was done was to slice a dome into half. The sliced portion provided the massive outward facade of the gate, while smaller doors could be made in the rear wall where the dome and the floor meet. This device, borrowed from Iran, became a feature in Mughal buildings later. The parapet on top of the front of the gate has a series of kiosks with cupolas which break the sky-line. Even though this massive door-way throws the rest of the building out of proportion, it has remained a most impressive building meant to create a sense of awe.

With the consolidation of the empire, the Mughal architecture reached its climax. Towards the end of Jahangir's reign began the practice of putting up buildings entirely of marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This method of decoration called pietra dura was used in the small, but slender tomb of Itimad-ud-Daula built during Jahangir's reign. A special feature of this rectangular building were the octagonal towers at the corners with graceful cupolas. Like his own tomb started by Akbar but finished by Jahangir, it had no dome, but only a small cloister on the flat roof decorated with variegated design of perforated screens.

The Taj Mahal, justly regarded as a jewel of the builder's art, brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms adopted by the Mughals earlier so as to make them their own. These included putting the mausoleum in a formal garden with streams of running water and fountains, erecting the main building on a lofty platform to impart solidity to the building and a beautiful sky-line to the dome. Finally, there was the half-dome portal at the entrance. The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender, minarets linking the platform to the main Building. The decorations are kept to a minimum, delicate marble screens, pietra dura inlay work and kiosks (chhatris) adding to the effect.

That the Taj Mahal is the logical culmination of the development of imperial architecture in the country is sufficient to set at rest the fable that the Taj was designed by an Italian, Geronimo Veroneo. Amongst others whose names are mentioned as architects is Ustad Isa Effendi and Ustad Ahmad from Lahore. According to a manuscript which gives details about the construction of the Taj, Shah Jahan had appointed a council of experts to advise him, and designers submitted plans for the proposed tomb on paper. Shah Jahan had his own ideas about the tomb, and made valuable suggestions. On this basis a number of models in wood were prepared. It was from the final model in wood that the stone building was put up.

It would, thus, appear that there was no single designer of the Taj. Like Mughal paintings, it was a collective effort. Thus, Amanaf Khan Shirazi, it is agreed, was the calligrapher, and Ismail Khan served as the dome builder. We may agree with E.B. Havell that the Taj was "of a living organic growth born of the Indian artistic consciousness..... The Taj is not an isolated phenomenon, the creation of a single mastermind but the glorious consummation of a great epoch of art".

Mosque building also reached its climax under Shah Jahan, the two most noteworthy ones being the Moti Masjid in the Agra fort, built like the Taj entirely in marble, and the other the Jama Masjid at Delhi built in red sandstone. A lofty gate, tall slender minarets, and a series of domes are a feature of the Jama Masjid.

While the Red Fort built by Shah Jahan at Delhi is famous for the trallised scale of justice in the Rang Mahal architecturally the most impressive is the flat roofed Diwan-i-Am where all the skills of the Hindu pillar maker have been used to provide clear vistas from the throne. The multi-foialiated arches give an effect of rippling water.

Thus, we find a unique combination of the arcuate and the trabeate forms in the buildings of Shah Jahan at the Red Fort.

Although not many buildings were put up by Aurangzeb who was economy-minded, the Mughal architectural traditions based on a combination of Hindu and Turko-Iranian forms and decorative designs continued without a break into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, Mughal traditions influenced the palaces and forts of many provincial and local kingdoms. Even the Harmandir of the Sikhs, called the Golden Temple at Amritsar which was rebuilt several times during the period was built on the arch and dome principle and incorporated many features of the Mughal traditions of architecture. The point to note is that there was no attempt to establish some kind of a communal representation in the buildings between what were considered Hindu elements and those considered Islamic. The rulers used whatever elements and devises they considered useful and aristic. It was their fine aesthetic sense, and the skill of the Indian craftsmen which effected a conjunction which was both graceful and pleasing.

## Painting

The Mughal school of painting has steadily gained recognition as a distinctive style of painting which had a rich tradition to fall back upon, and which reached full maturity during the seventeenth century. It created a living tradition of painting which continued in different forms in different parts of the country long after the glory of the Mughals had disappeared.

Paintings are referred to in some of the Sanskrit literary works, and the murals of Ajanta are an eloquent testimony to the richness of the pictorial tradition in ancient India. Although the tradition decayed from the 8th century, that it had not died is shown in some of the illustrated Jain palm-leaf works. A new phase was reached with the introduction of paper in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The painter found more freedom in his choice of colours and more working space at his disposal. The miniatures, therefore, began to show "signs of improvement in colouring, composition, delineation and decoration detail." The change was slow and hesitant. Gujarat and Malwa appear to be the two regions where such improvements took place.

We have no illustrated manuscripts of the Sultanat period, although Amir Khusrau tells us that the art of painting was practised among the ruling classes. Firuz had the wall paintings in his palace erased. Meanwhile, a rich tradition of painting was developing at Shiraz in Persia. This school was influenced by the Chinese style of painting. During the fifteenth century when the provincial kingdoms of Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur emerged as patrons of the fine arts and literature, painters, litterateurs etc. moved from Shiraz to these kingdoms. Thus, the earliest contact between the Persian and the West Indian style of painting took place during the fifteenth century. The best example of this is the Niamat Nama or Cookery Book, illustrated at Mandu in which Indian rounded body contours are displayed against a background of Persian formalized leaves and vegetation.

The foundation of the Mughal school of painting was laid by Humayun during his exile in Persia and Afghanistan. Bihzad, the master painter was at the height of his fame at the time. Humayun patronized many of his disciples, and two of them, Mir Saiyid Ali and Abdus Samad, joined him in Afghanistan, and then moved with him to Delhi.

In about 1567, Akbar ordered the preparation of a lavishly illustrated manuscript of the Persian translation of the Hamza Nama a celebrated Arab epic about a legendary Hamza (no relation of the Prophet). Under Saiyid Ali and Abdus Samad, a group of roughly one hundred painters drawn from Gwalior, Gujarat, Lahore, Kashmir, Malwa etc. were collected. It took fifteen years to complete the work, and one thousand and four hundred pages of illustrations were made. This proved to be a training

period for many Indian painters. The illustration of many other manuscripts was also taken up during this period. Thus, Anwar Suhaiii, epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, history books such as Chingiz Nama, Akbar Nama etc. were illustrated. Unfortunately, many of them have been destroyed, or scattered over many European libraries, specially the Prince of Wales Museum, the John Ryland Library, in Britain. Many of the illustrated manuscripts have now found their way to museums in the USA such as the Boston Museum. This has made the study of the Mughal paintings a difficult and arduous task.

Akbar was very fond of painting and during his reign, painting was organized as an Imperial establishment or karkhana. Abul Fazl says: "His Majesty from his earliest youth, has shown a great predilection for this art, and gives it every encouragement." "From the beginning, both Muslims and Hindus joined in the work. Thus, of the seventeen painters mentioned by name by Abul Fazl, thirteen were Hindus. Some of the Hindus were of the lower castes, such as Daswant who was a paliki-bearer till Akbar's eye fell on him and he trained him up. The painters were given monthly salaries, and the Emperor gave them further rewards on the basis of their works which were laid before him regularly. Commodities needed by the painters were provided to them. Attempts were also made to improve the mixture of colours.

Some of the orthodox thinkers of the time objected to the art of painting as being un-Islamic. Abul Fazl answers their objection by arguing that painting made the painter and others recognize God because while sketching anything which had life they realized that God alone could provide individuality to them. The painters covered a vast field. Their themes included war, hunting scenes, mythical beings, building activities etc. Portrait painting was another favourite theme. Akbar ordered to have the likeness taken of all the grandees of the realm. He also sat for his portrait. According to Abul Fazl, Basawan was excellent in drawing of features, portrait painting and several other branches. However, there was little scope for specialization: two or even three painters could be used to complete a picture. If one drew the outline, another would fill in the colours, and a third complete the face. The person who drew the outline might be asked to colour the next one, and the one who drew the face draw the outline. Later, Jahangir claimed that he could distinguish which painter had drawn the outline, and who had filled in the colours or drawn the face.

Despite the composite nature of many of the pictures, differences of style did emerge. Overall, the Akbari period not only established painting firmly, it freed itself from the Persian rigidity of form by introducing the plastic roundness of Indian painting in order to give a three dimensional effect in place of the flat, two dimensional effect. Indian trees and flowers, Indian buildings etc. were also introduced in the pictures. Indian colours, such as peacock blue, the Indian red etc. also began to be used.

Mughal painting reached a climax under Jahangir who had a very discriminating eye. Apart from painting hunting, battle and court scenes, under Jahangir special progress was made in portrait painting and paintings of animals, flowers, etc. Mansur was the great name in this field.

Under Akbar, European painting was introduced at the court by the Portuguese priests. Abul Fazl praises the skill of the European style of painting. Under its influence, the principles of fore-shortening whereby near and distant people and things could be placed in perspective was adopted. However, Indian painters never fully mastered the art of perspective. Distant objects are often shown in a vertical manner rather than foreshortened as necessary. The earlier bird's eye-view perspective whereby action at different levels could be shown in the same picture was replaced by circular effect.

Despite very lively studies of animals and birds, the Mughal painters had little interest in the study of nature independently. However, trees, birds, streams of water, hillocks often formed the background of many hunting and war scenes. A special feature was the tonal and rounded effect of the tree trunks. Painting continued to be patronized by Shah Jahan, but he lacked Jahangir's aesthetic sense in this field. Hence, there is a profusion of court scenes and a lavish use of gold.



Aurangzeb's lack of interest in painting led to a dispersal of the artists to different places of the country. This helped in the development of painting in the states of Rajasthan and the Punjab hills. The Rajasthan style of painting combined the themes and earlier traditions of western India or Jain school of painting with Mughal forms and styles. Thus, in addition to hunting and court scenes, it had paintings on mythological themes, such as the dalliance of Krishna with Radha, or the Barah-masa, that is, the seasons, and Ragas (melodies). The Pahari school continued these traditions.

## Language and Literature

The important role of Persian and Sanskrit as vehicles of thought and government at the all-India level, and the development of regional languages, largely as a result of the growth of the Bhakti movement, have already been mentioned. Regional languages also developed due to the patronage extended to them by local and regional rulers.

These trends continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time of Akbar, knowledge of Persian had become so widespread in north India that he dispensed with the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language (Hindawi) in addition to Persian. However, the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language continued in the Deccani states till their extinction in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Persian prose and poetry reached a climax during Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl who was a great scholar and a stylist, as well as the leading historian of the age, set a style of prose-writing which was emulated for many generations. The leading poet of the age was his brother Faizi who also helped in Akbar's translation department. The translation of the Mahabharata was carried out under his supervision. Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian poets. Though born in Persia, they were among the many poets and scholars who migrated from Iran to India during the period and made the Mughal court one of the cultural centres of the Islamic world. Hindus also contributed to the growth of Persian literature. Apart from literary and historical works a number of famous dictionaries of the Persian language were also compiled during the period.

Although not much significant and original work was done in Sanskrit during the period, the number of Sanskrit works produced is quite impressive. As before, most of the works were produced in south and east India under the patronage of local rulers, though a few were produced by brahmanas employed in the translation department of the emperors.

Regional languages acquired stability and maturity and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period. The dalliance of Krishna with Radha and the milkmaids, pranks of the child Krishna and stories from the Bhagwat Puran figure largely in lyrical poetry in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani and Gujarati during this period. Many devotional hymns to Rama were also composed and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata translated into the regional languages, especially if they had not been translated earlier. A few translations and adaptations from Persian were also made. Both Hindus and Muslims contributed in this. Thus, Alaol composed in Bengali and also translated from Persian. In Hindi, Padmavat, the story written by the Sufi saint, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, used the attack of Alauddin Khalji on Chittor as an allegory to expound Sufi ideas on the relations of soul with God, along with Hindu ideas about maya.

Medieval Hindi in the Brij form, that is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra, was also patronised by the Mughal emperors and Hindu rulers. From the time of Akbar, Hindi poets began to be attached to the Mughal court. A leading Mughal noble, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, produced a fine blend of Bhakti poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations. Thus, the Persian and the Hindi literary traditions began to influence each other. But the most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas whose hero was Rama and who used a dialect of Hindi spoken in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. Tulsi was essentially a humanistic poet who upheld family ideals and complete devotion to Rama as a way of salvation open to all, irrespective of caste.



In south India, Malayalam started its literary career as a separate language in its own right. Marathi reached its apogee at the hands of Eknath and Tukaram. Asserting the importance of Marathi, Eknath exclaims: "If Sanskrit was made by God, was Prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity alone. God is no partisan of tongues. To Him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike. My language Marathi is worthy of expressing the highest sentiments and is rich, laden with the fruits of divine knowledge." This undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of all those writings in local languages. It also shows the confidence and the status acquired by these languages. Due to the writings of the Sikh Gurus, Punjabi received a new life.

Another development during the eighteenth century was Urdu. Urdu, often called Rekhta, had developed in the Deccan, but can be found at the Mughal court during the second half of the seventeenth century. Thus, the satirical poet, Jafar Zatali, wrote during the reign of Aurangzeb, Dwelling on the hardship of the nobles exiled to the Deccan, and the loneliness of their family members in the north, he lampooned Aurangzeb for the prevailing lawlessness all around by saying: "Darkness under the arse of the giant."

Urdu acquired a definite form, content and style with the arrival of Wali Dakhani at Delhi in 1721. But the poets who raised Urdu to a status equal with Persian were, Mir, Dard and Sauda (1713-1781). Urdu became a literary language for the city elites, and both Muslims and Hindus contributed to its growth. The strains of mysticism, humanism and liberalism characterized Urdu poetry of the times.

## Music

Another branch of cultural life in which Hindus and Muslims cooperated was music. We have seen how Indian music had established itself in the court circles of the Sultanat during the fourteenth century, and even an orthodox ruler like Firuz Tughlaq had patronized music. The rulers of the provincial kingdoms during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were great patrons of music. Raja Man Singh of Gwalior was himself a skilled musician and a patron of musicians. He is credited with creating many new melodies which were collected in a work, *Man Kautuhal*. It was not only at the courts but in temples and sufi gatherings that patronage was given to music. Thus, Swami Hari Das of Vrindavan was considered to be a great connoisseur of music. Akbar himself is supposed to have gone incognito to hear his music. It should be remembered that many of the writings of the bhakti saints were set to different ragas and surs.

Among the rulers of Delhi, Adali, son of Islam Shah Sur, was a great patron of music and was an accomplished player of pakhawaj. Abul Fazl tells us that Akbar was very fond of music from his early years. He says: "His Majesty has such a knowledge of the science of music as trained musicians do not possess; and he is likewise an excellent hand in performing especially on the naqara." It was due to his interest in music that Akbar took over the services of Tansen from Man Singh. Tansen became the leading singer at the court of Akbar. Abul Fazl mentions by name thirty-six singers. Tansen composed many songs in Hindi and created new ragas many of which are sung even to-day. The style of singing which he took from Gwalior was the stately drupad style.

Shah Jahan patronised music at his court, and is said to have acquired considerable proficiency in the art himself. Aurangzeb himself was an accomplished player of the veena, and patronised music during the first ten years of his reign. But growing puritanism and a false sense of economy made him banish the singers from his court. Instrumental music however continued.

Despite Aurangzeb's jibe to the protesting musicians to bury music deep, Aurangzeb's reign saw the production of a large number of books on music. The most famous of these was *Tuhfat-ul-Hind* written for Aurangzeb's grandson, Jahandar Shah. Members of the royal family including ladies in the haram and many nobles continued to patronise music.

The reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48) is a period of considerable growth of music. His most famous singers were Niamat Khan Sadarang and Firuz Khan Adarang. They were masters of dhrupad but also

trained many pupils in the khyal style of music which was considered more lyrical in theme and erotic in approach. This greatly enhanced its popularity. Muhammad Shah himself composed khyals under the pen-name Rangila Piya. Many courtesans also became famous for their music and dance. Tabla and sitar became popular during this period but we do not know when these were invented.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

We have noted in an earlier volume that though India had a rich tradition of science and technology, advance in these fields had slowed down after the eighth century but not come to a standstill, as the works of Shripati and Bhaskaracharya II (AD 1150) in the field of mathematics show. Al-Biruni ascribed the decline of Indian science to the arrogance and growing insularity of the brahmins. After the coming of the Turks, there was a greater interaction of Islamic or what was called Arab science with India. Thus, many new technologies were introduced, such as paper, the spinning wheel, the carder's bow, an improved version of the water wheel or rahat, and widespread use of the iron-stirrup. In the fields of science, interaction was mainly in the field of astronomy, mathematics and medicine, though agricultural and animal sciences were not completely neglected. However, from the eleventh century onward, there had been a heavy onslaught on reason and science (in the name of philosophy) in the Islamic world. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) considered the great teacher played an important part in the assault on reason. As a result of this continuing campaign, science was virtually submerged under religion, mysticism, aesthetics etc. Various works on science were written during the period including those in India which have yet to be evaluated. They covered newer areas such as geography, physics especially optics and specific gravity, magnetism and concepts of motions and time. However, scientific works were generally mixed up with religion, mysticism, aesthetics etc. This was not a new feature because science, religion, magic and myth were mixed up in many religions. However, a sphere of rationality was a necessary condition for the growth of science. In Europe, science had grown from the 15th century onwards by setting out a sphere of rationalism away from religion. The inability of science to delink itself from religion or mysticism became an inhibiting factor in India and elsewhere in the Islamic world. Although a number of scientific inventions, such as a device for cleaning many gun-barrels at the same time, a moving carriage for grinding-corn which developed under Akbar show a spirit of inventiveness, this did not spread out because the ruling class had little interest in devices affecting the labouring classes.

The European impact on India was first felt with the coming of the Portuguese. Portuguese ships and guns were seen at the basis of Portuguese superiority at sea, and an attempt was made to copy them. Thus, the Zamorin of Calicut weaned away two Milanese from the Portuguese to manufacture guns for him. A Portuguese writer, Castanheda, writes that four Venetians came to Malabar in 1505 to cast guns. In the field of ship-building, we are told that as early as 1612, the ships at Dabul were reported to have been made "Christian like with topes and all their tackings (sails) accordingly". Another contemporary, Bowrey, thought that the master carpenters of the Krishna-Godavari delta on the Coromandal coast could construct and launch ships as any shipwright. Many of them had learned the techniques of European construction from European craftsmen. Surat was another centre for such ship construction. K.N. Chaudhuri says that by the end of the seventeenth century, "European country-traders made little technical distinction between ships built in the west and those built in the countries of the Indian Ocean. If anything, they seems to have preferred the local ships, as the standard of finish and general workmanship remained high."

Side by side with the improvement of ship-design, there was strengthening of their hulls to absorb the shock of artillery. Indian merchantmen began to carry guns and armed men for defence. The number of these guns varied - from 20 to 40 or even more. The Ganj-i-Sawai, the biggest ship of Aurangzeb, was armed with 80 cannons and 400 muskets. However, the cannons of these ships were useless against European ships because of their often faulty location, the unskilled marksmanship of the Indian gunners, and their poor navigational skills. As a contemporary, Fryer, remarked in 1670 that "... some of their ships carry 30 or 40 pieces of cannon, more for show than service..." Thus, the Ganj-i-Sawai fell to an English ship even without a proper combat. It seems that it were not so much the technological factors,

as political and societal factors including individual dedication which were responsible for the Indian weakness on sea. It has been remarked that when the Indians fought for themselves i.e. as pirates, than for a distant master, they did better. Even the Omani fleet built in India was able to deal with English piracy and threaten Surat.

All this shows the capacity of the Indian craftsmen to copy and produce a model indistinguishable from the original, using primitive tools. An example of this was a horse-carriage on the English model built for Jahangir. But such models were often not disseminated, nor improved upon. There has been a good deal of discussion recently why with an abundance of skilled craftsmen, and abundance of liquid capital, India remained backward in the field of technology during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although with the arrival of the English and the Dutch traders, there was increasing contact with the Europeans at various levels, and knowledge about Europe was growing. The rulers and the nobles were constantly on the look out for European novelties. Thus, we hear of globes of the world, glasses, spectacles, substantial house-clocks being purchased or presented. However, the Indian ruling class was not concerned with "toys" only. Abul Fazl was aware of the discovery of America by the Europeans and expressed appreciation of European painting. The governor of Junnar interrogated Fryer in 1670 on "the state of Europe, the government, policy and learning". Bernier's patron, Danishmand Khan, was interested in the philosophy of Descarte, and was interested in scientific matters, such as astronomy, geography and anatomy.

These contacts did not, however, spread out, or induce a more systematic study of the western sciences. As Bernier lamented, there were no academies (except madrasas for religious study) where such subjects could be taken up for study. Thus, interest in western science and philosophy was individual, and died with the individual.

Even in the field of manufacturing cannons and muskets India remained technologically backward. This was because the guns were not cast together as a single piece, but holes were made through the mould, and then brought together by a hot-ring placed over the pieces so that it fused with the barrel. A single piece could not be cast because the furnaces were too small, because of poor bellows. Good cast-iron could only be produced in large furnaces given high temperature by power-driven bellows. By 1550, bellows in Europe were being worked by "trip-lugs on water-driven shafts, or by system of cranks, levers and weights." In India, there was no improvement on the skin-bellows worked by wood or hands. According to Babur iron from seven or eight furnaces was used for making one cannon. Since all the pieces could not be of the same quality, they were liable to burst. But it is a mystery why the European employed by Mir Jumla in 1666, and later at Bengal to cast guns did not teach the Indians the right method to cast guns. This seems to have been rectified by Mir Qasim in Bengal later, and by Ranjit Singh in the Punjab.

Efficient water pump was another weak point. An Englishman had offered to Jahangir to pump water out of the Jamuna, like the Thames at London, for the use of the ordinary people. But the idea was pooh-poohed by Sir Thomas Roe, and went no further. The water-pump on ship was rejected in favour of water bailed out by the khalasi or labourer on board ships. However, the use of iron nails, the iron anchor, and the capstan to raise and lower it were accepted. Absence of water-pumps meant that mining could not go below water-level in mines. However, the rich Indian tradition of mining zinc, brass and silver in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh is a point which cannot be forgotten. It has been noted that the absence of the humble screw and spring in India made manufacture of machinery difficult. In place of a screw, a piece of wire was soldered on.

The absence of the screw and the spring may explain refusal to accept the European house clocks. House-Clocks were a representation of the new science of physics growing in Europe and depended on cranks, levers and weights. One reason for not accepting the house-clock was the different system of time reckoning in India. However, this did not prevent China from adopting the house-clock. In the field of weaving and dyeing, Indian technology was hardly backward as compared to the technology available at the time. Europeans complained of the width of the cloth produced, but this could be rectified easily. So also certain colours and dyes for which they sent their own craftsmen to



Murshidabad. But India was backward in silk reeling where European technology was slowly adopted despite much opposition.

India also remained backward in the sphere of glass technology. Although bangles and jars were made, English drinking glasses, and mirrors were always in demand, so also spectacles. None of them was manufactured in India. A great lacuna, however, was the absence of the use of telescopes (dur-bin) till the eighteenth century. This meant hostile ships could not be sighted on sea. It also made Jai Singh's observatories outdated because he did not use the telescope for observation. He did send a series of embassies to Portugal, but Portugal itself was out of touch with new developments in astronomy in England and Holland based on observation. Also, Jai Singh's observatories were based on the Ptolemaic view, repeated by Ulugh Beg, of the world as the centre of the universe, rather on Brahmagupta's and Copernican view of the sun being the centre.

It is not necessary to list all the European technologies which though familiar were not adopted in India. However, the views of some earlier western scholars that this was due to the other worldly or fatalist view of life in India which made them unconcerned with progress, or the caste system which bound people in one station in life are no longer accepted. It has been argued that Indian response to western science was "scrupulously selective in its nature, depending on convenience, utility, exigencies, or other material or pragmatic considerations."

It has also been argued that abundance of skilled labour combined with low subsistence costs inhibited improvement in tools. As Irfan Habib argues, "A finer product could be attained more cheaply by a larger application of labour and manual skill than by adopting a mechanical contrivance?" Of course, he excludes cases where "use of more labour or skill the product could not be attained, or invention and improvement would be cheaper than enormous use of muscle power".

Refusal to accept printing presses, and draw loom for weaving patterns have been given as examples of this. Although block printing on textiles had been developed in India, and was used in China for printing on paper, the same did not take place in India. Whether it was due to the fact that scribes could work still more cheaply - a fact which suggests a far wider diffusion of literacy than accepted, or was due to other factors, it certainly limited the dissemination of knowledge.

It has been argued further that "extreme specialisation" was promoted by the caste system, with the father training his son in the same profession since he had no option to move to another station. However, this argument has limited validity. In all pre-modern societies, including Europe, artisanal skills were passed on from father to son. Also, whenever a new profession, such as paper-making, making fire-works, dyeing, printing, painting of cloth arose, caste was no barrier for enlisting new entrants. Regarding resistance to labour saving devices, this again was not peculiar to India, as the Luddite movement in Britain during the 18th century shows.

The question has been asked: could the merchantile class provide the capital needed for new technology since the artisan was too poor to do so himself? And could the ruling class provide the necessary scientific input?

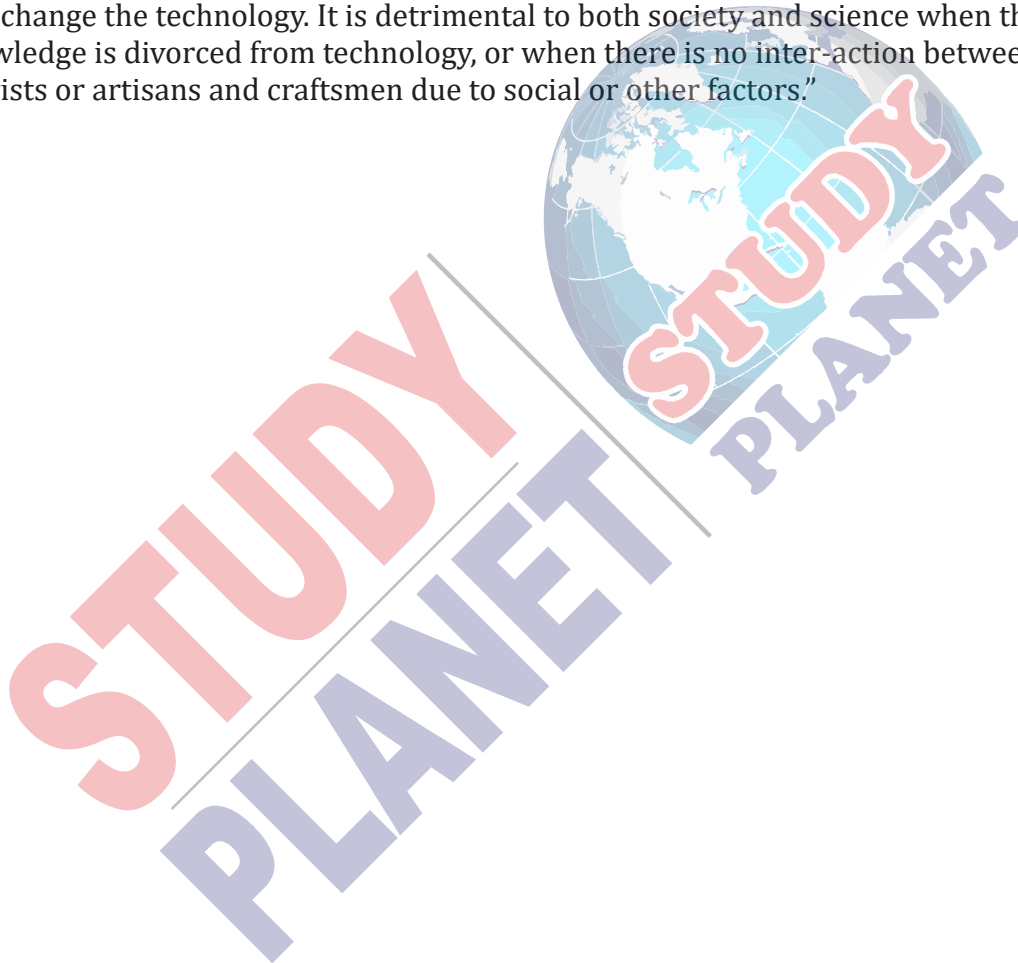
Regarding the merchants, although they did bring the artisan under their control through the putting out or dadni system, they showed no sign in investing in new technology, or changing the existing system of production. Thus, the tools remained under the ownership of the artisans. The merchants' lack of interest in new tools is shown by the fact that although the artisans were able to build the European type of ships, they continued to use the old, primitive tools. Thus, we do not hear of use of big saws or pulleys.

Regarding the ruling classes, they had the utmost contempt for those who worked with their hands. Akbar's experiment of working in the karkhanas with his own hands was not continued by any of his successors. Hence, an attempt of using science to improve productivity or the product was beyond their ken. Finally, it must be conceded that the world view of the Mughal and the Hindu ruling classes was the



product of a long tradition which was shaped by religion. The task of breaking this tradition entailed a long and difficult struggle. Jai Singh wrote: in this Introduction to the Zich of Ulugh Beg, "Religion disperses like mist, kingdoms are destroyed, but the work of the scientist remains forever." But Jai Singh was an exception in his time. Abul Fazl lamented: "the blowing of the heavy wind of taqlid (tradition) and the dimming of the land of wisdom. Of old the door of "how" and "why" has been closed and questioning and enquiry have been deemed fruitless and tantamount to paganism".

Thus, insularity, arrogance towards outside knowledge, and reluctance to undertake rational enquiry about which al Biruni had lamented with reference to the brahmans had become the hall-mark of the Mughal ruling classes. The Mughal ruling class which enjoyed the highest standard of living at the time, did not feel threatened by the European superiority at sea, and found no incentive to go out and learn their science and technology. Science and technology could hardly thrive and prosper in such an atmosphere. Thus, as a modern scholar, A. Rahman, says: "Major innovations in technology can only take place when the technical knowledge is well-developed, in a theoretical framework, and is applied to improve or change the technology. It is detrimental to both society and science when the available scientific knowledge is divorced from technology, or when there is no inter-action between scientists and technologists or artisans and craftsmen due to social or other factors."



# UNIT-XXIX

## CHRONOLOGY AND GLOSSARY

### CHRONOLOGY

712	First invasion of Sindh by Mohammed-bin-Qasim (Arabs)
836	Accession of King Bhoja of Kannauj
985	Accession of Rajaraja, the Chola ruler
998	Accession of Sultan Mahmud Ghazni
1001	First invasion of India by Mahmud Ghazni who defeated Jaipal, the ruler of Punjab
1025	Destruction of Somnath Temple by Mahmud Ghazni
1191	First battle of Tarain/ Taraori between Prithviraj Chauhan and Sultan Mohammad Ghori
1192	Second battle of Tarain
1206	Succession of Qutubuddin Aibak
1210	Death of Qutubuddin Aibak
1221	Mongol invasion -Chengiz Khan invaded India
1236	Succession of Razia Sultana to the sovereignty of Delhi
1240	Death of Razia Sultana
1296	Accession of Alauddin Khilji
1316	Death of Alauddin Khilji
1325	Accession of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq
1327	Capital was transferred from Delhi to Devagiri (Daulatabad) by Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq
1336	Foundation of Vijaynagar empire in the South
1351	Accession of Firoz Shah Tughlaq
1398	Timur's invasion of India
1469	Birth of Guru Nanak
1494	Accession of Babur in Farghana
1497	First expedition of Vasco da Gama to India
1526	First Battle of Panipat Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodhi Foundation of Mughal dynasty by Babur
1527	Battle of Khanwa-Babur defeated Rana Sanga
1530	Death of Babur Accession of Humayun
1539	Battle of Chausa Sher Shah Suri defeated Humayun Sher Shah Suri became Emperor of India
1555	Humayun recaptured the throne of Delhi

1556	Second Battle of Panipat
1556	Battle of Talikota
1576	Battle of Haldighati Rana Pratap was defeated by Akbar
1582	Din-i-Ilahi founded by Akbar
1600	English East India Company established
1605	Death of Akbar and accession of Jahangir
1606	Execution of Guru Arjun Dev Guru Arjun Dev was the 5 <sup>th</sup> Guru of Sikhs
1615	Sir Thomas Roe visits Jahangir
1627	Birth of Shivaji Death of Jahangir
1628	Shahjahan becomes Emperor of India
1631	Death of Mumtaz
1634	The English permitted to trade in Bengal
1659	Accession of Aurangzeb, Shahjahan imprisoned
1665	Shivaji imprisoned by Aurangzeb
1666	Death of Shahjahan
1675	Execution of Guru Teg Bahadur Guru Teg Bahadur was the 9 <sup>th</sup> Guru of Sikhs
1680	Death of Shivaji
1707	Death of Aurangzeb
1708	Death of Guru Gobind Singh Guru Gobind Singh was 10 <sup>th</sup> Guru of Sikhs
1739	Nadir Shah invades India
1757	Battle of Plassey Establishment of British political rule in India
1761	Third battle of Panipat

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Abwab** miscellaneous cesses, imposts and charges levied by zamindars and public officials

**Adl** justice

**Afaqis** foreigners (in the Deccan)

**Ahadi** gentleman trooper

**Ahl-i-qalam** a scribe

**Amil, amalguzar** revenue collector

**Amu Darya** The River Oxus

**Arraba** a wagon, a cart

**Ashraf** a person of noble birth, a gentleman

**Ataliq** guardian

**Banduqchi** musketeer

**Bania, Baniya** merchant; in some areas also refers to money-changer or banker; a caste traditionally engaged in the above activities

**Banjar** waste or fallow-land, fit for cultivation

**Banjara** grain and cattle merchant; name of an itinerant tribe  
**Baqqal** trader, grain-dealer  
**Barawardi** a recruit on ad-hoc pay  
**Bargi, bargir** an auxiliary soldier, a plunderer  
**Batai** division of the crop between the cultivator and the landlord or the government; payments may be in kind or cash  
**Bayutat** House-hold expenses, especially royal karkhanas  
**Beg** noble  
**Bidat** innovations in matters of religion, heresy  
**Cartaz** a permit given by the Portuguese to traders.  
**Chachar** land out of cultivation for 3-4 years  
**Cha'uth or chauthai** one-fourth of the land-revenue, Originally a zamindari charge in Gujarat, demanded by Shivaji as war expense.  
**Chetti, Chettiar** merchant caste of South India  
**Dadni** giving of advances (dadan) to artisans by merchants  
**Dagh System** of branding of horses and animals  
**Dahsala Revenue** settlement based on assessment of ten (dah) years revenue  
**Dalai, Dallal** Broker  
**Dam** A copper coin, considered  $1/40^*$  of a silver rupee for official purposes  
**Darogha** a minor officer in charge of a local office  
**Dar-ul-harb** Land not owing allegiance to Muslim rule, enemy land  
**Dastur rule**, assessment circle  
**Dastur-al-amal** Rule book  
**Dhimmi** A non-Muslim client or subject  
**Diwan** chief financial minister, a department, a book of verses  
**Doab** land between the Jumna and the Ganges  
**Du-aspa sih-aspa** A technical term meaning twice the number of sawars entertained otherwise  
**Farman** a royal order  
**Farr-i-izadi** Divine Light communicated to ideal rulers  
**Gajnal** A swivel gun born by an elephant (gaj)  
**Garhi** A hill fort, mud fort made of thick clay  
**Ghalla-bakshi** One mode of batai (q.v.)  
**Gharib** Foreigners (in the Deccan)  
**Ghazi** A hero, a soldier fighting against infidels  
**Ghusal-Khana** Private audience hall near the bathroom  
**Gumashta** agent or representative  
**Gunj; ganj** Mart  
**Habshi Abyssinian**, East African  
**Hadis** acts or words of the Arabian prophet  
**Hakim** A governor, a commander  
**Hakim** A physician, a sage  
**Hammam** Room for Bath of hot and cold water  
**Haram** Forbidden  
**Harmandir** The Sikh golden Temple at Amritsar.  
**Hasil** Actual realization (of land revenue)  
**Hun** A gold coin  
**Hundi** bill of exchange  
**Ijara** revenue-farming  
**Ijaradar** farmer of any item of public revenue, mainly land  
**Imam** supreme commander, leader; also the person leading the congregation Muslim prayers  
**Inam** gift; benefaction; land held free of revenue or at low rates of revenue



**Jagir** income from a piece of land assigned to officers by the ruler

**Jagirdar** holder of a jagir

**Jama** total sum; total land revenue levied from an estate or division of country

**Jamabandi** settlement of the amount of revenue assessed upon an estate, village or district.

**Jama-dami** Assessed income in terms of dams

**Jama-i-kamil** Maximum assessment

**Jamiat** A military following

**Jarib** A measurement, land measurement or survey

**Jharoka** darshan Showing of the Emperor to the Public from the Palace

**Jihad** holy war

**Jihat** Extra cesses

**Jizya** has two meanings: (a) in the literature of the Delhi Sultanat, any tax which is not kharaj or land tax; (b) in the shari'at, a personal and yearly tax on non-Muslims

**Junglah** Horses of mixed breed

**Kafir** non-Muslim (literally, one who is nongrateful to God)

**Kankut** Estimation of land revenue

**Karinda** Agent

**Karkhanas** royal factories or enterprises for producing or collecting commodities required by the state

**Karori** A revenue official

**Khalifa** Caliph, Commander of the Faithful, or successor of a sufi

**Khalisa** land land held and managed directly by the state

**Khalsa** The Sikh order set up by Guru Govind

**Khanazad** One born in the house, old (Turkish) employees

**Khanqahs** a house of mystics but more commodious than the jama'at khana

**Kharif** winter crop

**Khil'at** robe of honour

**Khilafat** Caliphate; commander of the faithful

**Khiraj**, kharaj tax; especially land revenue

**Khud-kasht** Owner of land who cultivates with his own ploughs and bullock and some hired labour, resident cultivator

**Kufr** Disbelief

**Kulkarni** village accountant

**Kunbi** caste of cultivators in Maharashtra

**Liwan** Ante chamber

**Madad- i-ma'ash** assignment of revenue by the government for the support of learned or religious persons, or benevolent institutions.

**Madrassa** an educational institution

**Mahajan** merchant, banker

**Mahal** a group of lands regarded as a unit for land revenue purposes

**Mahawara-un-Nahart** Transoxiana

**Mahzar** A declaration signed by ulama

**Malik** Owner

**Malikana** special allowance assigned to zamindar or landowner

**Malikut-Tujjar** literally, chief of merchants; a title given to one of the highest officer of the state

**Mansab** military rank conferred by the Mughal Government

**Mansabdar** holder of a mansab

**Mapillah** Muslim community in Kerala

**Math** Monastery

**Mauza** revenue term for a village

**Mihrab** High alter from which the priest prays.

**Miras** hereditary right

**Mirasdar** holder of miras lands

**Mokasa** Grant of land for military service, rent-free land.

**Muhtasib** an officer appointed to maintain regulations in a municipality

**Mujannas** Mixed breed of Arabi and Iraqi horses.

**Mujtahid** One entitled to interpret holy laws

**Mulhid** A heretic, one who renounces the faith.

**Mullahs** persons claiming to be religious leaders of the Musalmans

**Muqaddam** village headman; literally the first or senior man

**Murid** Disciple

**Mustaufi** An auditor of accounts specially of those collecting land revenue.

**Mutasaddi** A writer, a clerk

**Nabud** Remission of land revenue on account of natural disasters.

**Nabuwat** Prophethood

**Naib** deputy, assistant, agent, representative

**Na-Khuda** Commander or captain of a ship

**Narnal** Swivel gun carried by men

**Nasaq** A mode of assessment

**Naukar, Nokar** Servant, term used by Timurid rulers for their nobles

**Nawab** viceroy, governor; title of rank

**Nazrana** gift, usually from inferior to superior; forced contribution

**Nilgai** A kind of deer

**Pahar** One-eighth of a day i.e. three hours

**Pahi** A non-resident cultivator, temporary cultivator

**Paibaqi** Land reserved for allotment in jagir

**Paibos** kissing the feet, a ceremony generally reserved for God

**Patar** mistress, kept woman, common law wife.

**Patel** village headman

**Patta** document given by collector of revenue to the revenue payer stating terms on which the land is held and the amount payable

**Patwari** village accountant

**Peshkar** Agent, manager of finances

**Peshkash** Tribute from subordinate rulers

**Polaj** Land constantly in cultivation

**Qasba** small town

**Rabi** the winter crop

**Rahdari** Protection money paid by travelers

**Rai** a Hindu chief, usually one having his own territory and army

**Raiyat** Subjects, payers of land-revenue

**Raiyati** Areas without a zamindar, or where cultivation of land-revenue was easy, productive.

**Ray** A schedule

**Rekh** Assessed land revenue in Rajasthan

**Riyayati** Sections assessed at a concessional rate

**Sair**, sayar taxes other than land revenue; transit duties

**Sama** music, some time accompanied by dance for the mystics

**Saranjam** Land allotted in lieu of military service

**Sardeshmukhi** One-tenth of the assessed income

**Sarrafs** money-changers, bankers

**Sayurghal** Rent-free land

**Shahbandar** Official in charge of a port

**Shariat** Muslim religious law

**Shroff** banker and moneylender; moneychanger

**Sijdah** Prostration, theoretically before God

**Sufis** Mystics

**Tappa** small estate or a group of villages

**Taqavi** Advance of money for sowing or extending cultivation.

**Taqlid** Religious show without real piety, hypocrisy

**Tasawwuf** Mysticism

**Tauhid** unity of God

**Upri** temporary occupant; tenant-at-will

**Usar** barren land

**Vatan**, watan hereditary lands

**Wahdat-al-Wajud** Unity of God and the beings

**Wajh** money, salary

**Wajhdar** a salaried officer

**Wali** governor, guardian

**Wali** Successor

**Wali-ahad** heir-presumptive

**Wazir-i-mutlaq** wazir with full powers, who could administer without interference by the king

**Yassa** Regulations or code book of Chingiz

**Zabtjzabti** System of assessment based on measurement

**Zawabit** Secular laws

**Zimmi, dhintmi** protected non-Muslim

**Zor-talab** Areas of turbulence often held by powerful zamindars.

