

# SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN INDIAN HISTORY (1200 CE-1800 CE)

Postgraduate Programme in History

M21HS07DC



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU  
OPEN UNIVERSITY

**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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**Society and Culture in Indian  
History (1200 CE - 1800 CE)**  
Course Code: M21HS07DC  
Semester - II

**Discipline Core Course  
Postgraduate Programme in History  
Self Learning Material**



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MA History

Semester - II



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Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavours.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in History is expected to expose the learners to the intricacies of historian's craft through modules on historiography and historical methods. The learners will be trained on the skills for understanding historical forces enabling them to move further in to the complexities of historical narration in order to revisit history with the right perspective. The modules derived multi-disciplinary flavour due to their cross border penetration. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that you feel relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,  
Dr. P. M. Mubarak Pasha

01.01.2024

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# Medieval Indian Polity

**BLOCK-01**



## Delhi Sultanate

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ examine the polity of Delhi Sultanate under various dynasties
- ◆ analyse the nature of State in Delhi Sultanate
- ◆ discuss the administrative structure of Delhi Sultanate
- ◆ acquaint with the Vijayanagara state polity
- ◆ explore the State structure in Vijayanagara Empire

### Background

Delhi, initially the capital of Tomara Rajputs until they were conquered in the middle of the twelfth century by the Chauhans (also known as Chahamanas) of Ajmer. Delhi rose to prominence as a commercial center during the Tomaras and Chauhans. The transformation of Delhi into a capital, controlling vast areas of the subcontinent began with the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in the thirteenth century, after the defeat of the Tomara Rajputs. The Sultans of Delhi ruled for 320 years and made achievements in various fields. The history of the Sultanate can be tracked from Al-Biruni's geographical tract (1048) to the travels of Marco Polo (1271-1295) and Ibn Battuta (1325-1354). The inland routes of mobility in southern Eurasia became a continuous terrain of dynastic competition that ran from Qom in Persia, to Samarkand in Central Asia, to Delhi, Surat and Dhaka in India. Simultaneously, the Indian Ocean became an integrated commercial system. This unit will discuss the establishment of Delhi Sultanate, its expansion and administration. We also examine the Vijayanagara polity and administration.

### Keywords

*Chahalgani, Ulema, Sharia, Sultan, Nobility, Feudal Structure, Segmentary, Nayankara System*



# Discussion

## 1.1.1 The Delhi Sultanate

- ◆ *Establishment of Delhi Sultanate*
- ◆ *Five Dynasties*

The rulers who ruled a considerable portion of North India between 1200 CE and 1526 CE were known as Sultans, and the period during which they ruled was known as the Delhi Sultanate. These rulers were Turkish and Afghan in descent. After defeating the Indian ruling dynasties, primarily Rajputs in northern India, they established their rule in India. Prithvi Raj Chauhan (finally defeated in 1192 Second battle of Tarain) was the main ruler who was deposed by Muhammad Ghori from Delhi. These Sultans ruled for more than 300 years (from around 1200 CE to 1526 CE). The last of the Delhi Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by the Mughals under the leadership of Babur in 1526 CE, who established the Mughal Empire in India. During this period of around three hundred years, five different dynasties ruled Delhi. These were the Mamluks (Slave dynasty) (1206 CE-1290 CE), the Khaljis (1290 CE-1320 CE), the Tughlaqs (1320 CE-1412 CE), the Sayyids (1412 CE-1451 CE) and the Lodis (1451 CE-1526 CE). All these dynasties are collectively referred to as the Delhi Sultanate.

## 1.1.2 Nature of State in Delhi Sultanate

The nature of 'state' in Delhi Sultanate has been a subject of debate among historians. Despite appearing to complement each other, politics and religion functioned in separate areas.

### Muslim Political Ideas

- ◆ *Rules of law*

Muslims believe that Islamic society and government should be organised based on divine injunctions of the *Quran* and *hadis*, which are supplemented by the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The *ulema* (Muslim theologians) provide various rules based on the *Quran* and *hadis*, known as *Sharia* (Islamic Law). *Zawabit* (rules and regulations framed by Sultans) were also used for efficient administration.

- ◆ *Caliph-Sultan relationship*

The Caliph-Sultan relationship in Islamic times was characterised by the Sultans pretending to be the legal sovereign while themselves being the caliph's representatives. They included the Caliph's name in their *Khutba* (prayers) and *Sikka* (coins), adopting titles indicative of their subordination. However, only Qutub-ud-din Mubarak Khalji had the audacity to call himself the Caliph. Only three Sultans sought a *mansur* or letter of investiture



from the Caliph: Iltutmish, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and Firoz. Muslims generally regarded it as incumbent on the Sultan to show respect to the Caliph, and opposition to the Sultan, whom the Caliph had recognized as his deputy, was regarded as contrary to the Law.

◆ *Law of succession*

The Law of Succession required a male adult, no physical disability, free Muslim, faith in Islam, and election by the people. However, in practice, several violations of these criteria were made, such as Raziya being raised to the throne despite her womanhood, Qutubuddin Aibak's authority being recognised even before his manumission, Kaiqubad remaining the Sultan as a paralytic, Nasiruddin Khusrau having no special reverence for Islam, and Alauddin Khalji admitting his ignorance of the *sharia*.

### 1.1.2.1 Theory of Kingship

◆ *The doctrine of farr*

The doctrine of *farr*, or supernatural effulgence, was first introduced in the *Shah Namah* by Firdausi, symbolising divine favour to rulers. Delhi Sultans like Balban and Amir Khusrau recognised this doctrine. Sultans' authority was limited, and they could not disregard the advice of *ulema* or theologians. The nobility's power also limited their jurisdiction. Sultans were not powerful enough to rule without ignoring Hindu sentiments and had little opportunity to interfere with local governance. The Sultanate period had various administrative offices and a council of Ministers.

### The Sultan

◆ *Hold absolute power*

The Sultan was the administrative head of the Delhi Sultanate, ruling the entire realm and holding absolute power. They were the supreme commander of the army and led armies to conquer other areas. This applies to most sultans, except for Sultan Ruknuddin Firuz, Sultan Muizzuddin Bahram, Sultan Alauddin Masud, and Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud. However, even in infrequent instances, the Sultan remained the ceremonial head of the entire political establishment of the empire, with nobles at the court being more powerful.

◆ *Kept nobility and ulema under control*

The Sultan was the central figure in the administrative system, head of civil administration and Supreme Commander of the army. He had absolute power, made appointments and promotions, and could remove anyone from service. The Sultan also headed the judiciary and conferred titles and honours. However, in practice, different Sultans had varying powers. The position was always under pressure from powerful nobility and *ulema* groups. Sultans

of Delhi, particularly powerful Sultans, adopted strategies to keep these groups under control. Balban, for example, kept the nobles under his control. The Sultan's personality significantly influenced the administrative structure of the Sultanate.

◆ *Control of central government*

The nature of politics at the time necessitated the introduction of centrally monitored control and regulation apparatuses. The integration of new areas into the political empire was not guaranteed due to insufficient central control. The "parasitic" nature of governing classes and other groups required resources from other parts of the empire to maintain the political structure. Bureaucratization was highest in core areas, with a gradation of control as one moved away from the core. This comprised the territory of the state, all tied in their recognition of the sultan's supremacy in their domains.

### 1.1.2.2 Nobility

◆ *Emergence of nobility*

The nobility were the most significant functionaries of the state and enjoyed high social status. Initially, they were the commanders of the army, and later their descendants became the more powerful. The nobility was not homogeneous, with different groups within it, often causing clashes and rivalries. The position and power of the nobility varied, with nobles based in Delhi becoming powerful and sometimes even playing a role in Sultan's selection. The nobility was not a uniform group. Within the nobility, there were various groups, and there were frequent clashes and rivalries between them.

◆ *Nobles gained strength*

Qutbuddin ascended the throne without conflict, as the Muizzi (Muizzuddin Ghori) nobles accepted him as their superior and offered loyalty. Iltutmish's accession to Delhi marked a significant milestone in the growth of Turkish nobility in India, demonstrating the power of nobles to select leaders through armed strength. The principles of sovereignty and leadership were relegated to the background, and nobles in Delhi became the hub of political activity of Turkish rule. Iltutmish established a sovereign Turkish state in India, with efficient administrators and merit-driven enslaved people. The clash between Turkish and Tajik nobles began during Iltutmish's time and became intense after his death. The group of *chahalgani* (Group of Forty) created by Iltutmish, also emerged powerfully.

Balban, the first Sultan to bring the nobility under his control, maintained distance from the nobility and enforced



◆ *Crush the power of nobility*

a strict code of conduct, focusing on 'high blood' as criteria for occupying high positions and offices. The hereditary principle resurfaced with the accession of Ruknuddin Firoz, Raziya, and Bahram Shah, intensifying the tussle between Turkish and Tajik nobles. After Iltutmish's death, Balban (1269) tried to restore the crown's supremacy by crushing the power of the Turkish nobility. Balban's accession demonstrated that heredity was no longer the basis of sovereignty and kingship, and ability and force were also important factors in the succession to the throne. Both Qutbuddin and Iltutmish considered the nobles to be on par with themselves.

◆ *Change in the character of nobility*

During the rule of Khaljis and Tughlaqs, the doors of nobility were opened to people from every sphere of life, making it more accessible to people of all backgrounds. It was no longer just for Turks. Previously, according to Muhammed Habib, during the period of slave kings, membership in higher bureaucracy was dangerous for Indian Muslims and impossible for Hindus. However, the Khalji revolution brought about a change, with Sultan Alauddin sending an army of thirty thousand horsemen under a Hindu officer, Malik Naik, to fight against Mongols, Alibeg, Tartaq, and Targhi. The position of low-born men in Mohammad bin Tughlaq's government was the culmination of a century and a half of process. Barani criticises Tughlaq for assigning the *Diwan-i-Wizarat* to Pera Mali, the lowest of the low-born and mean-born men of the Hind and Sind, and placing him over the heads of *maliks*, *amirs*, *walis*, and governors.

◆ *Nobility open to all sections of people*

With the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, the nobility was open to people of diverse backgrounds, including low-caste people, both Hindus and Muslims, who could rise to high positions under Muhammad bin Tughlaq. During the Lodi period, the Afghan concept of equality became important, with the Sultan considered "first among equals," allowing nobles equal status with the Sultan. However, some Lodi Sultans, like Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi, tried to bring the nobles under their control, but the nobles resisted, causing trouble for both Sultans.

### 1.1.2.3 *Ulema*

The *Ulema*, a religious, intellectual group of Muslims, managed religious matters, interpreted religious regulations for the Sultan, and worked as *Qazis*. They were influential and commanded respect from the Sultan and nobility. They influenced the Muslim masses and urged the sultan to run the Sultanate according to Islamic religious laws. They

◆ *Ulema's role*

commanded respect from the Muslim masses and had influence among the Muslim masses. The *ulema*, a group of preachers and guardians of the Islamic religion, were committed to upholding the Islamic religious order and acting as socio-moral censors for the Muslim community. They rose as a powerful political faction and held high judicial positions, swaying the king and nobility in their favour.

◆ *Shari'at*

Kings embraced a policy of compromise and moderation, paying lip homage to *Shari'at* while conceding sinfulness if its provisions could not be enforced. They kept state-controlled *mullahs* in check and developed their own laws in the administration field. If traditional customs conflicted with *Shari'at*, they were given the appellation of *Urf*, which allowed them to supersede them. State laws known as *Zawabit* developed under the monarchy's protection, and if they violated *Shari'at*, the principle of necessity or *istihsan* (public good) might be invoked in their favour. The *Shari'at's* was shattered since it imparted no means of self-development.

◆ *Religious benchmark of the State*

The *ulema* served as the religious benchmark of the political empire, acting as judges and principles of educational institutions like the Nasiriyya Madrasa in Delhi. Their primary aim was to spread the religious 'Word' and uphold the Islamic religio-moral order. This was often contentious as the Sultan's ultimate goal was the success of the political life of the Sultanate, not the glorification of Islam. Due to the majority of the population being non-Muslim, the sultan was more interested in acting politically tactfully rather than solely upholding the banner of religion.

◆ *Ulema-Sultan conflict*

The interests of the *ulema* and the Sultan often clashed, with the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq being particularly significant. Tughlaq appointed meritorious non-Muslims to royal service, which scholars like Ziauddin Barani condemned. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir's *Adabu'l Harb Was'h Shujaa't* emphasises the noble birth of state officials. However, Tughlaq's policies showed that religious ideals were not always the Sultan's priority, and the interests of the Sultan, *ulema*, and learned rarely coincided.

### 1.1.3 Administration under Delhi Sultanate

#### 1.1.3.1 Central Administration

The *Diwan-i-Wizarat*, headed by the *wazir*, was a crucial position in the royal court, overseeing all departments



◆ *Important departments*

and serving as the chief advisor to the Sultan. The *wazir's* primary responsibilities were to supervise the state financial organisation, advise the Sultan and occasionally led military expedition at the Sultan's order. The *wizarat*, or office of *wazir*, also monitored land revenue collections, income and expenditure, and charitable donations. The position of the Sultan was heavily dependent on the *wazir's* wisdom, sincerity, and loyalty. Other departments under the *wizarat* included *Mustaufii-Mumalik* (Auditor General) and *Mushrif-i-Mumalik* (Accountant General). Later, other offices like *Diwan-i-Waqoof*, *Diwan-i-Mustakharaj* and *Diwan-i-Amir Kohi* were brought under the *wizarat's* supervision.

### ***Diwan-i-Arz***

◆ *Military organisation*

The department, led by *Ariz-i-Mamalik*, was responsible for the military organisation of the empire, including maintaining the royal contingent, recruiting soldiers, ensuring discipline, inspecting troops, and branding horses with royal insignia. During war, the *Ariz* arranged military provisions, transportation, and administered the army, providing constant supplies and custodian of war booty. The contingent stationed in Delhi was called *hasham-i-qalb*, while provincial contingents were called *hasham-i-atraf*.

### ***Diwan-i-Insha***

◆ *Royal correspondence*

The department responsible for state correspondence, headed by *Dabir-i-Khas*, drafted royal orders and received reports from officers. It was the formal communication channel between the center and other empire regions. The *Barid-i-Mumalik* led state news gathering and intelligence, while local barids sent regular news to the central office.

### ***Diwan-i-Rasalat***

◆ *Department of Justice*

The Department of Justice, led by *Sadr-us-Sadur*, the highest religious officer, was responsible for ecclesiastical affairs, appointing judges, and approving charitable grants. The Sultan was the highest court of appeal in civil and criminal matters. The *Muhtasibs* (Public Censors) assisted the judicial department, ensuring no public infringement of Islamic tenets and supervising public morals and conduct.

The Sultanate had several smaller departments, including *Wakil-i-dar*, *Amir-i-Hajib*, *Sar-i-Jandar*, *Amir-i-Akhur*, *Shalinah-i-fil*, *Amir-i-Majlis*, *Diwan-i-Isthiaq*, *Diwan-i-Khairat*, *Diwan-i-Kohi*, *Diwan-i-Insha* and Royal workshops (Karkhanas). *Wakil-i-dar* managed the royal household and personal

◆ *Minor departments*

services. *Amir-i-Hajih* acted as an intermediary between the Sultan and subordinate officials. *Sar-i-Jandar* handled royal bodyguards. *Amir-i-Akhur* and *Shalinali-i-fil* were in charge of horses and elephants respectively. Karkhanas played a crucial role in meeting the needs of the royal household.

### 1.1.3.2 Provincial Administration

◆ *Local officials*

The administration of areas outside the core political area depended on the degree of political control exercised. The Sultanate's territorial expansion and consolidation continued throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, with some newly conquered areas brought directly under the Sultanate's control, while others remained semi-autonomous. Control mechanisms varied, with some officials appointed by the Centre as a symbol of imperial presence, while everyday administration remained in local hands. The center's main interest was primarily economic, revenue collection. Governors were responsible for the overall administration, ensuring revenue collection, maintaining law and order, and controlling rebellious elements. Local officials were often transferred and not familiar with the areas, relying on local officials for their duties.

◆ *Important officials*

The Sultan faced challenges when governors became powerful with local rulers' help and rebelled against them. In the 14th century, provinces were divided into *Shiqs* for administrative convenience, later transformed into *Sarkar* during the Afghan period. *Faujdar* and *Shiqdar* were officers at the provincial level, with their duties often overlapping. The *Shiqdar* assisted the governor in maintaining law and order, provided military assistance, and supervised administrative units. Other important officers included *Barids*, intelligence officers, and *Salib-i-Diwan*.

### 1.1.3.3 Local Administration

◆ *Village administration*

The village was the smallest unit of administration, functioning similarly to pre-Turkish times. The main village functionaries were *Khut*, *Muqaddam*, and *Patwari*, working closely with *muqti* for revenue collection and maintaining law and order. Parganas formed from villages, with *Chaudhary*, *Amil*, and *Karkun* as important officials. Village and *Pargana* were independent administration units, with interrelated areas. In some cases, local rulers were recognized as subordinates of the Sultan.



### 1.1.4 Vijayanagara Polity

#### ◆ Formation of Vijayanagara state

The Vijayanagara state was founded in the middle of the 14th century by two of the five brothers named Bukka and Harihara. The kingdom's founding figures are also known as the Sangamas, after their father's name. The kingdom was named for its capital, Vijayanagara, which was located on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra. The state emerged as a Hindu resistance against the "Muhammadan" invasion, a concept introduced by Robert Sewell, who wrote the first standard work on the history of the Vijayanagara Empire.

#### ◆ Expansion of empire

The Sangamas, originally a small kingdom in Gutty, believed they could build a vast empire with the blessings of saint Vidyaranya. However, recent historians suggest Vidyaranya only emerged as an important figure several decades after the founding of empire. Cultural leaders played a crucial role in mobilising popular support for the rulers. The Sangamas engaged in numerous fights against both Muslim and Hindu rulers, defeating Rajanarayana Sambuvaraya in 1357 and Sultan of Madurai in 1370. By 1377, Vijayanagara was the largest regional kingdom in south India. The Sangamas continued to expand their empire, fighting against the Kondavidu Reddies, Velamas, and Gajapati kings, allowing them to mobilise resources for army maintenance and expansion.

#### ◆ Dynasties ruled Vijayanagara

Four distinct dynasties ruled the Vijayanagara kingdom. The Vijayanagara kingdom was founded by the Sangamas, also known as the Yadavas. After the murder of Sangama king Virupaksha II in 1485, the kingdom experienced a short period of confusion before being founded by Saluva Narasimha. The Tuluva line assumed power in 1505, marking the heyday of the Vijayanagara kingdom. The last dynasty of the Aravidu line came to power in 1542, but the empire began to decline. The central power was weakened under the Aravidus, and by the late 17th century, the kingdom was fragmented due to conflict with neighbouring powers and state crises due to rising military aspirations.

#### 1.1.4.1 Vijayanagara State Structure

Historians disagree on how to describe the Vijayanagara state, whether it was feudal or segmentary. Scholars suggest that the Vijayanagara state's character is influenced by the **feudal structure**, with the practice of giving new land grants to Brahmans leading to the rise of feudal segments. This increased Brahmans' autonomy, administrative powers, and

- ◆ Feudal structure
- ◆ Land relations

control over revenue resources. Additionally, the rulers' proposal to protect *Hindu dharma* prompted the emergence of new Brahman settlements. Historian T. V. Mahalingam characterised the Vijayanagara state as feudal, comparing it with European feudalism. He emphasised the differences between Western and Vijayanagara feudalism models. In the Vijayanagara polity, land was considered king-owned, and Nayakas, who held land, ruled over it with great autonomy. In return, Nayakas had two duties: remitting an annual financial contribution to the imperial exchequer, maintaining sufficient troops, and serving the king in wars.

- ◆ Nayankara system
- ◆ Responsibilities of Nayakas

The Nayakas, a group of landowners in the Vijayanagara Empire, often leased their lands to tenants on similar terms to European feudalism, which involved subinfeudation. This subinfeudation was a feature of European feudalism, where landholders paid homage to the lord and received land as a fief in return for services and promises of protection. This was not present in the Vijayanagara *Nayaka* system, which was an administrative policy where kings assigned territories to the Nayakas in exchange for military service and a fixed financial contribution. The *Nayankara* system, on the other hand, was an administrative policy where kings assigned heavy responsibilities to the Nayakas, who were not protected if they failed to perform their duties. In European feudalism, the society was chained together by land tenure, while the *Nayankara* system only linked a section of the population. Subinfeudation was not practised on a large scale in the Vijayanagara empire as in Europe.

- ◆ Segmentary state
- ◆ Political and ritual sovereignty

Burton Stein considers Vijayanagara to be a segmentary state. According to him, the center of the Vijayanagara state had absolute political sovereignty, but the nayakas and Brahman commanders had 'ritual sovereignty' (symbolic control). The relationship of these subordinate units - segments to the central authority was arranged pyramidally. The greater a segment's distance from the center, the greater its ability to shift loyalty from one power pyramid to another.

Nilakanta Sastri characterised the Vijayanagara state as the closest approach to a war state ever made by a Hindu Kingdom. European scholars have also described the Vijayanagara polity as military feudalism, but Burton Stein denies this, arguing that it lacks features of feudalism such as homage and vassalage. Stein also sees no tributary relationship. Stein described the system as segmentary, with kings enjoying ritual sovereignty in contradiction with actual



◆ *Various views regarding the nature of the State*

sovereignty. Herman Kulke and others challenged Stein's segmentary model, showing that kings in many parts of India enjoyed actual sovereignty over their territory. Noboru Karashima, after studying Tamil epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara empire, argued that the strength of state control over Nayakas made Vijayanagara feudal structure similar to the Tokugawa feudalism of Japan.

◆ *Centralised power*

Historians have noted the centralised nature of Vijayanagara compared to previous south Indian states. The power of Central government representatives increased in both villages and urban centers, with urban affairs controlled by local Governors appointed by the central administration, rather than assemblies attended by various castes.

#### **1.1.4.2 Administration**

◆ *The King*

The Vijayanagara Empire was a well-organized administration with a king who held absolute authority in executive, judicial, and legislative matters. The succession to the throne was hereditary, with occasional usurpation. The king's primary duty was to protect his subjects and maintain law and order in the state. They often intervened in provincial administration to end oppression by their chiefs. As ecclesiastical or religious heads, they aimed to maintain social solidarity, ensure peace, and maintain a balanced policy towards secular and religious institutions. The history of Vijayanagara demonstrates its efforts in addressing these issues.

◆ *Royal Council*

The Royal Council in Vijayanagara was a crucial check on the king's authority, advising him on state matters and policy. It was distinct from the Imperial Council, which was a large gathering of various elements, such as Nayakas, feudal vassals, scholars, poets, artists, merchants, and ambassadors from foreign kingdoms. The Council of Ministers, smaller in size but similar to Kautilya's *Mantriparishad*, played a more significant role in influencing government policy. It consisted of eight ministers, usually meeting in a hall called Venkatavilasamantapa, and maintained strict secrecy. The Prime Minister was the *Pradhani*, who presided over the meetings. Ministers were expected of qualifications, and Vijayanagara had a long line of able and efficient ministers. The hereditary principle was used in selecting ministers, with the son of a minister being considered a better candidate. The Council of Ministers' success depended on the king's personality, and it likely controlled the policy of the state under weak kings.

◆ *Administrative units*

The empire was divided into administrative units called Mandalams, Nadus, Sthalas, and Gramas. The governor of *Mandalam* is called *Mandaleswara* or *Nayak*. Local authorities had full powers in administration. Land revenue was fixed at one-sixth of the produce, while the government's expenditure included personal expenses, charities, and military expenditure. The Vijayanagara army was efficient, consisting of cavalry, infantry, artillery, and elephants. Top-grade officers, known as *Nayaks* or *Poligars*, were granted land in exchange for their services, and soldiers were paid in cash.

◆ *Ayagar*

The *Ayagar* system was a crucial aspect of village organisation within the Vijayanagara Empire. *Ayagars* were village servants or functionaries, consisting of families and headmen (*reddi* or *gauda*, *maniyam*), accountants (*karnam senabhova*) and watchmen (*talaiyari*). They were given a portion of a village plot, which was generally tax-free as no regular customary tax was imposed on their agricultural income. In exceptional cases, direct payments in kind were made for services performed by village functionaries.

◆ *Decline of Vijayanagara Empire*

Following Krishnadeva Raya's death in 1529, tensions within the empire began to rise, with rebellious *Nayakas* causing trouble for his successors. By 1542, control shifted to the Aravidu lineage, which remained in power until the end of the seventeenth century. Military ambitions of Vijayanagara rulers and Deccan Sultanates led to shifting alignments, eventually leading to an alliance between the Sultanates and Vijayanagara. The Golconda and Ahmadnagar sultans, who had suffered from Rama Raya's defeat, formed an alliance that destroyed Vijayanagar's power. By 1564, four Sultans, Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Bijapur had begun their march on Vijayanagar, leading to the Battle of Talikota in 1565 and the destruction of the city. Rama Raya was captured and killed, but his brother Tirumala escaped with the king and royal treasure.



## Summarised Overview

The Delhi Sultanate was a series of five distinct dynasties that ruled from Delhi from 1206 to 1526 CE. It was founded after the second battle of Tarain, where Muhammad Ghori defeated Rajput chiefs. After Ghori's death, Qutbuddin Aibak became sultan of Delhi and founded the Slave dynasty. The Sultanate was constantly changing, with five dynasties rising and falling: the Slave dynasty (1206-1290 CE), the Khalji dynasty (1290-1320 CE), the Tughlaq dynasty (1320 CE-1413 CE), the Sayyid dynasty (1414 AD-1451 CE), and the Lodi dynasty (1451 CE-1526 CE). The Khalji dynasty saw Alauddin Khalji elevate the Sultanate's power, while the Tughlaq dynasty saw Muhammad bin Tughlaq's reign disintegrate power and prestige. In 1526, the Mughals defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the last of the Delhi Sultans, at Panipat.

The Delhi Sultanate introduced a new system of administration at the top level, with the Sultan enjoying significant power over subjects, nobles, and officials. The core region was Delhi, with the authority of the Sultan being the most visible. In distant territories and provinces, the authority of the Sultan was limited depending on province-governing officers. Initially, nobles shared authority with the Sultan, but from the time of Balban, Khalji and Tughlaq rule, the Sultan became all powerful, with the *ulema* having a limited role in the administrative process. The Sultanate established a robust and stable administrative network for over three hundred years, despite fluctuating control levels.

The Vijayanagara state, was founded in the 14th century by the five brothers named Bukka, Harihara, Kampana, Mudappa, and Marappa. The Sangamas emerged as a Hindu resistance against the Muslim invasion. The Sangamas fought against Muslim and Hindu rulers, expanding their empire. The kingdom was ruled by four distinct dynasties, including the Saluva, Aravidu, and Tuluva lines, but faced decline and state crises. Historians differ in opinion about the nature of the Vijayanagara state- feudal or segmentary. The Vijayanagara Empire was a well-organized administration with a hereditary king who held absolute authority in executive, judicial, and legislative matters. The Royal Council, Council of Ministers, and *Nayankara* system were crucial in governing the empire. The empire was divided into administrative units and had a strong army. Local authorities had full powers, and the *Ayagar* system was a vital aspect of village organization. After Krishnadeva Raya's death, tensions within the empire grew, leading to the Aravidu lineage's control and military alliances. In the Battle of Talikotta in 1565 the combined force of Golconda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Bijapur Sultans destroyed Vijayanagara.



## Assignments

1. Analyse the nature of the State in Delhi Sultanate.
2. Discuss the debate regarding the nature of the State in the Vijayanagara Empire.
3. Briefly discuss the *Nayankara* system.
4. Examine the role of *ulema* in the administration of the Delhi Sultanate.
5. Write down the names of the important administrative officers under the Delhi Sultanate and their duties.

## Suggested Reading

1. Habib, Mohammad, *Studies in Medieval Indian Polity and Culture: The Delhi Sultanate and Its Time*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012.
2. Husain, Zakir, *Medieval India: Studies in Polity, Economy and Society Fourteenth-Nineteenth Centuries*, Primus Books, Delhi, 2019.
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2. \_\_\_\_\_, *History of Medieval India*, Orient Blackswan Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi, 2014.
3. Habib, Irfan, *Economic History of India, AD 1206-1526: The Period of the Delhi Sultanate and the Vijayanagara Empire*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2018.
4. Majumdar, R.C., et al., *The Delhi Sultanate: History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol.6, Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2006.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## The Mughal State

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ explore the varying viewpoints and interpretations of the nature of the Mughal State
- ◆ analyse the administrative structure of the Mughal Empire
- ◆ gain a comprehensive understanding of the Mughal-Rajput relations
- ◆ examine the structure of the Rajput state

### Background

In the previous Unit, we examined the nature and characteristics of the polity that existed under the Delhi Sultanate. The Mughal state, established by Babur in the early 16th century, was a significant landmark in the analysis of the state in medieval times. It lasted for over two centuries and had a lasting impact on the Indian subcontinent's polity. The Mughal empire's extraordinary longevity of the imperial structure and the control developed by its emperors to rule such a vast empire make understanding its dynamics crucial. Historical works have been used to study the Mughal state, from early British writings to recent scholarly debates on whether it was a highly centralised bureaucratic, patrimonial, or feudal state. This Unit will explain the basis of imperial political ideology and trace it back to Central Asian tradition. It will also introduce various interpretations of the nature of the Mughal state. The Mughal - Rajput political relation and the structure of the Rajput State also discussed in this unit.

### Keywords

Islamic State, Mongol, Feudal, Patrimonial Bureaucracy, *Khalisa*, *Padshah*, *Watan*, *Jagir*, *Bhaibant* System



## Discussion

The rise of the Mughal Empire registers an epochal change in medieval Indian history. Like ancient Indian imperialists, Mughals did more than conquer and dominate, they set up an imperial society that derived its strength from many sources and continued to expand its influence long after emperors were unable to compel submission. The greatest medieval empire spans the wide threshold of early modern times.

### 1.2.1 Establishment of Mughal Rule

#### ◆ *Timurids*

After the Mongol empire's decline in the 14th century, Timur established a large empire covering central Asia, West Asia, and parts of South Asia. The Mughals, descendants of Amir Timur, were an admixture of Islamic, Persian, and Turko Mongol practices. The Timurid polity combined attributes of Mongol Traditions, Turkish traditions, and *Shara* principles, transforming the Chagatai Khanate into a close-knit system. The divine proclamation aspect was given priority over Chingez Khan regulations, which prioritised divine proclamation over mundane laws. Some scholars argue that the Timurids adopted a bureaucratic system based on Persian traditions, but their principle of shared sovereignty could lead to partition and decentralisation of the empire.

#### ◆ *Chengez Khan*

The Mughal state was influenced by the Turko-Mongol theory of kingship, which combines Turkish, Mongol, and Islamic ideals. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, believed that rulers held a higher status than chiefs. Myths about Chingez Khan's lineage and divine aspects led to his family's kingship until the 16th century. Sovereignty was hereditary, confined to the Chingez house based on their exploits and achievements and not on the basis of mythical tradition. Timur, unable to achieve Chingez's status, remained with the modest title of 'Amir' or 'Beg', meaning lord or chief.

#### ◆ *Religious and political head*

The Chingez Khan of the Mongols was a political and warrior leader, unlike the Caliph of Islamic states, who were religious and political heads. The Chingez Khan was elected without religious overtones and was a pure and simple political sovereign. The Mongol polity divided the empire among princes on a tribal basis, with areas of power and authority being their autonomous domains. However, they owed symbolic allegiance to the Khan.

◆ *Ultimate authority of King*

The *Malfuzat-I-Timuri*, written by the Timur in Mongol, is a crucial source for understanding Timur's ideals of sovereignty. It combines Mongol and Islamic ideals, emphasising that the temporal empire's positions represented the empire of God. Timur believed that the representative of God on earth could only be one, and no one should influence the king. He respected nobles and officials, but the ultimate solution was the king's resolve, and officials' advice was not binding. Timur, influenced by Islamic ideals, believed kingship could be more than just political and military. He was credited as the champion and reformer of Islam, and his name is mentioned alongside Ummayyid and Abbasid khalifas. Timur adopted territorial partition of the empire among princes, a practice continued by his successors.

◆ *Challenge to Khan*

Abu Said Mirza, the grandfather of Babur, challenged the Great Mongol Khan's suzerainty in Timur's territory. He adopted the titles 'Sultan' and 'Mirza', challenging the Khan's authority. Women were not allowed to become sovereign, but could influence state functioning during the minority of princes as regents. Babur and Akbar were both minors when sovereign status was bestowed. Nobility and religious groups enjoyed significant respect and authority in Central Asia.

◆ *Political view of Babur*

In 1507, Babur, a prominent Timurid ruler, adopted the title of *Padshah* (emperor) and he was established in Kabul. His political outlook was pragmatic, based on patrimony, ancestry, and heredity. Babur believed sovereignty was like bondage, and a sovereign could not combine work with pleasure and rest. He sought advice from close associates and believed that division was not in accordance with the ideal of preserving sovereign power. He also opposed the partitioning of authority, stating that partnership in rule was uncommon and that it could lead to problems in the functioning of the state. His memoirs do not show superstitious or morbid regard for law or schoolmen.

◆ *Foundation for the principles of sovereignty*

The Timurids, who had a unique position as heads of the Islamic religious and political system, rejected the authority of the Caliph. When Babur invaded India, the authority of the Ottomans was not accepted as higher. The accession of Babur and Humayun as the eldest sons established a positive tradition for the Mughal state, providing legitimacy and sanctity to heredity and faith. This laid the foundation for the principles of sovereignty in the Mughal state.



◆ *Humayun*

After Babur's death, Humayun inherited India without conflict but faced challenges in dividing the empire among his brothers. After being defeated by Sher Shah, Humayun attempted to travel to Badakhshan, but was denied passage by his brother, Kamran. This led to the realisation that the division of the empire was flawed. Humayun's personal beliefs, including transcendentalism and astrology, led to his ideology of kingship as the 'shadow of god on earth'. He organised the state into 12 parts and emphasised abject submission to the will of the *padshah*. Despite his perceived superiority, Humayun struggled to command loyalty and subservience from his nobles.

◆ *Administrative structure under Akbar*

Under Akbar, a power and hierarchy framework was established, involving the nobility, military and civil personnel, chieftains, and *ulema*. This structure combined territory expansion with administrative structure, balancing ethnic, religious, and social groups. The nobility relied on the Emperor for positions in the Mughal administrative system, with a diverse group composition including Indo-Muslim, Persian, Brahman, Khatri, and Kayastha. The Khanzads and Rajputs were the most reliable props of the Mughal state. The principle of authority and subordination was stressed, sustaining the state amidst challenges.

◆ *Authority of Akbar*

Akbar's authority was strengthened by Abul Fazl's dynastic ideology, which combined Timurid traditions of hereditary monarchy with spiritual status. This shift from the earlier Mongol appanage tradition, hindered centralisation and cohesion. Abul Fazl's elucidation of sovereignty is found in the *Akbarnama*, which preserves events for 47 regnal years and includes the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the official manual and gazetteer. This theory helped to weaken the religious elite's hold on political matters.

◆ *Mahzar*  
◆ *All religious matters into Akbar's hand*

Previous Indo-Muslim rulers relied on religious validation for kingship, with the *khutba* and Khalifa being crucial for acceptance and legitimacy. However, none of the kings before Akbar could claim infallibility. Akbar was perceived as possessing indescribable brightness and glow, which could only be noticed by those with mystical and spiritual leanings. His mystical and spiritual accomplishments surpassed the authority and wisdom of interpreters of *sharia*, sufi saints, and charismatic saviours. Akbar's assertion of the right of final judgment between various interpretations of sacred law resulted from his struggle with conservative *ulema* holding state positions in the 1560s. The final resolution of this issue

appeared in the *Mahzar* of 1579 , which stated that the rank of the Sultan is higher in the eyes of God than of a Mujtahid. Akbar incorporated supernatural and complex traits into his personality, resulting in his foresight and idealism, which gave him dominance and authority.

◆ *Administrative and political initiatives*

Akbar's administrative and political initiatives were closely linked to his personal traits, which were shaped by contemporary 16th-century chroniclers, nobles, and agents of regional kingdoms. His approachable personality allowed for the creation of unbridled power. After 1580, Akbar's unrestrained power was justified through an ideology blending dynastic traditions and religious beliefs. His decision to establish his capital at Fatehpur Sikri and large-scale construction activities were manifestations of his desire to assert his power. His close association with the Sufi mystic Shaikh Salim Chisti further enhanced his charisma in political life. His esoteric proclivities were an asset in his ideological debates with the *ulema*, which were necessary for making the state broad-based.

### 1.2.2 Nature of Mughal State

◆ *Aligarh schools's view on the nature of State*  
◆ *Agrarian system*

Historians have various interpretations of the Mughal state, including the theory of sovereignty and the Aligarh school's study of the agrarian system. W.H. Moreland's analysis of the Mughal agrarian system is a significant contribution to the study of the Mughal empire. The Aligarh school focuses on the economic organisation of the Mughal state, identifying its monetary, fiscal, ranking (*mansabdari*), and revenue assignments (*jagirs*). The flourishing overseas trade, particularly the development of ports like Surat, Thatta, Goa, Hughli, Balasore, and Masulipatnam, is considered a hallmark of the Mughal period. T. Ray Chaudhury argues that the Mughal state's actions were largely driven by a small ruling class's desire for more material resources. The state obtained surplus from the agrarian economy as land revenue, which constituted a significant part of the produce. The revenue demand varied from 1/3 to 1/2 or more of the produce. Historians like Habib, Raychaudhuri, and Richards believe that during Akbar's reign (1556-1605), a cohesive and uniform agrarian system emerged and this view was largely based on the work of British administrative historian W.H. Moreland.

Irfan Habib argues that the '*Zabt/Zabti* system' (method of revenue assessment based on measurement) was the epitome of the unified administrative system under the



◆ Revenue assessment

Mughals. In 1574-75, Akbar took several measures to work out revenue rates, including collecting information on yields, prices, and cultivation area for each locality for 10 years. The revenue rates were fixed directly in cash for each crop, and the provinces of Lahore, Multan, Ajmer, Delhi, Agra, Malwa, Allahabad, and Awadh were divided into revenue circles with separate schedules of cash revenue rates.

◆ Gap in the interpretation of sources

◆ Zabt

Historical sources suggest that the zabt system was operational through a military cum bureaucratic system in the entire region from the Indus to Ghagra, with state demand fluctuating between one-third and half of the yield. However, a re-examination of contemporary sources reveals certain lacunae in the interpretation of the sources used by historians. Scholars like Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam point out that towards the end of Akbar's reign, many Subas had no data on *arazi* (measured) land, leading to about one-third of land revenue collection under the Mughals being done by methods other than *zabt*. In Malwa and Gujarat, zabt was not adopted in total or on a large scale, and a large portion of land was with chieftains who adopted methods other than measurement for revenue fixation.

◆ Fiscal system

◆ Trade expansion

The 17th century saw significant growth in the fiscal system and trade expansion, with the rise of bankers remitting revenue from provinces to the center and the integration of trade-related and monetary aspects into the economic system. The nobility and rulers also played a significant role in commerce and trade. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam argue that Shahjahan's trade was part of an implicit bullionist orientation in Mughal state policy. Fiscal dispatches were conducted through bankers and hundis, while cash transfers by imperial agents and armed bearers continued. This period was marked by the involvement of the nobility and rulers in commerce and trade.

◆ Centralised character

*Dastur ul amal* or revenue documents used by historians, indicate the centralised character of the Mughal state. Shahjahan's and Aurangzeb's reigns saw efforts to bring more land under the *Khalisa*, land owned directly by the emperor. Changes were introduced in *mansabdari*, an administrative system that developed and grew in the late 16th century. No single ruler can be credited for perfecting these institutions. Shah Jahan's period saw the expansion of agriculture by cutting forests, with woodcutters and ploughmen accompanying troops to clear forests and cultivate land. This

period was notable for growth in trade, fiscal system, and agricultural expansion.

◆ *Criticism on unified administrative structure*

The analysis of the Mughal state as one based on a uniform and unified administrative apparatus is now being questioned by scholars. Studies on population, urbanisation, and external trade are all based on the interpretation of concise data given in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, which are being scrutinised afresh.

◆ *Centralized and bureaucratized system*

The Aligarh school emphasises the period from Akbar to Aurangzeb was considered as the most reliable source. They believe Mughal institutions were established by Akbar and continued under his successors, but developed cracks in Aurangzeb's period. The school views the state as a centralised and bureaucratized system, characterised by uniform revenue, *mansabdari/jagirdari*, and coinage systems. The 18th century is considered a period of anarchy and decline, with inflation aggravated.

◆ *Jahangir and Shahjahan*  
◆ *Kingship was divinely ordained*

During the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, kingship was divinely ordained, with the king's image being placed as that of a sufi saint. Sir Thomas Roe, an English ambassador, describes Jahangir as a greater Prophet than Muhammed, and he formed a new law combining all religions. The king's image was compared to that of a sufi saint, as seen in the use of terms like *pir-o-murshid* and *qibla*. However, during Shah Jahan and Jahangir's period, there was a shift in ideology, with Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi promoting Islamic revivalism and strict adherence to *Shariat* principles. This led to a permeation of Sufi ideology with orthodoxy, influencing politics by enlisting nobles as disciples and encouraging Islamic revivalism.

◆ *Period of Aurangzeb*

The compilation of *dastur ul amal* or revenue documents during Shah Jahan's and Aurangzeb's periods emphasizes formalism and emphasis on procedure and propriety. The *Akhbarat* serves as a medium for communication between the center and provinces. Aurangzeb's efforts to define a legal procedure based on Hanafite law led to insurrections and revolts. The crisis was a result of economic and bureaucratic issues and the desire for political power and autonomy. The Mughal religio-legal scheme and the role of judicial officials in settling religious and other discords are also studied.

According to R. P. Tripathi, the Afghan and Timurid polities were essentially decentralised. The Mongol traits inherent in Timurid polity, particularly Chingez Khan's decrees, emphasised partition of authority through the division of



◆ *Decentralised power*

tribes, which supported the establishment of an appanage system. This prevented the establishment of a bureaucratic structure and a strong ruler, both of which were required for centralisation. Scholars such as I. A. Khan claim that Humayun had to deal with the authority of the nobles and his brothers, but Akbar was able to overcome this difficulty by adopting the techniques of the Turkish monarchs of the 13-14th centuries and establishing a powerful absolutist state.

◆ *Scholar's view on centralisation*

Recent evidence suggests that the Timurid polity evolved from a loosely cohesive system to a tightly knit despotism, based on Timur's empire's combination of divine sanction and Chingez Khanid traditions. This divine aspect gave legitimacy to despotism. Struesand argues that Persian bureaucratic traditions were adopted by the Timurids, contradicting the decentralised contention of scholars. Sanjay Subrahmanyam emphasises the importance of studying Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim's position and the threat he posed to Akbar, as succession always presented challenges. He argues that partition and appanaging were issues in succession, and the idea of 'linear succession' was not always feasible. Scholars believe that the tradition of partition and appanage counters the centralisation perspective.

◆ *Various perspectives on Mughal state*

Some scholars argue that the institutions established under Akbar paved the way for centralisation, but it is important to note that the *jagir* or *mansab* had origins in earlier periods and were not the creation of Akbar's genius. M. Hodgson's 'gunpowder empires' proposition emphasizes the role of firearms in establishing centralized empires like the Mughal state. Struesand views the Mughal state as an admixture of Islamic and Hindu ideals, similar to Burton Stein's segmentary state theory. During the Post-Akbar period several factors, such as the *jagir* system crisis, contributed to decentralisation.

◆ *Patrimonial bureaucracy*

Stephen Blake's analysis of the Mughal state suggests it was a patrimonial bureaucratic empire, a concept borrowed from Weber. In small states, rulers governed as if it were their household, but as territories expanded and large states emerged, a bureaucracy was needed for effective governance, forming the basis of this empire.

Contemporary Europeans like Francisco Pelsaert and Francois Bernier criticised the 17th-century Mughal state for its limitations, including the 'agrarian crisis' caused by issues in the *jagirdari* system. This view was adopted by W. H. Moreland, M. Athar Ali, and Irfan Habib. Bernier divided

◆ *Economic criticism*

the Mughal state into superstructures led by the tyrant and native princes dominated by the sovereign. Scholars like Chetan Singh have analysed the Mughal state's regions.

### 1.2.3 Administration under Mughals

#### 1.2.3.1 Central Administration

##### Emperor

◆ *Role of Emperor*

The Mughal empire had a centralised military power structure based on the absolute authority of the emperor and the strength of the army. The emperor was the supreme commander of the armed forces, determining the rank of mansabdars and allotting jagirs for their maintenance. He was the fountain of justice and supreme judge, making laws and issuing administrative ordinances. The Mughal Empire followed a policy of individualistic minimum interference, discharging only police duties and revenue collection. Jadunath Sarkar observed the Mughal administration as a combination of Indian and extra-Indian elements or more correctly, it was the "Perso-Arabic system in the Indian setting".

◆ *Independent rulers*

It was during the reign of Akbar that the Mughal rule was systematically implemented. When Babur won the First Battle of Panipat and came to power in Delhi, he took the title of *Padsha* which means *Chakravarthi*. This was followed by his successors as well. Unlike the Delhi sultans, the Mughal rulers had implicitly stated that they were independent rulers and not controlled by the Caliphs. Aurangzeb was the only Mughal emperor who sought to rule only according to Islamic law. *Jahanbani* or the protection of the empire and *Jahangiri* or developing the borders of the empire was declared as the primary aim of the Mughal rule.

◆ *Power of Padshah*

The *Padshah*, or emperor, was the head of state and empire, responsible for legislative, administrative, and military functions. He had the power to accept or reject the advice of ministers, who advised him on financial matters. The ministers' advice and suggestions were generally accepted. The emperor was considered 'God's representative on earth', and the welfare of the people was the primary goal of rule. They considered the suggestions of ministers and sought the advice of powerful nobles, who often exerted a decisive influence on the government.

##### *Wazir and Mirbakshi*

Next to *Padshah*, the most powerful in the Mughal Empire



◆ *Officers under Mughal administration*

was the Prime Minister or *Wazir*. According to the central Asian tradition, the *Wazir* acted as a mediator between the emperor and various departments. Some *Wazirs* even started to control the emperor. That is why Akbar introduced some restrictions on the authority of the *Wazir*. *Mirbakshi*, the head of military affairs, was also the head of the nobility. Under *Mirbakshi*, there were spies of royal officials or *barids* throughout the empire. News reporters in the empire were known as *Waquia-navis*. These too were under the control of *Mirbakshi*.

### *Diwan-i-Kul and Sadr-us Sudur*

◆ *Minister in charge of Revenue collection*

*Diwan-i-Kul* was the chief diwan responsible for revenue and finances, strengthened by Akbar. He inspected transactions and payments all departments and supervised provincial diwans. The *diwan* was responsible for the entire revenue collection and expenditure of the empire, and the diwans were required to report daily about state finance to the Emperor.

◆ *Ecclesiastical department*

The *Sadr-us-Sudur* was the head of the ecclesiastical department, responsible for protecting *Shariat* laws and distributing allowances and stipends to eligible individuals and religious institutions. During Akbar's first 25 years, the office was lucrative. However, in 1580 the *Mahzar* promulgation restricted Sadr's authority. Akbar believed he should prevail in conflicts among religious scholars and regulated revenue-free grants for religious and charitable purposes. Later restrictions restricted Sadr's authority, and *Muhtasibs* were appointed to ensure morality observance. They also examined weights and measures and enforced fair prices.

◆ *Other departments*

*Mir Saman* was the officer responsible for managing royal household, *Karkhanas*, overseeing purchases, storage, and manufacturing of various items for the royal household, as well as supervising the production of various items. Other departments were: *diwan-i-khalisa* (incharge of crown lands), *diwani-tan* (incharge of *jagirs*), *mushrif-i-mumalik* (Accountant General), *mustau-l-mumalik* (Auditor General), *daroga-i-dak chauki* (Postmaster General), *mir-i-arz* (incharge of petitions), *mir-i-mal* (incharge of privy purse), *mir-i-tozak* (incharge of ceremonies), *mir bahr* (incharge of ships and boats), *mir manzil* (incharge of quarters), *mir atish* or *daroga-i-topkhana* (head of artillery).

### 1.2.3.2 Provincial Administration

#### ◆ Administrative division of empire

The Mughal Empire was divided into twelve provinces or subas by Akbar, including Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Ahmedabad, Bihar, Bengal, Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Malwa, and Multan. As the empire expanded, the number of provinces increased to twenty. Each *suba* was under a provincial governor, who was responsible for maintaining general law and order, encouraging agriculture, trade, and commerce, and enhancing state revenue.

#### ◆ Important officials and their duties

The head of the revenue department was the *Diwan*, an independent officer appointed by the Emperor to supervise revenue collection and maintain expenditure accounts. The *Bakshi* in the province performed similar functions to *Mir Bakshi's* at the center, checking and inspecting horses and soldiers and issuing paybills. In provincial level, *Sadr* was responsible for the welfare of religious activities and learning. Other officers at the provincial level included *Darogai-i-Dal*, *Waqainavis*, and *waqainigars*, who provided reports directly to the Emperor.

### 1.2.3.3 Local Administration

#### ◆ Sarkars

The provinces were divided into Sarkars and Parganas, with villages being the smallest units of administration. At the *Sarkar* level, there were two important functionaries: the *faujdar* and the *amalguzar*. The *faujdar* was appointed by the imperial order and was responsible for safeguarding the life and property of the residents, addressing law and order issues, and collecting revenue. The *amalguzar* was the revenue collector, responsible for assessing and supervising revenue collection, increasing land cultivation, and encouraging peasants to pay.

#### ◆ Pargana

At the *Pragana* level, the *Shiqdar* was the executive officer, while the amils looked after revenue collection at the *Pargana* level. The *Quanungo* kept land records in the *pargana*. *Kotwals* were appointed mainly in towns to maintain law and order. *Muqaddam* was the village headman, while *Patwari* looked after village revenue records. Zamindars maintained law and order in their areas and collected revenue. Forts were under the *Qiladar*, while port administration was independent of provincial authority.

### 1.2.4 Rajput Polity

The Mughal policy towards the Rajputs was crucial for the expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire under



◆ *Various views on Rajput- Mughal relations*

Akbar and his successors. The alliance was influenced by the personal religious beliefs of the rulers, such as Akbar's liberalism and Aurangzeb's orthodoxy. However, recent studies are examining the Mughal-Rajput relations within the framework of the Mughal nobility and the tensions within different segments of the nobility. The political vicissitudes of the Mughal Empire were largely governed by the struggle for supremacy or autonomy by the aristocratic elements, including the Mughal bureaucracy and autonomous rajas and zamindars. The Mughal-Rajput conflict is part of a broader historical conflict, developed during the decline of the Delhi Sultanate and the emergence of a new state system in Rajasthan, Malwa, and Gujarat.

◆ *Rana Sanga*

In the late 15th century, a conflict emerged between Rana Sanga of Mewar and the Lodis for control over eastern Rajasthan and Malwa. Sanga feared the Lodi's strengthening and began negotiations with Babur against the Lodis. Sanga feared Lodi power strengthening and negotiated with Babur against the Lodis. However, Babur's ascendancy in the Gangetic valley surprised Sanga, leading to an alliance between Afghans, Rana Sanga, and other Rajput princes to hold back his advance towards Delhi. Babur later focused on countering Afghan danger and securing control over the region.

◆ *Relation based on political need*

Babur aimed to adopt a forward policy in Mewar and Malwa but did not do so until the Afghan problem was resolved. The Mughals and Rajputs' relations were not definite and positive, but rather in line with political needs. When Humayun ascended the throne, the political situation in Malwa and Rajasthan changed significantly. Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat, captured Malwa and Rana Ratan Singh of Mewar sided with him. However, a rupture between Rana Vikramjit and Bahadur Shah led to the siege of Chittor.

◆ *Babur and Humayun relation with Rajput*

Humayun's stance towards Rajasthan was primarily defensive, postponing an offensive policy. He realised that Mewar's power was waning due to internecine warfare, and its military importance as an ally was inadequate. Bahadur Shah's success was short-lived, as Chittor was devastated. Babur and Humayun's relationship with the Rajput rulers could be analysed in the context of the Afghan problem, which prevented them from making friendly overtures.

Akbar's relations with the Rajputs have been a subject of debate. Some argue that his policy initiated a system

◆ Akbar's relations with the Rajputs

where religion would not be discriminated against in public appointments, while others believe it was a deliberate attempt to exploit the martial attributes of the Rajputs for the expansion of the Empire. Akbar's Rajput policy was part of a broad policy of wooing the zamindars and martial classes, including the Rajputs and Afghans. The loyalty of Rajputs was legendary, and a matrimonial alliance between Bhara Mal's daughter and Akbar in 1562 was a common feature before his time. These alliances did not lead to a special bond between Rajputs and Mughals, nor were they intended to counter recalcitrant elements or use the Rajputs for military gains. However, the war with Chittor, where the Rajputs offered firm resistance, was a religious conflict that emphasised the religious dimension of the conflict.

◆ Rana Sangha power declined

◆ Rajput's alliance with Mughals

In 1570, the Rajputs established closer relations with Akbar. The Gujarat expedition of Akbar marked the evolution of Mughal-Rajput relations, as Rajputs were enlisted as soldiers and given significant assignments. During the Gujarat insurrection, Akbar relied heavily on Rajput (Kachawahas) Man Singh and Bhagwant Singh. The battle of Haldighati between the Rana of Mewar and Akbar was not a struggle for independence but rather a declaration of regional independence. However, Rajput states were vulnerable to internecine warfare due to lack of supreme regional power. The rulers of Bundi and Mawar were subdued, causing the Rana's power to be severely weakened, and Rajputs becoming allies of the Mughals.

◆ Akbar's close relations Kachhawaha family

Akbar's reliance on religion for political purposes during his reign, particularly during the invasion of Punjab by Mirza Hakim in 1580, led to a break with orthodoxy. He rewarded Rajput nobles like Man Singh and Bhagwant Singh, who resisted the invasion and became the sword-arm of the Empire. Akbar also sought to maintain close relations with the Rajput ruling houses, with the Kachhawaha family holding a special position in Mughal-Rajput relations. In 1585-86, the administrative sphere was given a new shape, with the Kachhawahas holding the largest share of appointments among Rajputs. The Rajputs became stable allies and partners in the Empire.

### 1.2.4.1 State Structure

◆ Bhaibant system

The Rajputs' state structure was based on the 'bhaibant system', a loose confederation where regions were held by clans or khaps with close kinship ties. The leading family was called *rao/rai-rana*, and there was no definite law of



succession. The deciding factors were the support of Rajput sardars and military might.

◆ *Parganas*

The leading family held only a few parganas or mahals under direct control, while the rest were assigned to individual members who erected their own fortresses or places of residence called *basi* or *kothri*. Holders of these fortresses were called *dhani* or *thakur*, and these holdings were hereditary. The Rana tried to extend their holding at the expense of the thikanedars, while the clan attempted to gain at the cost of neighbouring clans.

◆ *Watan jagir*

Rajput rajas were given *jagir* against their *mansab*, which consisted of mahals or tappas where the clan members lived. These mahals were part of parganas with a fort or *garhi* where the raja resided with his family. The real *watan* of the raja was the region, sometimes extended to include the entire tract held by the raja and his clansmen. The term *watan jagir* came into vogue at the end of Akbar's reign. Jagirs in close proximity to the *watan* were not transferable except in case of rebellion. Outside Rajasthan, jagirs were transferrable. The first reference to this term is found in a farman of Akbar to Raja Rai Singh of Bikaner.

◆ *Watan jagir replaced Bhaibant*

Rajasthan's state structure evolved with the introduction of *watan jagir*, replacing *bhaibant*. By Jahangir's time, *watan jagirs* were firmly entrenched, bringing areas controlled by clan members under the raja's control. This allowed rajas to consolidate their position against pattayats, nobles, leading to a stable and centralised state structure. *Watan* and *riyasat* sometimes overlapped, and when a raja died, his parganas were not inevitably inherited by his successor. Instead, his successor was given a few parganas based on his *mansab*, dividing *jagir* rights in a *pargana* to exercise control over Rajput rajas.

◆ *Dispute over territories*

◆ *Mughal took advantage*

Akbar faced disputes with Rajputs over territories, such as Pokharan, which was claimed by the Bhatias of Jaisalmer and rulers of Bikaner and Jodhpur. The Mughals, aware of these differences, took advantage of them by transferring disputed parganas. The control over an autonomous raja was determined by the Mughal concept of paramountcy attitudes and political expediency. Chittor and Ranthambhor forts were under the control of Akbar. Land revenue was assessed and collected according to custom, but certain taxes were disallowed. Marwar was under direct Mughal rule from 1563 to 1583, and parts of Mewar were directly controlled by the

Mughals from 1568 to early Jahangir's reign.

◆ *Policy to weaken aristocracy*

Rajput rajas were granted jagirs outside their *watan* in neighboring subas or subas where they served, either in productive or rebellious areas. Jagirs in Rajasthan were more attractive due to their prestige and ability to maintain power. The establishment of Pax Mughalica (Mughal peace) was crucial for Rajput rajas to serve in different parts of the empire without worrying about their homelands. This policy aimed to weaken the aristocracy by instigating middle and lower strata to assert their independence. The Mughals enlisted many minor feudatories of Rajput rajas in the Imperial service.

◆ *Liberal policy*

The issue of succession in Rajput states led to fratricidal civil wars, but the Mughal Paramountcy allowed for control over the throne. Akbar tried to encourage mixed contingents, but this was not accepted by many. The Rajputs also struggled to adjust to the Mughal service. Akbar's alliance with the Rajputs began as a political coalition but later evolved into a closer relationship between Hindus and Muslims, forming a liberal tolerant policy.

◆ *Collapse of alliance*

The concept of justice became extensive, emphasising justice for all, regardless of religion, faith, caste, and race. However, this alliance was not in line with social and political realities, as the Rajputs were generally orthodox and refused to join Akbar's Tauhid Ilahi. The Mughal elite and *ulema* feared a broad liberal policy would harm their dominant position. The alliance collapsed due to limited influence from non-sectarian movements.

## Summarised Overview

The Timurid dynasty's origins in the Turko-Mongol region influenced the Mughal concept of empire and kingship. Babur's ideas of sovereignty and kingship were closely linked to tribal Mongol and Islamic traditions. Akbar introduced a rational element to the Mughal theory of sovereignty, which demanded obedience and justified the sovereign's claims over individual subjects. This theory's strength lies in its secular character and alleged social needs. The Mughal emperor was the supreme authority, commanding absolute loyalty from all subjects. To counterbalance the threat from the nobility, the Mughals developed a mechanism of checks and balances. The Mughal emperor ensured his position as a superior arbiter in conflicts over power sharing and agrarian surplus.

The Mughal state has been analyzed by some historians as a highly centralized bureaucratic empire, while others focus on the systemic perspective and economic management. Irfan Habib explained the system, which grew with a centralised bureaucratic state apparatus appropriating surplus and exploiting peasants. Scholars like Blake and Pearson describe the Mughal authority as personal and patriarchal, while Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam emphasise regional differences rather than uniformity. Chetan Singh also suggests a regionalisation or decentralisation of administrative functionaries.

The Mughal policy towards the Rajputs was crucial for the empire's expansion under Akbar and his successors. Influenced by religious beliefs, the alliance was shaped by the Mughal nobility's struggle for supremacy. The Mughal-Rajput conflict is part of a broader historical conflict.

## Assignments

1. Explain the nature of the Mughal state referring the viewpoints offered by different historians.
2. Discuss the provincial and local administration under Mughals.
3. Write a short note on *Wazir* and *Mir Bakshi*.
4. Analyse the Mughal relationship with Rajputs during Akbar's reign.
5. Describe the Structure of Rajput State.

## Suggested Reading

1. Athar, M. Ali, *Mughal India: Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society and Culture*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.
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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## South Indian Polity

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ gain insights into the south Indian polity
- ◆ identify the reasons for the decline of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas
- ◆ analyse the emergence of nadus
- ◆ assess the polity of Chalukyas
- ◆ explain the feudal tendencies in South India

### Background

The land lying to the south of the Vindhyas and Narmada and stretching almost east to west along the Tropic of Cancer is known as South India. The peninsular part of this region juts out into the Indian Ocean between the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. It narrows to a point at Cape Comorin or Kanyakumari. The history of South India is divided into two well-marked regions to the north and south of Krishna-Tungabhadra. The former is traditionally known as the Deccan Plateau. In the early medieval times, like North India, South India also was ruled by a number of dynasties. During 800-1200 CE, South India became the centre of political activity. The Pallavas, a significant force, were declining, and the Chalukyas of Badami were overthrown by the Rashtrakutas. The Cholas, feudatories of the Pallavas, began to assert their power and replace them, marking the beginning of a new stage in South Indian history. In this unit, the decline of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas and the emergence of the nadus are discussed. It also examined the polity of chalukyas and fuedal tendencies in South India.

### Keywords

South Indian Kingship, Centralised Administration, Segmentary, Feudal, *Nadu*



## Discussion

In the Deccan, the Rashtrakutas ruled from about the middle of the eighth century to the close of the tenth century, when they were overthrown by the Chalukyas, who founded an independent kingdom with their capital at Kalyani. In the far south or in the region to the south of Krishna-Tungabhadra, the contemporaries of the Rashtrakutas were the Pallavas of Kanchi, who ruled from the middle of the sixth century to the close of the ninth century, when the Cholas took their place. Besides these four dynasties, there were many smaller dynasties like the Cheras of Kerala, the Pandyas of Madurai, the Chalukyas of Vengi or Eastern Chalukyas, Badami and Kalyani which ruled over various parts of South India during the period.

### 1.3.1 Decline of Chera, Chola and Pandya Dynasties

#### 1.3.1.1 Chera

##### ◆ Chera dyansty

The Chera dynasty was one of the most powerful kingdoms of the Sangam period in Tamil Nadu and the present-day state of Kerala. They were divided into two periods: Early Chera (2nd century BCE-3rd century CE) and Later Chera (8th-12th century CE). Their history was marked by constant conflict with the Cholas and the Pandyas, highlighting their historical influence in the region.

##### ◆ Chola- Chera conflict

Rashtrakutas conquered the Cheras in 805 CE and briefly ruled them between 855 and 865 CE. King Goda Ravi Varma's annexation of the Ay kingdom into the Chera kingdom heightened tensions. The Cheras granted political asylum to Maravarman Rajasimha II, further infuriating the Cholas. During King Indu Kotha Varma's reign, Chola emperor Parantaka Chola invaded and annexed Kongunadu's northwestern parts, ruled by Chera relatives. The Pandyas joined Chera army in the Chola- Chera war, which began during Bhaskara Ravi Varman I's reign. The Cholas defeated the Chera armies in various locations, including Kandalur, Vizhinjam, Quilon, and Mahodayapuram Udagai. By the end of Raja Raja Chola's reign, they annexed southern Travancore from the Cheras. In 1028 CE, the Cheras revolted against the Cholas, but the Cholas suppressed the uprising and won several victories in subsequent campaigns.

The Chera kingdom was significantly weakened by prolonged wars, leading to several chiefs asserting their independence. The Cholas later consolidated control over a

- ◆ *Weakened by prolonged war*
- ◆ *Disintegration*

large area of the kingdom. The Cheras acknowledged their supremacy but made efforts to re-establish themselves. The Cheras reorganised their defenses and broke free from Chola rule, assisting the Pandyas in regaining territories. In retaliation, the Chola Emperor Kulattunga attacked the Chera kingdom, causing an unprecedented crisis for the newly crowned King Rama Varma Kulasekhara. The Chavers, a significant portion of his army, fought heroically and relocated his capital to Quilon after capturing Mahodayapuram. The later Chera kingdom emerged as principalities led by separate chieftains.

### 1.3.1.2 Chola

- ◆ *Chola's position*

The Chola Empire declined when Vikrama Chola, son of Kulottunga I, recaptured Vengi and took control of a section of Gangavadi. The Cholas' dominance was consolidated under Hoysala rule, and the last Chola kings, Kulottunga II, Rajaraja II, and Rajadhiraja III, were powerless to stop the Hoysalas from annexing the Chola Kingdom. The Cholas' control over the Pandyan realm was waning, and around 1243 CE, the Pallava chief proclaimed his independence. The Kakatiyas and Hoysalas divided the Chola Empire, and the kings of Ceylon, Kerala, and the Pandya kingdom tried to divorce their allegiance.

- ◆ *Ceylonese assault*

Rajadhiraja II managed to resolve the succession in favour of his protege, but Chola authority fell so low that the Ceylonese king dared to engage in Pandyan matters on behalf of one of its contenders to the throne. Kulottunga III successfully marched to Madura, pushing back the growing tide of Ceylonese assaults in the peninsula.

- ◆ *Decline of Chola*

A civil war between Rajaraja II and Rajendra III broke out in 1246 CE, allowing the Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra, Kakatiyas of Warangal, and Pandyas of Madurai to enrich themselves at the expense of the decadent Chola monarchy. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya struck the death blow to the Chola dominion during Rajendra III's reign, who governed alone until 1267 CE, failing to stop the decay and later the empire had collapsed and the Cholas vanished into obscurity.

### 1.3.1.3 Pandyas

The Chalukyas of Vatapi and the Pallavas of Kanchi were often at war due to political ambitions to acquire resources for their governments. Mahendravarman I expanded the Pallava dynasty's territory, while the Vishnukundins



◆ *Conflict between Chalukyas and Pallavas*

became a neighbouring kingdom. Pulakesin II defeated the Vishnukundins, allowing the Chalukyan dynasty to take over the conquered territory. Vishnuvardhana later founded the Chalukyan kingdom of Vengi. With the decline of Vishnukundins, the Chalukyas became the Pallavas' neighbouring territory. This led to constant conflicts between the two dynasties.

◆ *Struggle for political expansion*

The Pandyas of Madurai, a neighbouring kingdom of the Pallavas, played a significant role in the conflict between them. The Pandyas sought to control the fertile Kaveri delta and formed alliances with the Chalukyas of Vatapi to achieve their ambitions. They also engaged in wars with the Cheras to extend their territorial boundaries. The victorious rulers demonstrated pride through various means, such as Jayantavarman, who adopted the epithet of *Vanavan*. The Pandyas also attempted to invade Ceylon during the reign of Sinhalese ruler Sena I, causing destruction and a large booty. The succeeding Sinhalese emperor Sena II invaded the Pandya kingdom to avenge the Pandyas.

◆ *Pandyas conflict with Pallava*

The Pandyas sought to disrupt the Pallava kingdom's internal conflicts. Maravarman Rajasimha I, a Pandyan king, formed an alliance with the Chalukya emperor Vikramaditya II and supported Chitramaya for the throne. He defeated Pallava king Nandivarman II multiple times and took the title '*Pallava Bhanjana*' (Breaker of the Pallavas). Chitramaya was ultimately killed by Nandivarman II's military general. However, Nandivarman II was alarmed by the Pandyas' interference in the Pallava kingdom's affairs and repeated attacks, aiming to contain their growing influence.

◆ *Foundation of Rashtrakuta empire of Manyakheta*

During Kirtivarman II, Dantidurga, a Chalukya feudatory with political ambitions, attempted to establish an independent territory by attacking the Pallava monarch Nandivarman II. The latter fought Dantidurga hard, and as a result of their negotiations, Dantidurga gave his daughter Reva in marriage to Nandivarman II. Meanwhile, Dantidurga defeated Kirtivarman II and established the Rashtrakuta empire of Manyakheta.

The Chalukyas, in alliance with the western Ganga dynasty, fought against the Pallavas in numerous battles. The Pandyas, after their alliance with Dantidurga, sought to reduce the power of the Chalukyas. The Pallava monarch formed a confederacy of rulers to support him against the Pandyas. Kongu, a kingdom near the Ganga dynasty, was one of the

◆ *Battles with Pallava*

members of the confederacy. The Pandyas defeated Kongu's emperor and merged it into their territory. The Pandyas also advanced into Pallava territory, but the Pallavas failed to stop their advance. Despite numerous battles, defeats, and victories, neither side could claim territorial gains for long.

◆ *Decline of Pandyas*

After King Maravarman Kulasekara I's death in 1308, his sons Vira and Sundara fought for the throne. In March 1311, Malik Kafur invaded the Pandyas' territories, causing widespread raids and destruction of temples. The Pandya brothers fled, and Kafur pursued them, intending to make one a subsidiary of Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji. Sundara Pandya was defeated and sought help from the Delhi Sultanate, regaining control of the South Arcot region by 1314. However, two other Khalji Sultanate expeditions, led by Khusro Khan in 1314 and Ulugh Khan under Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq in 1323, destroyed the Pandyan dynasty. Ulugh Khan not only looted the Pandyan kingdom but also captured it and brought it under Delhi Sultanate control.

### **1.3.2 Chalukya Dynasty**

Chalukya dynasty ruled large parts of southern and central India between the 6th and 12th century CE. Three important branches of Chalukya dynasty, Chalukyas of Badami, Vengi and Kalyani ruled during this period.

#### **1.3.2.1 Chalukyas of Badami and Chalukyas of Vengi**

◆ *Political expansion*

The Badami Chalukyas were the earliest dynasty of the Chalukya empire. The Pallava king Simhavishnu expanded his territories, while the Chalukyas of Badami, led by Pulakesin I, established their capital in Bijapur District. Pulakesin converted a hill near Badami into a fortress, and Kirtivarman I conquered and annexed the territories of the Kadambas of Banavasi and Mauryas of Konkan. Pulakesin II (609-42 CE) expanded the Chalukya territory, subjugating Ganga rulers of South Karnataka and Alupas of the West coast, bringing the entire Kannada-speaking area under one rule. The army expanded to Malwa and Southern Gujarat, where Latas, Malwas, and Gurjaras became submissive. Pulakesin II defeated Harsha of Kanauj, his greatest northern adversary, on the Narmada river, and assumed the title of Parameshvara (Supreme Lord).



◆ *Chalukyas of Vengi*

◆ *Decline*

Pulakesin II attempted to control the Deccan region by attempting an expedition into the Eastern Deccan and coastal Andhra, causing conflict with the Pallavas. Mahendravarman I, a Pallava king, was also ambitious. The Pallavas were defeated, and the Chalukyan army penetrated into their territory. Pulakesin II appointed Vishnuvardhana to rule over the Andhra country, leading to the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Narasimha I, son of Mahendra I, defeated the Chalukyan king in battles and entered Chalukyan territory, even entering Badami, where an inscription of his victory was found on a rock. Over the next few decades, the Chalukyas and Pallavas engaged in more hostilities, but no significant changes occurred. In 750 CE, the Chalukyan rule in Badami was replaced by the Rashtrakutas, who defeated the Chalukyan king Kirtivarman II.

◆ *Establishment of Chalukyas of Vengi*

The Eastern Chalukyas, also known as the Chalukyas of Vengi, were a South Indian dynasty that ruled from the seventh to the twelfth centuries. They began as Chalukya governors of Badami and eventually ruled over the Vengi region of modern-day Andhra Pradesh until around 1130 CE. After 1130 CE, they continued under Chola's overlordship, with their capital initially in the city of Vengi. The Eastern Chalukyas, under Vengi's rule, were involved in numerous conflicts with the Cholas and Western Chalukyas. Pulakesin II, a Chalukya king, conquered coastal Andhra in 616 CE, and Vishnuvardhana was appointed as viceroy. After Pulakesin's death in 624 CE, Vishnuvardhana I declared independence and established the Eastern Chalukya dynasty, which extended to Cheepurupalli, making him the founder of this dynasty.

◆ *Conflicts*

The Eastern Chalukyas faced opposition from the Pallavas of Kanchi and Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta, who replaced the Badami Chalukyas. Due to ongoing conflicts with their neighbours, the Vengi Chalukyas formed alliances with the Cholas of Tanjore to protect their territory. From 642 CE to 705 CE, some kings ruled for short periods, leading to family feuds and ineffective governments. The Badami or Western Chalukyas were defeated by the Rashtrakutas.

◆ *Decline*

The Rashtrakutas, who repeatedly conquered Vengi's kingdom, challenged its weak rulers until Gunaga Vijayaditya III emerged in 848 CE. Vijayaditya declared independence after Amoghavarsha's death, and their rule has been a source of numerous wars between Cholas and Western Chalukyas for control of the strategically important Vengi country.

During Vengi's Eastern Chalukya rule, the region unified and flourished with Telugu culture, literature, poetry, and art. This period is considered the golden age of Andhra's history. However, the Vengi kingdom was defeated by the Chola empire, ending its existence.

### 1.3.2.2 The Chalukyas of Kalyani

#### ◆ Emergence of Chalukyas of Kalyani

The Chalukyas of Kalyani, also known as the Later Chalukyas, originated after the Chalukyas of Badami. They were also known as the Kalyani Chalukyas, as their capital was Kalyani in the eleventh century. Their descent from Badami Chalukyas is uncertain, but their fortunes were established by Taila II, a subordinate of the Rashtrakutas, who claimed to be the direct descendant of the Chalukyas of Badami. The Rashtrakutas were overthrown in 973 CE by Tailapa or Taila II, who belonged to the Chalukya dynasty. The dynasty founded by him, with its capital at Kalyani (Karnataka), is known as later Chalukya or Chalukyas of Kalyani.

#### ◆ Struggle for expansion

Taila II waged a protracted war with the Parmaras of Malwa and eventually killed the Paramara king Munja, leading to the Chalukya-Chola struggle. Somesvara I's accession to the Chalukyas of Kalyani marked a brilliant period, but he was defeated by his son Rajendra I at the battle of Koppam, where Rajadhiraja, the Chola king, fell. He not only conquered north Konkan, but also attacked Gujarat and Malava and received Parmara Bhoja's submission. Vikramaditya VI, the last great Chalukya ruler, conquered north Konkan, invaded Gujarat and Malava, and received Parmara Bhoja's submission. He killed his elder brother Somesvara II and ascended the throne in 1076 CE, withdrew from the Shaka era, and introduced the Chalukya-Vikrama era. During his reign, he fought against various rulers, including the Hoysalas of Dwarsamudra, Kakatiyas of Warangal, Yadavas of Devagiri, and Kadambas of Goa, and was patronised by authors Bilhana and Vijnanesvara.

#### ◆ Decline

The Chalukya dynasty declined in the mid-twelfth century due to the defeat of Somesvara IV by Yadava king Bhillana, and its successors, the Yadavas of Devagiri, Hoysalas of Dwarsamudra, and Kakatiyas of Warangal, gained prominence.

### 1.3.3 Feudal Tendencies and Emergence of Nadus and Principalities

The Chola state was established in the 10th century CE



◆ *Landed magnates*

and saw the growth of a king's government with numerous functionaries or agents. These functionaries were primarily landed magnates who gained strength in the tenth century and after. By the middle of the tenth century, these magnates emerged in the Kaveri delta and outside the state, holding titles like Udaiyan, Velan, Araiyan, and Muventavelan. These titles indicated land ownership and state structure, often prefixed by the name or title of a Chola king. In some cases, the titles were actually conferred by the state, 'Pattam Kattina Peyar'.

◆ *Role of landed magnates*

The Kaveri delta experienced a surge of landowners following agrarian expansion, leading to the state's recognition of these magnates. These recognised magnates carried out state functions, with most agents or "officers" being drawn from this class of landed magnates. Examples include *Adhikàris*, *Olainayakams*, *Dandanayakams*, *Srikaryans*, and other similar functions of the king's government. Functionaries who performed significant functions held more impressive titles, indicating greater importance in society. They carried out the king's work, looking after *Nam Karumam Arâyum*, meaning 'our work' and *Nantamar*, i.e., "our men" for the king and *Koyirramar*, "the king's men" for others. They carried out the administration of the kingdom, both in the capital city and far afield. The transfer of state agents from one place to another is evident, indicating the existence of an officialdom. This pattern of landed magnates being recognised and enlisted as state agents became popular in the late 10th century and elaborated during the reigns of Ràjaràja I and Rajendra I. It began to decline by the mid-12th century CE.

◆ *Feudatories*

The royal government at the center did not have absolute power, with numerous local nodes of power at various levels. The chiefs in the localities, known as "feudatories," were possibly second only to the king at the center. The chiefs of the "Sangam" period in South India, known as Ays, Vels and Malavas were not landed magnates. They recognised the overlordship of the Chera, Chola, or Pandya, with evidence of their suzerainty evident in various ways. This superordinate-subordinate relationship was evident in the dating of records in their territories during the regnal years of the overlords and the complex network of political and matrimonial alliances with them. Their role in early South India's polities was crucial.

Chiefs had diverse territories, varying in size, ambition, and administration. They had "Companions of Honour" that

◆ *Overlord-chief relationship*

served as military and police forces. Some had elaborate bureaucracies, while others were humbler. The chief of Valluvanadu in Kerala fought the Battle of Takkolan for their Chera overlords, who were subordinate to the Cholas. Overlords claimed revenue from chiefs' territories, with the Chera overlord receiving one-tenth of the share. Matrimonial relations between chiefly houses and the overlord's house strengthened this relationship. Chiefs were required to attend the suzerain's court, as evidenced by attestations from major Kerala chiefs in Jewish Copper Plates and Kalingattup-parani.

◆ *Sabha and Ur*

In early medieval South India, local groups played a unique role in polities, with the Sabha being the most significant body of Brahmanas. They controlled vast amounts of agricultural land and had the largest number of inscriptions in their villages and temples. However, the population of these groups was smaller than the rest, and they enjoyed landright that was out of proportion to the population. The agrarian settlements, called *Brahmadeya* in Tamil-speaking regions and *Gramma* in Kerala, were less numerous than non-Brahmanical villages, called the *Vallanvagai* or *ur*. Despite having fewer records, the *urs* were larger in number and exerted greater influence on the economy, society, and politics.

◆ *Non-brahmanical land owning group*

The information on non-Brahmanical land-owning groups in the Pandya and Chera situations is limited, but their existence and vitality are not to be doubted. They constituted habitation sites, cremation grounds, drinking water sources, irrigation channels, cultivated land, and pasture land. Residential areas consisted of landowners, artisans, and agrestic labourers. The Kutis or households formed the basic unit, while labourers and artisans formed the primary producers. Landowners, called Ulukutis, held superior rights over the land and met in assemblies of the *Ur*, known as *Urar* and *Urom*. These assemblies were exclusive groups of elders of families with landed property and commanding authority in the countryside. They decided on property and other community interests and related themselves with the state, functioning as a channel of communication between the king's government and the political structure.

The *Nadu*, a local group in early medieval South India, has gained significant importance in recent years. The *nadu* denoted both the locality and the assembly of its spokesmen, known as *Nattar* or *Nattom*. The *nadus* was a grouping of



◆ *Nadu*

non-Brahmanical agrarian settlements, with no natural boundaries and varied in size. The nomenclature of Nadus also indicates the spontaneity of their origin. The *nadu* was named after one of the constituent Urs, mostly the first clan settlement to emerge, and was generally a toponym. This contrasts with the units called Valanadus, which had natural boundaries, were comparable in size, and were given the name of a Chola ruler or his title.

◆ *Role of Nadu*

The nadus, a pastoral grouping, emerged in the Pallava territory, with the *Kottam* becoming an agricultural cum pastoral region. The Pandyan kingdom and Chera kingdom also had similar nature and functions. However, the Chera kingdom used the term *nadu* for locality chiefs' territories. The number of nadus increased over time due to the expansion of the agrarian order and the belief that nadus were groupings of agrarian villages. The nadus, consisting of agrarian villages and the dominant *Nattar*, primarily focused on agriculture, managing irrigation and other related arrangements. They paid taxes to the king's government and played a crucial role in carrying out royal orders, resettling land, collecting taxes, and managing temples. The nadus was recognised as an agent in the locality, exercising power and authority on its behalf.

◆ *Brahmadeya villages and Nagaram*

The *Brahmadeya* villages were managed by corporate bodies called Sabhas, consisting of Brahmanas with property ownership and knowledge of Vedas and Sastras. These bodies followed Dharmasastra's prescriptions and maintained solidarity as non-cultivating intermediaries with superior rights over land. The writings engraved on Manur and Parantaka inscriptions show class and caste interests among Brahmanical groups. Nagarams were organised bodies where traders organised themselves, similar to corporate bodies of other groups. They provided administrative, fiscal, and judicial rights to trading groups. These groups, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim groups of West Asian origin, also had local origins, significantly influencing statecraft in these polities.

◆ *Local groups*

The principalities were ruled by several chiefs who recognised the suzerainty of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya kings. Later, these chiefs became state functionaries and were absorbed into the state system. Local groups' political aspirations were articulated through assemblies like *Sabha* and *Ur*.

### 1.3.3.1 Debates on Feudalism in South India

#### ◆ Features of feudalism

The South Indian feudalism during the early medieval period was suggested by Kesavan Veluthat. Veluthat argues that the basic direct producers in a feudal system own the means of production themselves in a very technical sense. The possession of superior rights over the land by local magnates, as well as the extra-economic coercion by which those magnates extract surplus from the primary producer, are among the foremost characteristics of the feudal mode of production in medieval South India. The political structure of early medieval South India was like the feudal pyramid with the king at the top, with the feudatory chieftains immediately below him, with the local groups of nadus, brahmadeyas and nagarams below them, the tenants and cultivators below these groups and finally the landless labourers at the bottom. This pyramidal hierarchy is found in military organisation and judicial administration as well. Compared with agricultural production, commodity production was limited.

#### ◆ Kesavan Veluthat negates the idea of Nilakanta Sastri

Numerous scholars have conducted a study on medieval South Indian polity, proposing various arguments to understand the period from the 7th century CE to the 13th century CE. Kesavan Veluthat, a South Indian scholar, posits that the Chola dynasty's collapse was due to centrifugal forces resulting from the political order, and that chiefdoms began re-asserting themselves during this period. The concept of a feudal South Indian order is a recent idea, based on a recent analysis by Noburu Karashima and Subbarayalu. Historical analysis began with studying inscriptions of this period. In 1886, the Madras government established the Department of Epigraphy under Dr. Hultzsch. Nilakanta Sastri's historical treatment of the medieval south India was criticised for glorifying the highly centralised and bureaucratised state. This view remained unchallenged for nearly forty years until Burton Stein challenged this view with his Segmentary State Theory, borrowed from Aidan Southall. Kesavan Veluthat later proposed a feudal model based on R.S. Sharma and Noburu Karashima, challenging the conventional historical view.

Previous attempts to define the Chola state as feudal were tentative and lacked thorough scrutiny. Karashima suggests a feudal nature in the later Chola period, while Veluthat and M.G.S Narayanan propose studying the feudal potential of the South Indian macro-region. Veluthat's postulates on



◆ *Kesavan Veluthat's view on South Indian feudalism*

feudal society in India, as proposed by R.S. Sharma, include the alienation of administrative, judicial, and political power, through religious grants, erosion of state power, and an intricate hierarchy of officials. Veluthat acknowledges the need for a precise definition of feudalism within the south Indian Medieval context, utilising a framework from Noboru Karashima, a Marxist-oriented work, to provide a concise model for this purpose.

◆ *Superior rights of landed magnets*

Veluthat, based on Karashima's formulation, argues that peasant society in the region is stratified by individual peasant producers, who are linked to the kutis of South India. These serfs hold land but pay feudal rent, initially in surplus form and later as land rent. Veluthat refers to landed magnates with superior land rights, who extracted feudal rent through extra economic means. The landed labourer was at the bottom of this peasant hierarchy. Veluthat's feudal society is structured with the king as the supreme head, followed by chieftains, *brahmadeya* units, *nadus* and *nagarams*, tenants, and labourers, descending from the *nadu*.

◆ *Military stratification*

Veluthat suggests a military stratification with the king's bodyguard at the center, followed by similar forces in each *nadu*, special forces, and mercenary troops from peasants and artisans. This graded hierarchy was maintained through the system of *jati*, reaffirmed by the *Varnasrama Dharma* and the *Bhakti* movement. Veluthat argued that the feudal structure described was not an archetypal European feudalism analogy but a unique one for South India.

◆ *Pyramidal*

Kesavan Veluthat argues that direct producers in a feudal system own the means of production themselves, with local magnates possessing superior rights over the land and extracting surplus through extra-economic coercion. The political structure of early medieval South India was a typical feudal pyramid, with the king at the top, feudatory chieftains below, local groups below, tenants and cultivators below, and landless labourers at the bottom. This hierarchy was also present in military organisation and judicial administration. Commodity production was limited compared to agricultural production, and trade was marginal to the economy and society.

## Summarised Overview

The Chera kingdom appears to have been conquered by some of the major dynasties of medieval South India, including the Chalukya, Pallava, Pandya, Rashtrakuta, and Chola. By the 10th/11th century CE, Cheras appear to have been absorbed into the Pandya political system. The Cholas and Pandyas had alternating friendly and hostile relations with the Chera kingdom. In the early 11th century CE, the Cholas attacked and eventually forced the kingdom into submission. When the Chera kingdom was dissolved in the 12th century, the majority of its autonomous chiefdoms became independent. The Chola dynasty ruled South India from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. In 1264, Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan I sacked Gangaikonda Chozhapuram, the Chola capital. Kanchipuram was lost to Telugu Cholas, and remaining Chola territories fell to Pandyan rule. The dynasty declined 1279 when Maravarman Kulasekara Pandyan I established Pandya rule. Two Khalji Sultanate expeditions, led by Khusro Khan in 1314 and Ulugh Khan under Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq in 1323, destroyed the Pandyan dynasty, looted it, and brought it under the Delhi Sultanate.

Three branches of Chalukya dynasty ruled from 6th century CE to 12th century CE; Chalukyas of Badami was the earliest dynasty followed by Chalukyas of Vengi and Chalukyas of Kalyani

The *nadu*, a kinship-based agrarian unit, had collective controls over production and hereditary land rights. Despite its segmentary state, it was marginally studied due to its phased opening of the Tamil plains. The debate now focuses on *nadu* autonomy and organisation stability, affecting the segmentary state concept. The realm was ruled by several chiefs who recognised the suzerainty of the Chera, Chola, and Pandya kings. Later, these chiefs became state functionaries and were absorbed into the state system. Local groups' political aspirations were articulated through assemblies like *Sabha* and *Ur*. Different perspectives on political organisation help critically analyse the nature of polity during this period.

## Assignments

1. Examine the emergence of nadus during the medieval period.
2. Write down the reasons for the decline of Chera, Chola and Pandya dynasties.
3. Discuss the emergence of Chalukyas.



## Suggested Reading

1. Karashima, Noboru, *A Concise History of South India*, Oxford, 2014.
2. Sastri, K.A.Nilakanta, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.
3. Stein, Burton, *Essays on South India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1996.

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1. Subbarayalu, Y., *South India Under the Cholas*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011.
2. Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Early Medieval in South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010.
3. Veluthat, Kesavan, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Orient Blackswan Private Limited, New Delhi, 2012.
4. Stein, Burton, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Oxford India Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1995.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



# Production and Appropriation

**BLOCK-02**



## Agricultural Production

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ acquire an awareness of the nature of the agricultural economy of the medieval period
- ◆ get introduced to the intricacies of the land revenue assessment
- ◆ discuss the *iqta* system of the Sultanate and *jagirdari* system of the Mughals
- ◆ evaluate the formation of irrigation facilities during the medieval period

### Background

During the early medieval era, North India had several kingdoms but did not produce a major power until the Delhi Sultanate. Agriculture formed the backbone of the medieval Indian economy, undergoing a significant expansion, utilising innovative techniques and cultivating diverse crops. The revenue of the state heavily relied on land taxes, leading to the establishment of complex tax systems. Peasant discontent and uprisings marked the period despite government efforts to assist farmers. Provincial administrations and revenue systems like *iqta* and *jagirdari* played crucial roles in governance and revenue collection.

### Keywords

Agricultural production, Crop pattern, Land tenures, *Zabt/Zabti*, *Iqta*, *Jagir*, *Diwan-i-amir-i-Kohi*, Irrigation canals



## Discussion

### 2.1.1 Agricultural Production during Medieval Period

#### 2.1.1.1 Extent of Cultivation

◆ Increase in agricultural production

During the medieval period, there was an abundance of land available. The state aimed to increase the revenue by increasing agricultural production, hence putting more land under cultivation. The Sultanate had abundant land, such as the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, which was fertile. The rulers of this time aimed to encourage farming in areas where there was no cultivation before. Forests were cut down, making those lands suitable for cultivation. From the Sultans to the Mughals, farming expanded across the country, with the extent of cultivation increasing during Aurangzeb's reign. The rise of farming in Bihar, Awadh, and some parts of Bengal was attributed to the clearing of forests, the use of ploughs, and animal power. The Mughals' reign saw the expansion of agriculture in almost every part of the country.

#### 2.1.1.2 Crop Pattern

◆ Techniques for crop cultivation

During the medieval period, the inhabitants of India cultivated a diverse array of crops, including food crops, cash crops, vegetables, and spices, among other things. According to Ibn Battutah, they produced two crops a year—*Kharif* (Monsoon) and *Rabi* (Winter) crops. Medieval Indian society was aware of the most cutting-edge techniques for cultivating crops at the time, such as *do-fasli* (double cropping), harvesting three crops at the same time, crop rotation, using manures, and utilising a variety of instruments for watering the crops, among other things.

i. **Food crops:** Wheat, rice, barley, and millets (Jowar and Bajra) are the principal crops that were utilised for the production of food, including a wide range of pulses, including gram, arhar, moong, moth, urd, and khisari, amongst others.

ii. **Cash crops:** Sugarcane, cotton, indigo (which was utilised in the production of blue dye), opium, silk, and other commodities were among the most significant cash crops in medieval India. Sugarcane was a most important cash crop during the Mughal rule, with Bengal being the most productive region. Bayana and Sarkhej regions produced high-quality indigo during the Mughal reign. Sericulture, or the rearing of silkworms on mulberry bushes, grew more

widespread during this period. Bengal became the world's significant silk producer. Bihar and Malwa were known for producing high-quality opium. Tobacco cultivation was introduced to India by the Portuguese in the 16th century, and Surat and Bihar became key locations for tobacco production. Large-scale coffee growing began in the 1600s. The cultivation of these commodities contributed to the growth of the economy in medieval India.

◆ *Types of crops cultivated*

**iii. Fruits and vegetables:** During the Medieval period, there was a rapid expansion of horticulture. Some of the sultans in Delhi tried their best to support the people in growing food for themselves. Firuz Shah Tughlaq is credited for building 1,200 gardens in and around Delhi, 80 on the Salora embankment, and 44 in Chittoor. Fruits like grapes and pomegranates were grown during this time. In the 16th and 17th centuries, India received a small amount of fruit from foreign countries. The Portuguese introduced pineapple, bananas, papaya, and cashew nuts. Afghanistan was the origin of cherry. Peasants in India farmed a diverse selection of vegetables, with potato, red chillies, and tomato plants being introduced at the end of the period. Abul Fazl's book *Ain-i-Akbari* provides a list of these vegetables consumed during this period.

**iv. Spices:** During the Medieval period, Indian peasants made important spices like pepper, clove, cardamom, ginger, saffron, betel leaf, and many others. By the time of the Mughals India's southern coast was sending many different kinds of spices to different parts of Asia and Europe.

## 2.1.2 Assessment of Land Revenue and Magnitude of Demand

### 2.1.2.1 Land Revenue Assessment and Management

Land taxes were the state's principal revenue source. Rulers like Alauddin Khalji, Sher Shah Suri, and Akbar created a complex land tax system in the Medieval period. Land revenue management ended up with well-thought-out guidelines. These were:

◆ *Land tax*

- i. Actual cultivable land measurement for land revenue calculation
- ii. Land categorisation by soil fertility
- iii. Setting the land revenue demand rate
- iv. Calculating and collecting land revenue in cash



◆ *Batai and Kankut systems*

During the medieval era, various methods were used to calculate and collect taxes. The most fundamental method was the sharing of crops, also known as *batai*, where a delegated official collected the state's portion of the crop. The area of the property did not affect the total amount of money gathered. The second method, *Kankut*, involved measuring the land and analysing its productivity to determine the required amount of money for each metre of land.

◆ *Zabt system under Sher Shah*

Sher Shah, the founder of the Suri dynasty, did not rely on crop-sharing or estimation for land revenue assessment. Instead, he used the *Zabt* system of measurement, which involved analysing the productivity of the land. Under Sher Shah, samples were taken from three distinct kinds of land to determine the overall level of productivity of the land: good, middling and bad. The average yield was then calculated, and its one-third was the share of the state. The amount of money that each harvest was required to bring in every *bigha* was referred to as the "Rai of Sher Shah."

◆ *Zabt and Dahsala System under Akbar*

During Akbar's reign, the kingdom used various methods to calculate revenue. The third approach, known as *Zabt*, based on measurements, was significantly developed during Akbar's reign. Each region was divided into revenue circles or *dasturs*, where cash revenue rates for crops were determined based on their yields and production expenses. The adoption of *Ain-i-Dahsala*, or income rates averaged over 10 years, was a solution to the need to calculate new rates each year for different regions. In this system, the cash revenue rate for a particular crop was calculated using an average of the rates used over the previous 10 years. However, these rates did not undergo regular revisions and changed at sporadic intervals. The system was initially applied to Agra, Allahabad, Awadh, Delhi, Lahore, and Malwa but expanded to other locations. Despite measurements being taken in some areas, some territories remained unsurveyed. Consequently, almost every region, including the *Zabti* regions, used different approaches to measuring and data collection processes.

### 2.1.2.2 Classification of Land and Crop Sharing

Following the completion of the survey, the land was divided into three categories according to its level of fertility: good, average, and poor. The land was further subdivided into four categories called *Polaj*, *Parati*, *Chachar*, and

◆ *Cultivation strategies*

*Banjar*, based on the duration of time it had been used for agricultural purposes. In *Polaj* areas, two different crops were cultivated annually. On the other hand, once two different crops had been grown on the land in *Parati*, they had to lie fallow (meaning they could not be utilised) for a period to rejuvenate the fertility of the soil. Due to its limited fertility, *Chachar* land was cultivated only once every three to four years at most. Since the land in *Banjar* was not suitable for cultivation, there was not much of an agricultural presence there. The majority of the state's wealth was acquired from the sale of land. To maximise the profits that could be made from farming, the State tried to expand the quantity of land that was being cultivated.

◆ *Tax collection structure*

In addition, the State put forth effort to collect the maximum amount of taxes from the farmers. The Mughal administration maintained records at the *pargana* level to track the payment of land taxes. Separate officials handled land measurement and tax collection. While *Amil* and *Amin* were responsible for obtaining the funds, *Amin* was in charge of the crew that carried out the surveys. The *Qanungo* assisted the *Amin* and was in charge of keeping track of all of the revenue-related data. *Chaudhari* also assisted *Amil* in revenue collection. At the village level, the village headman, also known as the *Muqaddam*, was responsible for managing records and fund collection. There was also a clerk named *Karkun* and a treasurer named *Potdar*. Documents were composed not only in Persian but also in the local languages. The *Diwan* was in charge of the administration of taxes for the *suba* and served the emperor as a free and loyal servant. It was his responsibility to retrieve funds from the *suba* and monitor how those funds were being utilised. He intended to cultivate more crops on additional acreage. Loans, known as *Taqavi*, were frequently provided by his office to those living in rural areas.

◆ *Patta and Qabuliat*

There were three different methods for dividing up the harvest. Following the removal of the grain, the first thing that needed to be done was to split the crop up on the threshing floor. The second strategy was known as *Khet-Batai*, and it included separating the field in which the crop was growing while it was still in its early stages. In the third place, which was known as *Langbatai*, the crop was harvested and then stacked without the grain being separated. This decision determined the share of the state each would acquire.

The state provided each cultivator with a document



◆ *Harvest division*

known as a *Patta* (title deed), which outlined the various types of land that the cultivator owned as well as the rate of land revenue that was payable on specific crops. The cultivators were asked to sign a document called a *Qabuliat*, a commitment to pay a specific land tax to the state. These documents were collected from cultivators. Further, farmers were required to pay particular additional cesses on top of the land revenue to cover the costs of assessment and revenue collection.

### 2.1.2.3 Role of Landed Intermediaries in Revenue Collection

◆ *Intermediaries and revenue acquisition*

The peasants and the state were separated from one another by a variety of forms of intermediaries in addition to the state officials. The use of intermediaries was essential for the State to acquire revenue from the lands. They attempted to negotiate tax breaks or a share of the land earnings in exchange for the labour in the farming fields. Historical sources refer to the pre-Delhi Sultanate period using titles such as *Raja*, *Rajaputra*, *Ranaka*, and *Mahasamanta*, among others. The land rights of these individuals had been inherited from previous generations. They went around to the farmers in their separate regions and collected money from them, some of which they gave to the state and part of which they retained for themselves. In addition, as we have seen, the state did not impose any taxes on Brahmins or the churches when the state granted them land. They were also awarded funds derived from the land at these places.

◆ *Middlemen in the Sultanate period*

During the Sultanate period, landed middlemen continued to play an important role in the process of collecting revenue. Small landowners, who were referred to as *Khuts*, local leaders known as *Muqaddams*, and a set of middlemen, such as *rai*, *rana*, and *rawats*, had higher land rights than peasants. Alauddin Khalji made an effort to restrict the rights and shares held by these groups. In later years, Sultans of Delhi like Ghiyasuddin and Firuz Shah Tughlaq bestowed upon them a variety of unique privileges.

Middlemen were typically referred to as Zamindars during the Mughal dynasty. Some middlemen, including *rais*, *ranas*, and *rawats*, inherited the rights to the land from their ancestors. Zamindars were local land revenue collectors or proprietors of land under the Mughal administration. They were responsible for collecting taxes from the peasants and forwarding a portion of it to the state. Their primary role was to ensure revenue collection from their assigned

◆ *Zamindars and Jagirdars*

territories. The *Iqta* was rebranded as the *Jagir* during the time of the Mughal emperors. Jagirdars were recipients of the *Jagir*, which was a type of land grant given by the Mughal emperor in exchange for services rendered, usually military or administrative. They were not typically subordinate to Zamindars but held land granted by the state in return for specific duties. In northern India, the *muqaddams* and the *Patels* served as the roles of village leaders. They were accountable for the collection of taxes as well as the upkeep of the peace in the community. In return for their cooperation, they were granted land in the village that did not have any tax obligations attached to it. *Patwaris* in northern India and *Kulkarnis* in the Deccan received salaries similar to those of village leaders.

#### 2.1.2.4 Condition of Peasantry

◆ *Peasantry and taxation*

During the medieval period in India, the population was primarily composed of peasants, albeit with varying characteristics. Wealthier peasants, known as *Khuts* and *Muqaddams* (during the Delhi Sultanate) and *Khudkasht* (during the Mughal Empire), held extensive land and cultivated their crops with the aid of hired labourers. On the other side of the spectrum were small farmers and village workers, referred to by diverse names like *Balahars*, *Reza Riaya*, *Paltis*, *Kunbis*, *Pahikaasht* and *Upari*. Most identified themselves as *raiya*s and were obliged to provide a significant portion of their crops as land tax. Additionally, a large number of landowners and intermediaries kept some of the surplus food for themselves.

◆ *Peasant discontent and uprisings*

Due to the regressive nature of land taxes, an enormous load of repaying debts, and the regular occurrence of famines, sicknesses, and epidemics, peasants were always on the edge of hunger. Problems and frustrations experienced by peasants sometimes led to riots and uprisings. Under the rule of the Sultanate, Muhammad bin Tughlaq made an effort to expand the Doab region's economic opportunities. A significant uprising broke out among the farmers in the region as a result of such initiatives. During the reign of Aurangzeb, discontent among groups such as Jats, Sikhs, Marathas, and Satanamis increased significantly. It reflected widespread dissatisfaction among farming communities, often culminating in revolts.

#### *Diwan-i-Amir-Kohi*

During Muhammad ibn Tughlaq's reign, the *Diwan-i-Amir-Kohi*, an agricultural service named after *Amir*, was



◆ *Agricultural initiative*

established to improve agricultural practices and productivity in the fertile Doab region between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. This department aimed to assist farmers in the Doab province by enhancing agricultural output and efficiency. The Doab region, known for its fertility between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, was vital for agriculture during that era. The *Diwan-i-Amir Kohi* was a separate entity that was primarily focused on agricultural matters. Its objective was to elevate the economic status of local farmers by enhancing productivity.

◆ *Downfall of Diwan-i-Amir-Kohi*

Department heads allocated areas designated for development within the Doab. They provided financial aid, encouraged better crop yields, educated farmers on modern practices, and promoted cash crops like sugarcane, which was in great demand in the market at that time. The government offered interest-free loans to farmers, repayable after crop production. The establishment of the *Diwan-i-Kohi* was a crucial step in enhancing agricultural sector and raising the overall productivity of the land. However, the department was finally brought down by issues such as dishonesty and bad management, which led to its downfall.

### 2.1.3 Provincial Administration of Medieval India

#### 2.1.3.1 Provincial Administration and *Iqta* System

A number of methods were used to manage administrative tasks in locations outside of the core political region. It was dependent on the level of control that the central government had over various areas. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Sultanate's realm flourished under the influence of continued expansion and growing stability. Some of the newly captured areas came under the direct rule of the Sultanate. In contrast, others maintained some degree of independence. As a direct consequence of this, the Sultan utilised a variety of tactics to preserve his control in each of these regions. The day-to-day management of things was left up to the people of the Sultanate, even though the Centre did station a few officials in parts of the Sultanate to assert authority symbolically. The Centre's primary motivation for looking into these areas was financial, such as the possibility of profiting from them. The Governors were in charge of both the regions and the general management of the territory they were responsible for. This included making certain that taxes were paid, preserving law and order, and bringing disorderly people under control. The Sultan appointed him to serve as an ambassador in his area. As a result of the authorities being moved often and

◆ *Sultanate administration*

their lack of familiarity with the places, they usually require aid from the local officials to carry out their responsibilities. Without the support of these officials, obtaining funds would have been challenging.

◆ *Governor's authority*

As a direct consequence of this, the governor and the power brokers in the local community worked closely together. This alliance eventually led to the governor's assertion of increased power, often challenging the Sultan's authority and causing difficulties for the Sultan at times. In order to make the administration of the government more manageable, the lands were subdivided into *Shiqs* in the 14th century. The *Shiqdar* was in charge of watching over the *Shiqs*. During the time of the Afghans, the *Shiqs* were succeeded by the Sarkar.

◆ *Provincial officials*

However, the *Shiqdar* was not the sole administrative figure; alongside them, the *Faujdar* also held a significant role. Although their specific functions may have seemed to overlap at times, the *Shiqdar* assisted the governor in the upkeep of law and order as well as in the resolution of military conflicts. Additionally, he ensured the smooth functioning of the more decentralised administrative units. The *Faujdar* was responsible for carrying out the same tasks as the *Shiqdar*. The *Kotwals* supervised the *Faujdar* during this period. Moreover, other important provincial officials included *Barids*, a spy and reporter, and *Sahib-i-Diwan*, who recorded how much money the province earned and spent. The *Barids* and *Sahib-i-Diwan* collaborated closely in their respective roles.

### 2.1.3.2 *Iqta System*

◆ *Evolution of Iqta*

The *Iqta* was a form of recognition given to individuals in the early Islamic world in recognition of their contributions to the state. Under the authority of the Caliphate, officers in both the civil and military sectors were paid with it. Following the establishment of the Sultanate, the *Iqta* system was put into place by the Sultans. In the beginning, territories were delegated to army commanders and nobles so that they could manage them and collect taxes. The individuals who were granted these lands were referred to as *Iqtadar* or *Muqti*, while the lands themselves were referred to as *Iqta*. In its most basic form, this was a system for paying commanders and having them maintain the army themselves. Rules and regulations were progressively put into place to provide structure for the entire system. During the Sultanate period, it grew into the principal administrative instrument used by the government. By using this strategy, the Sultans were also able to collect surplus goods across the empire.



◆ Responsibilities of Muqti

*Walis*, also known as *Muqtis*, were the leaders of military and administrative tracts known as *Iqta*. The earliest mention of *Walis* or *Muqtis* is from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The circumstances dictated how their particular powers manifested themselves. Following the established procedures, the *Muqti* was granted complete authority over the administration of the *Iqta*, which included the duty of ensuring the continued existence of an army. It was the responsibility of the *Muqti* to provide the Sultan with the help of his troops whenever the Sultan needed assistance. It was anticipated of him that he would be able to sustain the army while also meeting his financial obligations with the funds that were gathered. After the *Muqti* had paid for his expenses as well as the expenses of the army, he was supposed to remit the remaining balance (also known as the *Fawazil*) of the money to the centre, beginning with Balban. This indicates that the central revenue agency estimated the anticipated income of the *Iqta*, in addition to the expenditures necessary to sustain the army and fund the personal costs of the *Muqti*.

◆ *Iqta* and state control

During the reign of Alauddhin Khalji, this method became a far more stringent one. The *Muqti's* administration was subject to a greater degree of oversight as a direct result of the establishment of central authority. The *Khwaja*, who was most likely the same person as the *Sahib-i-Diwan*, was given the responsibility of recording the revenues of the *Iqtas*. A *Barid*, also known as an intelligence officer, was given the responsibility of keeping the Sultan up to date. During Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq's reign, several governors were selected, and as a condition of their appointment, they were compelled to pay a price to the state that had been specified in advance. Under the rule of Feroz Shah Tughlaq, *Iqtas* were made inheritable, which reduced the state's ability to exert control over those individuals.

### 2.1.3.3 Jagirdari System

The Mughals maintained a system where nobles received financial resources from their provinces as a reward for their services to the empire, known as *Jagirs*. The individuals who owned them were called *Jagirdars*. The *Jagirdari* system was an essential component of the *Mansabdari* system that was established by Akbar and continued to evolve throughout the reigns of his successors after his death. During Akbar's reign, the territories were divided into the *Khalisa* and the *Jagir*. The revenue from the *Jagir* was sent to the *Jagirdars* in the form of a non-cash stipend, while the *Khalisa's* funds

◆ *Khalisa and Jagir*

went to the imperial treasury. The *Zat* and *Sawar* grades of the *mansabdars* were used in the calculation of their wage entitlements. The salary may either be paid in cash, which was known as *naqdi* during that period, or it might be assigned as a *Jagir*, with the latter being the more favoured way. If the payment was made through the assignment of a *Jagir*, the office of the central *Diwan* would select *parganas* whose *Jama* totalled up to the required amount for the *mansabdars'* salaries. This would be done to make room for the distribution of the *jagir*. The assignee was responsible for making up the difference with the central treasury if the recorded *Jama* was higher than the salary claim. If it came in lower than the required amount of salary, the difference between the two was covered by money taken from the general treasury.

◆ *Relocation of Jagirs*

Nevertheless, none of the positions were either permanent or hereditary. At any given time, the emperor could relocate either a portion of the *Jagir* or the entire *Jagir* to a different region of the imperial empire. During the reign of the Mughals, there was a lot of fluctuation in the ratio of *Jagir* to *Khalisa*. *Khalisa* accounted for a little more than five percent of total revenue during the reign of Akbar; during the reign of Jahangir, it was ten percent; and during the reign of Shahjahan, it fluctuated from nine to fifteen percent. During the latter half of Aurangzeb's reign, there was a lot of pressure put on the *Khalisa* since the number of people making claims for *Jagir* increased along with the number of *Mansabdars*.

◆ *Variety of jagirs*

There was also a transfer of *Jagirdars* from one *Jagir* to another (but in certain cases, they were allowed to keep their *Jagir* in one locality for a longer period). Because of the transfer system, the *Jagirdars* were unable to develop roots in the community. At the same time, it presented a challenge in that it discouraged *Jagirdars* from making sustained efforts to enhance the quality of life in their districts. There was a wide variety of *Jagirs* to choose from. *Tankha Jagirs* were granted in place of a salary, *Mashrut Jagirs* were presented based on certain requirements, and *Watan Jagirs* were assigned to *Zamindars* or *Rajas* in their respective regions. *Altamgha Jagirs* were titles of nobility that were granted to Muslims in their native towns or places of origin. *Tankha Jagirs* were subject to possible relocation once every three to four years.

*Watan Jagirs* could only be inherited and could never be sold. When a *Zamindar* was elevated to the rank of



◆ *Jagir regulations*

*mansabdar*, he was given *Tankha Jagir* in addition to his *watan Jagir* in another region if the compensation that came with his new position was more than the income that he had been earning from his *watan Jagir*. In line with the restrictions of the imperial government, the *Jagirdars* were only permitted to collect the legalised forms of revenue. The *Jagirdars* were given their very own officials, such as *Amil*, to work for them. The authority of the imperial government was keeping a close check on the *Jagirdars*. The *Diwan* of the *Suba* was established to prevent the *Jagirdars* from abusing their power over the peasantry. To monitor compliance with imperial laws among *Jagirdars*, *Amil* established a presence in each *suba*. In the past, when the *Jagirdars* were having difficulty collecting taxes, the *Faujdar* would step in to help.

◆ *State assistance to religious figures*

#### 2.1.3.4 *Madad-i-Maash*

Land grants from the state served as income sources for diverse groups like government officials, artists, scholars, and theologians. In particular, those who held positions of religious authority, such as scholars and religious divines, heavily relied on these grants. In Mughal terminology, these gifts were referred to as *Madad-i-Maash*, while in Rajasthani, they were called *sasan*. These religious leaders and academics relied on the state for their livelihoods, and in exchange, they provided the government with assistance in maintaining social harmony and cohesion.

◆ *Water resources and irrigation*

#### 2.1.4 Means and Methods of Irrigation

In the long and illustrious history of irrigation in India's agricultural regions, various water sources, including rain, wells, rivers, tanks, canals and lakes, have played significant roles. Dams, lakes, and storage tanks were essential components in the system that ensured crops received the appropriate amount of water. The state, together with the assistance of local chiefs and religious authorities, facilitated the construction of numerous dams across rivers in southern India. For example, the rulers of Vijaynagara built the Madaga lake on the Tungbhadra river so that irrigation could be more easily accomplished. For irrigation purposes, medieval Rajasthan relied significantly on several lakes and water storage sites, such as the Dhebar and Udaisagar in Mewar, the Rajsamand and Jaisagar in Marwar, and the Mansagar in Amber.

Nearly every area had access to wells, which were one of the few ways to collect water that was safe to drink. The

◆ *Techniques*

extraction of water from its subsurface sources has been artificially assisted in a variety of ways. Pulleys were installed above the wells to accomplish this goal. The principle of levers was also utilised in another type of machine. A hefty weight was attached to the end of a fork that was put on an upright beam. This was done to counterbalance the weight of the bucket once it had been filled. The complete equipment was hung from a long rope.

◆ *Canal construction*

When it came to moving large amounts of water, the Persian wheel was at the cutting edge of technology. It wasn't until the period of the Sultanate that people in India started making use of it. After coupling a gear system with a string of pots, which was then secured to the rim of a wheel, the device was ready for use. After that, the wheel was spun with the help of several animals. The Delhi Sultans placed a high premium on the construction of canal irrigation systems. During his rule, from 1320 to 1325, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq created a series of artificial rivers to accomplish the objective above. However, Firuz Shah Tughlaq was responsible for the construction of more canals than any other emperor before him. In contemporary works, reference is typically made to four of these rivers: from the Yamuna to Firuzabad, from the Nandavi and Simur hills to Arasani, from Ghaggar to the city of Hiransi Khera, and from the Sutlej to Ghaggar. Additionally, the Sutlej was used to go from Ghaggar to the city of Arasani. The Mughal rulers continued the practice of canal construction initiated by the Delhi Sultans. For example, during Shahjahan's reign, the Nahr Faiz was built to divert Yamuna water to irrigate a larger territory. This was accomplished by the construction of a dam.

## Summarised Overview

The medieval period in India witnessed a focus on expanding agricultural production by putting more land under cultivation. The state was consistently seeking innovative approaches to expand the total acreage of land that it could tax to generate more revenue. Techniques like ploughing, animal power, and crop rotation were used to enhance agricultural output, especially during the Mughal period. Food crops, cash crops, fruits, vegetables, and spices were cultivated extensively. Indian spices like pepper, clove, cardamom, etc., were significant commodities traded with Asia and Europe during the Mughal period.

The Sultanate and Mughal administrations managed provinces through governors, Shiqdars, Faujdars, and other officials while using systems like the *iqta* and *jagirdari* for revenue collection and governance. Various methods were used for land revenue assessment and collection, including *batai*, *kankut*, and *zabt* systems under rulers like Sher Shah and Akbar. The actualisation of land income was impossible without the participation of these intermediaries like zamindars, jagirdars, and other local leaders. However, peasants faced challenges due to regressive land taxes, debts, famines, and epidemics, leading to frequent uprisings and discontent, particularly during the reign of Aurangzeb.

The era also saw advancements in irrigation techniques. Various water sources and methods like dams, canals, wells, and Persian wheels were utilised for irrigation across different regions. The Delhi Sultans have given importance to the construction of canal irrigation systems.

## Assignments

1. Analyse and explain the expansion of agricultural cultivation and its impact on the economy and society during the medieval era in India.
2. Analyse the intricate land revenue assessment systems, including crop-sharing, land measurement, and the roles of landed intermediaries in revenue collection.
3. Discuss the provincial administration structures, including the *Iqta* and *Jagirdari* systems, and their significance in governance and revenue distribution during the medieval period.
4. Assess the challenges faced by the peasantry, comprehend their socio-economic conditions, and analyse factors leading to peasant discontent and uprisings.
5. Evaluate the means and methods of irrigation used during the medieval period and their importance in agricultural practices and land productivity.



## Suggested Reading

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1. Banerjee, A. C., *New History of Medieval India*, S Chand and Company, WNew Delhi, 1990.
2. Chitnis, K. N., *Socio-Economic History of Medieval India*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1990.
3. Chitnis, K. N., *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Ideas and Institutions*, R K Chitnis, Poona, 1981.
4. Habib, Irfan, and Raychaudhuri, T., (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1982.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



## Revenue Administration

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ◆ get introduced to the revenue administration of Medieval India
- ◆ analyse the revenue reforms of Alauddin Khalji, Sher Shah Suri and Akbar
- ◆ familiarise themselves with the *Dahsala* and *Zabti* systems under the Akbar and *Ijarah* system in the eighteenth century

### Background

The Persian chronicles provide only a limited amount of information on the early medieval Indian economy. There are, on the other hand, a great number of allusions in contemporary Sanskrit and other regional Indian languages that provide light on the situation of agriculture and other related industries throughout the state. The former systems of taxes continued in their entirety even after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. However, as the years passed and the Sultanate's influence increased, initiatives were launched to improve the tax collection. Sher Shah is credited with instituting a tax system that required farmers to pay predetermined rates of assessment as payment. One may trace the origins of the Mughal tax system back to Akbar. Through a process of trial and error, Akbar refined the taxing system. His method of taxing was founded not only on the measurement and zoning of land but also on the creation of fixed revenue rates. In this unit, let us focus on the revenue administration of Medieval India and the reforms implemented by rulers such as Alauddin Khalji, Sher Shah, Akbar and *Ijarah* system in the eighteenth century.

### Keywords

Revenue administration, *Dahsala* system, *Zabti* System, *Batai* system, *Nasaq* system, *Ijarah* system



# Discussion

## 2.2.1 Revenue Administration of Alauddin Khalji

### ◆ Unified taxation system

A vast portion of northern India was subject to a unified taxation system thanks to Alauddin Khalji, who was responsible for its implementation. The levy might be paid in either cash or in kind by the taxpayer. Alauddin issued a proclamation that the peasantry would be subject to three taxes: the *kharaj*, which was a tax on agriculture; the *charai*, which was a tax on animals; and the *gharai* (tax on houses). The taxing system established by Alauddin is likely the one institution left over from his rule that has survived the longest. The dominant social group came to capture the majority of the surplus produced by the peasantry through the primary mechanism of land revenue.

### ◆ Laws and regulations

Alauddin Khalji was not satisfied with simply managing markets and maintaining price control. He intended to increase the state's available financial resources through his efforts. As a result, he shifted his focus to the changes that would be made to the income. Not only did he want to improve the effectiveness of the administration of the income, but he also wanted to bring about a fundamental shift to maximise the amount of money he brought in from the revenue. Alauddin altered the income laws and regulations of the Delhi Sultanate to accomplish the goals mentioned above by introducing many innovative new policies and procedures.

### ◆ Strict laws were implemented

The first step that Alauddin took was to seize property that was mostly in the possession of Muslim grantees and religious figures. Therefore, all of the land that was part of the empire was turned into *khalisa* land, which means that it was directly under the administration of the state. Resumption of land that was held as *Inam* (gift), *milk* (property rights provided by the state), *Idrarat* (pensions), and *Waqf* (endowments). The only thing that was given as a concession to certain people was permission to enjoy the benefits of the land that they had originally owned. The second step that Alauddin took was to take away all of the advantages that the Hindu *muqaddams*, *Khuts*, and *Chaudharis* had been using for many years. They were forced to pay the land revenue taxes together with the home taxes and the grazing taxes, just like everyone else.

The land revenue in the centre areas of the empire was determined based on measurement, and the share of the

◆ *Jizya and grazing tax*

total output that was allocated to the government was always set at fifty per cent. In the past, payments for land revenue might be made in either cash or in kind. However, when restrictions concerning the market were implemented, Alauddin favoured the payment of land income in kind. In addition to that, the housing and grazing taxes had to be paid by the peasants. In addition to that, the *jizya* tax had to be paid by the Hindus. According to Barani, the grazing tax was collected from every head of cattle that entered the village commons. However, according to Firishta, a person who had ten goats, two cows, two buffalo, two oxen, and two pairs of oxen was free from paying the grazing tax. The grazing tax had to be paid by anybody who had more than the required minimum number of animals.

### 2.2.2 Administration and Land Reforms of Sher Shah

◆ *Diwan-i-Wizarat*

Sher Shah's ministers were nothing more than his creations; they followed Sher Shah's directives and worked under his direct supervision as they went about their daily administrative tasks. There were departments whose administrative chiefs possessed the title of minister in addition to their responsibilities. The following is a list of them: *Diwan-i-Wizarat* (finance), *Diwan-i-Arz* (army), *Diwan-i-Risalat* or *Diwan-i-Muhtasib* (foreign affairs), *Diwan-i-Insha* (palace), *Diwan-i-Qaza* (Justice), *Diwan-i-Barid* (intelligence division) and *Diwan-i-Saman* (management of the royal household). Out of these departments, *Diwan-i-Wizarat* had the primary responsibility to oversee the state's finances and income. The *Wazir*, the Minister of Finance, was in charge of the office and this department. In principle, he was able to exercise some level of general control over the activities of the other ministers. Sher Shah was himself a financial and land-revenue professional with extensive experience. He took a close interest in the department's day-to-day operations.

The primary sources of money for the state included land revenue, unclaimed property, trade, mint, salt tax, *Khams*, and *jizya*, as well as gifts from subordinate kings, governors, nobles, and traders, amongst other people. The costs associated with maintaining the army, paying the salaries of civilian officials, and funding the expenses of the royal household and the Sultan were the primary components of the total expenditures. *Abwabs* were the name given to the local taxes, which were primarily levied on the production and consumption of various trades and professions, in



◆ *Source of state income*

addition to transportation costs. Despite this, money from land remained the state's principal source of income for the longest time. In his childhood, Sher Shah served as the manager of the *Jagir* that belonged to his father. This experience provided him with a first-hand understanding of the challenges associated with land revenue as well as the key to the state's prosperity and stability.

◆ *Zabt system under Sher Shah*

According to Abul Fazl, Sher Shah was the one who first implemented Alauddin Khalji's system of land revenue. This perspective held by Abul Fazl on Sher Shah, on the other hand, appears to be inaccurate. Sher Shah did not unquestioningly adhere to Alauddin's method of collecting taxes. He chose to trust his instincts and acted upon what he believed was the correct course of action. He used the *Zabt* system of measurement, in which the productivity of the land was analysed. The samples were taken from three distinct kinds of land to determine the overall level of productivity of the land: good, middling and bad. The average yield was then calculated, and its one-third was the share of the state. The amount of money that each harvest was required to bring in every *bigha* was referred to as the "Rai of Sher Shah."

Sher Shah believed that the welfare of the peasants was the key to ensuring the welfare of the state, and he felt this to be the case. As a result, he devoted his particular attention to the management of the revenue, and he successfully implemented several new methods to enhance its quality. His management of the country's taxes is often regarded as one of the finest examples of its kind from the medieval ages. The following is a list of its fundamental characteristics:

◆ *Features of land revenue management*

1. Elimination of the intermediaries, *zamindars*, agents or contractors for collecting the land revenue was the most significant contribution to the efficiency of its land revenue system by Sher Shah. The *Ryotwari* system, also known as the system of cultivators or *ryots*, was implemented in the majority of the regions in which the state maintained direct ties with the peasants to assess and collect land tax. However, due to the ongoing use of the *Jagirdari* system in Malwa, Multan, and Rajasthan, the new system was unable to be implemented in those regions.
2. Based on their ability to produce crops, all of the land that could be farmed was ranked as either excellent, moderate, or poor. A standardised method was

used to measure the land, and the quality of the land owned by each cultivator was evaluated and ranked accordingly. After determining the typical value of the harvest in each instance, Qanungo argued that the peasants needed to contribute equal to one-fourth of the typical value. On the other hand, the vast majority of historians, including P. Saran and R.P. Tripathi, the cultivators were required to hand up a third of their harvest to the state.

3. The state favoured collecting money in the form of cash over any other medium. Despite this, the farmers were provided with the option to pay some or all of their earnings in kind. Cash was the sole acceptable method of payment for the peasants' share of the earnings from the sale of perishable goods.
4. The facility for the peasants to pay their revenue in two instalments every year, according to the agricultural seasons, was made available to them by the government.
5. The state provided the peasants with *qabuliyats* (documents of agreement) and *pattas* (title deeds) so that they may legally own their land. *Patta* provided details on the various types of land possessed by the farmer as well as the rates of land income payable by the cultivator on the various types of crops. Through *Qabuliyat*, the farmer committed the state to pay a certain amount of money from the land.
6. Peasants were required to pay two additional taxes, which were referred to as the *jaribana* (surveyor's fee) at the rate of 2.5 per cent and the *muhasilana* (tax fee) collector's at the rate of 5 per cent of the land revenue to the state. Both of these taxes were paid as a percentage of the total land revenue.
7. In addition to these obligations, the peasants were required to hand up 2.5 per cent of their harvest in the form of in-kind payments. These funds were to be restored to them in the event of any natural disaster.
8. Sher Shah's standing instructions to the tax collecting officials were that they should show mercy to the cultivators at the time of measurement but collect the money with the utmost strictness.
9. During the conflict, every precaution was taken to preserve the harvest from being destroyed, and if it was destroyed, the peasants were reimbursed by the state for their losses.



◆ *Unsuccessful attempt*

Sher Shah made several attempts to improve the management of the land revenue, but his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. Under this arrangement, the farmers who owned property of average or poor quality had to pay a higher price than those who owned land of high quality since the former group was required to do so. The taxation system that required the peasants to pay one third of their harvest as revenue, including the *jaribana*, the *muhasilana*, and additional tax for unexpected events was unquestionably demanding for the peasants.

◆ *Protection of peasant interests*

Because of the variations in cost from region to region, it's likely that the peasants had trouble making their cash payments for the earnings they received. The yearly settlement of the tax presented difficulties for the peasants as well as for the authorities of the state. The system was not implemented in the lands owned by *Jagirdars*; as a result, the peasants who lived in such areas were unable to get any benefits from using it. Sher Shah was unsuccessful in his efforts to clean up the land tax department's unethical practices. Nevertheless, the policies that Sher Shah put into place had, for the most part, been successful in improving the peasants' lot and raising the income of the State. As a result, the method of collecting taxes that Sher Shah used has been considered to be superior to the methods utilised by the various other medieval Indian rulers. In comparison to other rulers, he did not levy a particularly high tax burden on the peasants of his domain. He exacted punishment on anyone who caused the peasants any kind of problem, and he even took a personal interest in ensuring that the peasants' interests were protected. As a result, the Sher Shah administration of the tax system has garnered commendation from all historians.

◆ *Foundation for Akbar's taxation system*

## 2.2.3 Revenue Administration Under Akbar

### 2.2.3.1 Evolution of Akbar's Revenue Policy

Land revenue was the Mughal government's primary source of revenue, despite the fact that it also possessed other sources of income like as customs, mint, inheritance, pillage, tribute, and monopolies, among other things. Sher Shah was the first ruler of Hindustan to implement extensive revenue reforms, which were advantageous to the state as well as to the people. These changes benefitted both parties. Sher Shah's tenets served as the foundation for Akbar's taxation system, and Akbar incorporated several novel ideas into the framework to make it more effective.

◆ *Adoption of Sher Shah's method*

The *Ain-i-Akbari* written by Abul Fazl provides a comprehensive account of Akbar's tax management system. When Akbar became emperor, he immediately implemented Sher Shah's method, which involved measuring the extent of the cultivated land and developing a centralised plan. It established a crop-wise obligation for the peasant depending on the amount of produce that might be harvested from the land. A comprehensive price schedule was constructed using this plan as the basis. Akbar discovered that this method of establishing a central schedule had certain restrictions attached to it. One of the consequences was that there was a delay, and another was that it made life difficult for the farmer. Because the prices specified and typically prevailing in the imperial court were often higher than those in the countryside, the farmer ended up parting with more produce than he had originally intended. When it came to the management of taxes, Akbar tried out numerous different approaches.

◆ *First experiment*

It was important for him to have a direct line of communication open with the cultivator. Because of logistical challenges, such as the variety of crops grown and the diversity of the land, it was challenging to implement a standard system across the empire. Akbar made certain changes to Sher Shah's method. In the year 1560, Akbar conducted the first experiment by attempting to improve tax management by assigning Khwaja Abdul Majid Khan to the position of *wazir*. He made the decision to collect the income in cash and set the amount at a greater level, but the farmers were unable to pay the increased amount and were thus unsatisfied.

◆ *Revenue reforms - Krori system*

Itimad Khan was given the position of *diwan* in charge of *Khalisa* lands by Akbar in the year 1563. He divided the region belonging to the *Khalisa* from the land of the *Jagir*. He then split the *Khalisa* territories into income divisions, with each division resulting in an annual revenue of one crore rupees. The name "*krori*" eventually evolved to be given to the officer in charge of each section. In the year 1564, Muzaffar Khan was given the position of *diwan-i-kul*. He was instrumental in the introduction of revenue changes alongside Raja Toder Mal. It was requested that *Qanungos*, located in a variety of regions, provide revenue figures for their particular regions to the *wizarat*, which would then determine revenue rates based on the facts that were provided to it. In the year 1569, he was the one who initiated the yearly tax. Because the *qanungo* was already familiar with the environment, he was given the task of providing a report on the real produce, local pricing, sales, and the state of the crop. The yearly evaluation was flawed in



that it made life difficult for both the peasant and the state, and this was the assessment's flaw.

### 2.2.3.2 Raja Toder Mal's *Bondobast*

Following Akbar's conquest of Gujarat (1573), Raja Toder Mal was selected by Akbar to oversee the implementation of tax reforms in the newly acquired province. Toder Mal carried out routine land surveys, and assessments were performed with consideration given to both the total area and the quality of the land. The *Jagirs* were included in the Crown's existing estates. One hundred eighty-two *Parganas* were each given control over a portion of the empire in its entirety at that time. The harvest brought in one crore *dam* from each *paragana* (equivalent to two and a half lakh rupees a year). *Kroris* was the name given to the police officers who were put in charge of collecting this income. Akbar selected Toder Mal to serve as the *diwan* and Khwaja Shah Mansur to serve as his deputy so that the tax reforms could be put into action. Toder Mal is credited with establishing the foundation for the management of land income for the empire.

◆ *Todar Mal as Diwan*

The following are the three primary actions that Toder Mal took:

- i. Measurement of land that was used in the process of conducting a systematic survey of land. In the past, the land was measured using a rope made of hemp, which would either shrink or expand depending on the quantity of moisture that was present in the air. The hemp rope was substituted with either *jarib* or bamboo that were held together by iron rings and maintained their original length.
- ii. Following the completion of the measurement, the land was categorised. This action was taken to maintain the cultivation process. The land was divided into these four categories as a result: (i) *Polaj*, which was land that was always farmed, was never allowed to lie fallow and produced income every year. (ii) *Parauti* refers to land that has been abandoned for a year or two to enable it to regain its vitality and productivity. (iii) *Chachar*: It is the land that has been abandoned and left unused for a period of three to four years. (iv) *Banjar*: It is a term that refers to land that has been uncultivated for more than five years. The territories of the *polaj* and the *parauti* were further divided into three categories: excellent, moderate, and terrible.

◆ *Todar Mal's effort*

Following the calculation of the average of the three, the evaluation was completed. It was recommended that *banjar* land be used for agricultural purposes.

iii. Measuring and evaluating were only done in the areas that were under cultivation. The state's share was equal to one-third of the average yield, although this number may be higher or lower depending on the method of assessment and the productivity of the land. There were varying prices for the various types of crops. Because Toder Mal's *bandobast* system was in place, both the government and the farmer were relieved of a great deal of uncertainty. The amount that the farmer was going to pay was clear to him. The farmer was given a receipt when the payment was made. A record was maintained of all of the holdings, obligations, and collections that were made. Each farmer was provided with a *patta*, which is similar to a title document, and forced to sign a *qabuliyat*, which is another term for an agreement. This paperwork included the cultivator's land plot specifications, including the acreage of each plot as well as the income that the cultivator was required to pay for each plot. The record of the collected was sent to the treasurer by the collector. The books of accounts were written in Persian.

### 2.2.3.3 Systems of Revenue Collection

#### *Dahsala* System

◆ *Restructuring of revenue collection*

When Toder Mal was appointed to the position of *Diwan-i-Ashraf*, (Minister in charge of Agricultural Department), the mechanism for collecting revenues was completely restructured. The ever-expanding size of the empire made the necessary changes to the tax system unavoidable. The assessment used to be fixed each year depending on the yield and price, which resulted in the state demand being varied from one year to the next. However, this practice was discontinued at some point. To prevent the hassle and annoyance brought on by the yearly settlement, Toder Mal established a set of principles. As a result of this, a compromise known as the *Dahsala* system was implemented for 10 years. This method allowed for the calculation of the average yield of a variety of crops as well as the average prices that have been in effect over the previous ten years. The state's portion of the overall produce was equal to one-third of the whole amount.



◆ *Functioning of the Dahsala system*

It was requested of the cultivators that they pay the revenue in cash. To accomplish this goal, the prices of each cereal were standardised throughout all regions since the regional pricing varied. A.L. Srivastava asserts that Akbar partitioned his whole kingdom into several *dasturs*. It was expected that the pricing for all types of crops would be the same across the entirety of the *dastur's* areas. For each *dastur*, an individual calculation was made to determine the average price that was paid during the past 10 years for each kind of crop. The price of the crop during the assessment year was determined to be equal to the crop's average price. There were multiple pricing schedules for each type of crop, and these price schedules varied from *dastur* to *dastur*. There were also separate price schedules. The provinces of Bihar, Allahabad, Malwa, Awadh, Agra, Delhi, and Lahore, as well as a portion of Multan, were among the first to use the *Dahsala* system.

◆ *Benefit to both the State and the peasants*

According to the *Dahsala* system, the peasants were required to pay a fixed revenue for 10 years. If they were able to create more as a result of their efforts, then they were free to reap the benefits of doing so. In addition, all *Jagirdari* land was managed by state authorities, who had complete authority over it. Since there were no intermediaries such as *Jagirdars* or landlords, the peasants were not subject to exploitation. As a result, the method of collecting taxes that Akbar implemented was advantageous not only to the state but also to the peasants. It caused a rise in output, which in turn contributed to the expansion of both industry and commerce. Even though Akbar was always engaged in warfare for this reason, his treasury continued to be well-stocked throughout his reign. Vincent Smith argued that Akbar's method of collecting taxes was a commendable one.

### **Zabti System**

The *Zabti* system was another method of collecting money from land, during the Mughal period, with its inception credited to Sher Shah. Under the rule of Akbar, this system underwent multiple revisions before ultimately settling into its final form. Under this system, when the time came to plant crops, a group of officials went on a trip across the towns and communities to determine the precise amount of arable land that was being used for farming to compile the crop statement. After determining the total area of each crop grown on each holding, the official in charge of collecting taxes, *Bitikchi*, then used the specified rates to arrive at the

amount of money that the farmer owed. In the *subahs* of Bihar, Allahabad, Multan, Awadh, Agra, Malwa, Delhi, and Lahore, as well as in certain sections of Gujarat and Ajmer, the *Zabti* system was the dominant social structure.

### ***Ghallabakshi or Batai System***

This was perhaps the oldest and most widely used method of obtaining financial contributions. The state and the farmer each received a certain share of the harvest, which was then split between them according to the predetermined ratio. The crop was separated into its parts either while it was still standing in the field after it had been harvested, or after it had been threshed. This system was also referred to as the *Batai* or *Ghallabakshi* system at one point in time. This system continued to be used in Qandahar, Kashmir, and some regions of Sindh and Multan.

◆ *Fixation of land revenue*

### ***Nasaq System***

In addition, there existed a system known as *nasaq*, which was quite common at the time. After conducting a thorough examination of a field, competent appraisers derived an approximate estimate to represent the yield of the field. The state's allotment was decided to be equal to one-third of the total expected harvest. At one point, a weighted average of the land revenue that the farmer had paid out over the previous 10 years for all of his land was determined. It is believed that Aurangzeb supported the *nasaq* system. When Aurangzeb was in power, the demand for state rose to the level where it consumed half of the whole output. In the states of Bengal, Gujarat, and Kathiawar, the *nasaq* method of taxation was a most common practice.

◆ *Crop-sharing system*

### **2.2.3.4 Revenue Officials**

*Ryotwari* was the mechanism that Akbar used to collect taxes. The real landholders who were responsible for cultivating the land were made accountable for the annual payment of the set revenue. *Patwaris* and *Muqaddams* were not officers of the state, yet the state acknowledged the services they provided, assessed and collected tax with their assistance, and kept records with their assistance. In exchange, a portion of the earnings was distributed to them. The *Amil* was in charge of collecting the taxes. He was helped in his endeavours by the *Qanungo*, the *Bitikchi*, and the *Potahdar*. In the final years of Akbar's reign, *Qanungos* were elevated to the status of state officials and given wages by the government of Akbar's empire. In charge of Amils

◆ *Aurangzeb favoured the Nasaq system*



◆ *Paternal attitude towards the peasants*

were *Amalgujars*, who reported to regional diwans, who, in turn, were responsible to the central *Diwan (Wazir)*. Akbar had a keen interest in the development and expansion of agricultural practices during his reign. He gave *amil* the instruction to behave paternally toward the peasants. It was requested of him that, in times of need, he lend money to the peasants in the form of loans so that they might buy things like seeds, tools, animals, etc., and that he collect the money from them in manageable instalments. During the time of Akbar's rule, the peasants were not subjected to excessively high levels of taxation. From the peasants, Akbar demanded and received the customary one-third share of the harvest as payment for the land.

### 2.2.3.5 Other Sources of Revenue

◆ *Abwabs and Jizya*

Other taxes and levies, known as *Abwabs*, were imposed on the peasants in addition to the usual revenue from the land to boost the amount of money the state brought in. These taxes included duties on the sale of produce, fees on the sale of immovable property, perquisites taken by the officers for their own sake and fees or commissions taken for the state, license-tax for carrying on certain trades, forced subscriptions, and imposts on the Hindus, such as a tax on bathing in the Ganges and for carrying the bones of the deceased Hindus for immersion in the Ganges. Aurangzeb got rid of a lot of the *Abwabs*, but he also created some new ones so that the state could make more money. *Jizya*, the poll tax that was required to be paid by non-Muslims and had been eliminated by Akbar in the past, was reinstated by this ruler.

### 2.2.3.6 The Zamindars

◆ *Zamindari rights*

During the time of Mughal rule, the *Zamindars* were also responsible for an important part of the management of income. They were in charge of upholding the law and preserving order in their respective regions. They were not members of the government in the same capacity as the *amalguzars*. In the community, the *Zamindars* served as a form of minor landholding. A good number of them were the offspring of long-established governing families who nonetheless maintained possession of their family territory. Others had positions of authority, such as Rajput princes. The *Zamindars* were responsible for the cultivation of the lands that they held. They also inherited the right to collect land revenue from many villages, which was a significant source of income for them. The *Zamindars* did not personally

possess every piece of land that was included in his *Zamindari*.

◆ *Responsibilities*

If the tenant farmer paid his land rent, he was protected from eviction and could continue cultivating the property. In Bengal, the revenue that was paid to the state by each *Zamindar* was predetermined. His income was determined by what was available after deducting what he owed the government. The amount of money that the peasant was required to pay to the state was predetermined in some areas. As a result, the *Zamindar* instituted a distinct tax to enrich himself. Because of the *Zamindars'* treatment of the peasants, the peasants came to be known as the "exploited classes." The *Zamindars* were responsible for the upkeep of their armies. They made their homes in strongholds known as *garhis* or forts, which were indicators of their social standing. As long as they maintained a consistent flow of income into the imperial treasury, they were given the autonomy to run their affairs as they saw fit. The *Zamindars* wielded significant authority and influence in their communities, and the administration of the imperial state was unable to ignore them.

### 2.2.3.7 The *Jagirdars*

◆ *Allocation of jagir*

When Akbar was in power, the government officials, particularly the *mansabdars*, received their salaries in cash. On the other hand, Akbar's successors made certain adjustments to this system. The Mughal officials who worked in the imperial service were compensated not in cash but rather with revenue-generating land that was personally allotted to them. The position of the person in charge of the assignment was known as the *Jagirdar*. The mansabdar's standing and rank determined whether or not he was given a *Jagir*. He supported himself financially thanks to his *Jagir*.

◆ *Transformation and crisis*

The evaluation of the assignments was carried out by the *Wizarat*. Because of their positions as state officials, *Jagirdars* were subject to being moved about every few years. This was done to prevent them from cultivating any vested interests in a certain area. These *Jagirdars* did not make many efforts to improve the quality of life for the people who lived on their *Jagir*. The imperial authority did not exercise any kind of consistent control over the *Jagir* at any point in time. The *Jagirdari* system turned into a hereditary structure during the authority of the later Mughals. One of the causes of the fall of the Mughal Empire was a crisis that occurred inside the *Jagirdari* system.



## 2.2.4 Decline of Agriculture and Revenue

◆ *Gradual decline*

During the reign of Jahangir, both revenue and agricultural production suffered from a slow but steady decrease. The *Jagirdars* were given unrestricted authority over the management of their respective estates. The peasants were typically subjected to oppression at the hands of these *Jagirdars*. The amount of money made from *khalisa* lands likewise gradually decreased. Shahjahan endeavoured to improve the lot of his peasants during his reign. He made an effort to increase the amount of land that was cultivated. The system of providing *mansabdars* with *jagirs* rather than a monetary payment was maintained. The agricultural problem got much more severe during the reign of Aurangzeb. The state was unable to evict peasants thus they needed to maintain working in agriculture. The peasants were subjected to tyranny at the hands of the officers and *Jagirdars*. During the rule of the later Mughals, revenue management began to deteriorate, which had an effect on tax collection and contributed to the worsening status of the imperial finances.

## 2.2.5 Revenue Administration during 18<sup>th</sup> Century

### 2.2.5.1 Later Mughals

The crisis that befell the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century was the precipitating factor that ultimately resulted in the empire's disintegration. As the influence of the Mughal Empire declined, the governors of the provinces, *subedars*, and the large *Zamindars* all grew more influential and asserted their autonomy. The regional states that existed during this time may be classified into the following three categories:

◆ *First Category*  
◆ *Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad*

1. Some of the states' founding families were prominent Mughal lords who held high *mansabs* at the time of their states' establishment. Even though they achieved independence, they never severed their links with the Mughal Empire. Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad are three of the most significant states that fall within this group.

◆ *Establishment of regional states*

Sa'adat Khan is credited with establishing the state of Awadh. Murshid Quli Khan is credited with establishing the state of Bengal, whereas Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah established the state of Hyderabad. These three individuals were not only influential members of the Mughal nobility but also served as governors of their respective regions. There was a large-scale movement of troops and bureaucrats from Delhi to these new states when the Mughal Empire began to decline.

These new states presented several opportunities for their new residents.

◆ *Zamindar demotion*

In these states, the former *Zamindars* were demoted to a different post. Sa'adat Khan, for instance, was able to take control of some Rajput *Zamindaris* in addition to the agriculturally productive territories of the Afghans in Rohilkhand. Similarly, Murshid Quli Khan sent all Mughal *Jagirdars* to Orissa and commanded a significant recalculation of Bengal's income to lessen the authority of the Mughals in Bengal. All *Zamindars* were required to pay their revenue in cash, and the collection process was very stringent. As a direct consequence of this, many *zamindars* were forced to get loans from various bankers and moneylenders. Those who were not able to make the payments were ordered to sell their land to *Zamindars* with more resources.

◆ *Role of bankers*

There was also an increase in the number of bankers and moneylenders known as *Mahajan* in these states during this period. When it came to loans, both the state and the landed elite were dependent on them. These bankers, in turn, rose to positions of power and had an impact on the government. The state sold the privilege to collect taxes by auction to whoever placed the highest offer, which was mostly bankers and *Mahajan*. In return, the lenders committed to the state that they would pay a certain amount of money. As a result, the state was guaranteed a consistent revenue. The people who purchased the right to collect taxes were referred to as *ijaradars* under this system, which was referred to as the *ijaradari* system. The Mughal state has never supported this method of government. There was a possibility that those who collected the tax would take advantage of the peasants by collecting far more than the predetermined amount. As a result, they would send less money to the state, which would result in a decrease in the amount of money the state received.

◆ *Second Category*

2. The second group of regional states in the eighteenth century was comprised of those states that had previously been granted a significant amount of freedom as *Watan Jagirs* while they were under Mughal authority. These were the states that belonged to the Rajput dynasty.

◆ *Third Category*

3. The states in the region that had developed as a result of uprisings against the Mughal power constituted the third group of regional states. They included the Sikhs, the Marathas, and the Jats. As an illustration, the Sikh uprising against the Mughals resulted in the establishment of a state in Punjab.



◆ Introduction of the Ijarah system

### 2.2.5.2 Ijarah System

The *Ijarah* method involved awarding a task in exchange for a sum of money to the person who submitted the highest bid. During the time of the Mughal emperors, it had widespread popularity. Jahadar Shah, who reigned from 1712 to 1713, is credited for instituting the *Ijarah* system, which was a revenue farming system at the time. During the 18th century, this method of collecting and assessing taxes and other forms of income gained widespread popularity. When local farmers lacked the resources necessary to grow their property properly, this same mechanism allowed them to lease it to other parties instead of cultivating it themselves. Officials of the revenue department and their families were restricted from using the system.

## Summarised Overview

Land taxes contributed much more than any other source of revenue to the medieval state's coffers. A unified taxation system characterised the revenue administration of Alauddin Khalji. Alauddin Khalji's reforms aimed at maximising state revenue, altering income laws, and implementing strict measures. On the other hand, Sher Shah implemented the *Zabt* system for land revenue. He prioritised peasant welfare, eliminated intermediaries, and introduced the *Ryotwari* system in certain regions.

Akbar refined the measurement-based taxation system and introduced innovative measures like the *Dahsala* system. Toder Mal, appointed as the diwan, implemented systematic land surveys, categorised land, and introduced the concept of 'kroris' for revenue collection. Additionally, the *Ghallabaksha* or *Batai* system and the *Nasaq* system represented alternative methods of revenue collection involving crop-sharing and approximate yield estimations, respectively.

The revenue officials were instrumental in maintaining records and facilitating tax collection. *Zamindars* inherited rights to collect land revenue from villages. The *Jagirdari* system, initially non-hereditary, later transformed into a hereditary structure. The decline in agriculture and revenue during Jahangir's reign persisted through Shahjahan and worsened under Aurangzeb. The unrestricted authority of *Jagirdars* and oppressed peasants led to agricultural problems. The later Mughals witnessed a deterioration in revenue management, affecting tax collection and overall imperial finances, which contributed to the gradual decline of the Mughal Empire. The *Ijarah* system, or revenue farming, gained popularity during the 18th century.

## Assignments

1. Describe the significant reforms introduced by Alauddin Khalji in the taxation system during his reign.
2. Analyse the revenue reforms implemented by Sher Shah Suri.
3. Discuss the revenue reforms introduced during Akbar's reign.
4. Examine the role of Raja Toder Mal in Akbar's revenue administration. What were the key actions taken by Toder Mal to improve land revenue collection?
5. Discuss the features of *Dahsala*, *Zabti*, *Batai* and *Nasaq* Systems of Medieval India.
6. Explain the *Ijarah* system during the eighteenth century.
7. Describe the revenue administrative structure of the medieval period.

## Suggested Reading

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4. Moosvi, Shireen, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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## Social Stratification

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the satisfactory conclusion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- ◆ understand the nature of the rural society of Medieval India
- ◆ analyse the intricacies of the caste system and craft production during the medieval period
- ◆ know the condition of women in Medieval India

### Background

The Mughal Empire reached its largest territorial size by the end of the seventeenth century. We have discussed the political and administrative challenges faced by the empire and significant economic developments that happened during the medieval period. The social structure during the Sultanate period persisted under Mughal rule, showing signs of both continuity and change. Important developments included the increased stratification of society, the growth of urbanisation, and the emergence of the artisan and master-artisan class. Moreover, there was an expansion in the composite ruling class, along with bureaucratisation and commercialisation. There was an overall expansion and strengthening of the middle segments and the commercial classes. Now, let us focus more on the nature of rural society, the caste system and craft production during this period. This unit will also provide an overview of the status of women in Medieval India.

### Keywords

Non-agricultural activities, Caste, Village craftsmen, *Iqtadar*, *Zamindars*, *Mansabdars*, *Jagirdars*, Women



# Discussion

## 2.3.1 Non-Agricultural Activities of Medieval India

### ◆ Craft production

In Medieval India, despite agriculture being the primary source of income for the majority of the population, a wide range of crafts were also produced on a substantial scale across the country. These craft making were prevalent in both rural and urban settings. The production of textiles, ceramics, dyes, sugar, metalwork, papermaking, woodworking, weapons and armour manufacture, shipbuilding, chemical operations, and other types of work were all included in this category of crafts.

### ◆ Textile production

In medieval India, one of the most frequently practised crafts was the creation of textiles. Cotton, silk, woollen, and mixed coarse cotton were the four primary forms of woven cloth that Indian weavers manufactured. Important centres for the manufacture of cotton textiles in India include Bengal, Lahore, Agra, Awadh, Patna, Fatehpur Sikri, and Gujarat, amongst others. Agra, Lahore, and Kashmir were three of the most important centres for the production of shawls and carpets. Both Bengal and Gujarat were well-known for the export of textile items in addition to their industrial industries. During this period, the process of dyeing or bleaching textiles evolved into its own distinct and specialised art form. The cities of Bharuch, Ahmedabad, Surat, Patna, Sonargaon, Dacca, and Masulipatam, among others, were important centres for dyeing and bleaching.

### ◆ Textile technology

The medieval period was marked by technological advancement. One significant advancement in the textile industry that happened during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was the introduction of the spinning wheel, also known as a *charkha*. This innovation led to a sixfold increase in yarn production speed compared to the traditional spindle-based method. Similarly, the pit loom, introduced in India around the fourteenth century, sped up the weaving process. The drawloom was yet another key piece of weaving equipment that allowed for the simultaneous weaving of patterned threads of several colours. Similarly, the use of block printing is believed to have originated in India during the medieval period.

### ◆ Sugar products

Sugar was produced in several locations around the nation. In addition to Bengal and Orissa, Ahmedabad, Lahore, and Multan, many more cities and towns contributed to the production of sugar in its numerous forms, including Gur,



powder, and finely ground sugar, amongst others.

◆ *Mineral production*

The mining of minerals was also a significant business in medieval India. On a massive scale, the production of various minerals such as salt, saltpetre, alum, and mica took place. The Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan, the rock salt mines in Punjab, and the water from the sea were all significant contributors to salt production. The regions of Bengal, Sind, Malabar, and Mysore, as well as the Rann of Kutch, were the primary producers of sea salt. One of the most significant products derived from minerals was called saltpetre, and its primary function was in the production of gunpowder. In the beginning, it was obtained from Ahmedabad, Baroda, Patna, and other locations. Despite this, by the second half of the seventeenth century, Patna had established itself as one of the most prominent centres for the processing of this material.

◆ *Metal production*

In terms of metals, India lacked an adequate quantity of gold and silver mines. Because of this, the majority of these metals were imported. Golconda was the location where the vast majority of diamond mining activity took place. The regions of Biragarh (Berar), Panna (Madhya Pradesh), and Khokhra (Chotanagpur), among others, were also important diamond-producing centres. Khetri in Rajasthan was the most important location for the manufacturing of copper. Iron was the most common metal that was discovered. During the medieval period, important centres for the production of iron were located in Bengal, Allahabad, Agra, Bihar, Gujarat, Delhi, Kashmir, Chotanagpur, and the districts of Orissa that were adjacent to these places.

◆ *Advances in metalworking*

Manufacturing has undergone a revolution with the adoption of various new technologies, particularly in metallurgy and metalworking. These include the use of pulleys, vertical bore pits, oval shaft deep mines, and other similar technologies. During this time, the production of high-quality steel and the bidri alloy, made of copper and zinc, were major advancements in metalworking. The arrival of the Turks in India also led to the practice of tin coating, where the interior of copper and brass utensils was coated with tin to protect food from acidic substances.

◆ *Modern artillery*

The use of gunpowder, cannons, and firearms also emerged as significant developments in the arms and armour industry during the medieval period. The introduction of modern artillery in India can be attributed to both Babur,

who brought it from Persia, and the Portuguese. Additionally, Fatullah Shirazi, a prominent scholar and engineer during Akbar's reign, made important contributions to this field.

◆ *Paper making*

The art of papermaking first appeared in India during the time of the Sultanate. Around the first century of the Common Era, it was first produced in China and the practice experienced rapid expansion. During the Mughal period, practically every province was home to a significant paper manufacturing industry.

◆ *Glass works*

Although ancient Indians had the technology to make glass, glass jewellery was limited to beads and bangles. However, during the medieval period, the production of various glass goods, such as pharmaceutical phials, vessels, and other items, began.

### 2.3.2. Organisation of Craft Production

◆ *Jajmani system*

Craft production was organised not just in *Qasbas* but also in nearby communities. There were also imperial *Karkhanas* in existence. Craftspeople manufactured items that were used daily in rural communities. The social network in the community was known as the *jajmani* system, and these artisans were members of it. The Deccan and Maharashtra both have highly organised versions of this system. *Balutedars* were the names given to the village artisans and servants in various parts of the world. Individual craftsmen who lived out of towns produced the core of the goods that were intended for sale. They were responsible for the acquisition of essential raw materials and tools, the manufacturing of goods, and the sale of those goods on the market.

◆ *Dadni sWystem*

The handcrafted method of production that was being used, on the other hand, had a significant flaw. Because each craftsman was responsible for their output, they did not have access to significant resources that could be invested in the manufacturing process. In order to find a solution to this issue, a redesigned method of manufacturing known as the *dadni* system was established. Under this method, a merchant who dealt with the relevant goods would offer an artisan with the essential raw materials as well as advance payment for their work. When the allotted amount of time had passed, the merchants gathered the finished products and brought them to the market to be sold.

Another unit of craft production was the Royal Workshop, also known as the *Karkhana*. The royal institution included



◆ *Karkhanas*

these *karkhanas* as one of its components. These divisions were responsible for producing a variety of goods for the royal household and the court. They produced, for the most part, costly goods and articles of luxury such as cloth embroidered with gold and silver thread, silk and so on. The *Karkhanas* hired skilled workers and centralised their operations so that authorities from the state could monitor them. It would appear that there were two unique sorts of *Karkhanas*. First, there was the traditional kind of *Karkhanas*, which produced luxury goods in limited quantities but of high artistic value; second, there were mints or arms manufacturing units, which engaged in large-scale production that was standard-oriented and technologically advanced; both of these types of establishments produced goods.

### 2.3.3 Caste System during the Medieval Period

◆ *Primary Castes*

It is believed that there were minimal changes in the structure of Hindu society during this period. An indefinite number of sub-castes and mixed castes of varying status, as well as a group of despised castes coming in at the bottom of the scale, make up the social structure described in the *smritis*. These four primary castes are known as the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, and the Shudras. Their rank and status decrease from highest to lowest. According to Al-Biruni, eight *antyaja* castes hold a status lower than the Shudras. They were the blacksmith, the juggler, the shoemaker, the fisherman, the hunter of wild animals, and the basket maker, in that order. All of those people who did not belong to any of the conventional castes were referred to as “outcastes” or chandalas. This was a derogatory term for them. People from higher castes took advantage of those in lower castes, who were also subjected to indignities and insults at the hands of those higher up the social hierarchy. Even the government practised caste-based discrimination against its own population.

◆ *Higher status of Brahmins*

The *Smriti* writers of the time consistently upheld the higher status of the *Brahmins* while strongly condemning those deemed unworthy within the order. According to one school of thought, brahmins were not only allowed to engage in agriculture during times of distress but also in normal times, as officiating at sacrifices did not provide sufficient means of subsistence in the Kali Age.

The *Smriti* texts continued to emphasise that the responsibility of punishing the wicked and nurturing the good rested with the *Kshatriyas*, and the exclusive right to wield

◆ *Condition of lower castes*

weapons to protect the people belonged to them alone. The duties, occupations, and limitations of *sudras* were reiterated, with the highest duty being the service of other castes. While *sudras* were allowed to engage in all occupations, except dealing in liquor and meat. The prohibition on the study and recitation of the *Vedas* by *Sudras* persisted, although listening to the recitation of the *Puranas* was allowed. Some writers even advocated not only avoiding eating *sudra's* food, but also sharing the same house, sitting on the same cot, and receiving religious instructions from a learned *sudra*. However, the strictest restrictions were imposed on interactions with *chandalas* and other 'outcastes'.

◆ *Proliferation of castes*

The shifting political and economic landscape affected the social stratifications that were defined by caste. Both in the north and the south, a great number of the older castes disappeared, while a number of new castes emerged or rose to prominence. In theory, members of the *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, and *Vaisya* castes were required to work in their customary vocation, but, in fact, this requirement was not strictly enforced. The *Kayastha* people are one of the several subcastes that can be found in northern India. The government employs them and has risen to a prominent position there. The *Khatris* people originally hail from Punjab. They were skilled administrators and clever bankers, and their influence eventually stretched over the entirety of northern India. In Agra and Malwa, where the Nagars of Gujarat settled after migrating from Gujarat to other regions of northern India, they had a significant political and social influence. They remained the guardians of the Hindu faith. The *Brahmin* caste in South India kept their place at the top of the social hierarchy. Great administrators came from the *Konkan* or *Chitpavan* branch of the *Brahmin* caste in Maharashtra. Among the other groups, the *Chettiars* maintained a monopoly on commerce for a long time.

◆ *Division among Muslims*

The concept of caste was foreign to Muslims, who adhered to the Islamic belief that all humans should be treated as equals and should have a brotherly relationship with one another. Islam does not recognise any differences between people. However, Muslim society in India experienced divisions along ethnic and racial lines. Muslims came to be subdivided into distinct groupings such as Sayyids, Sheikhs, Mughals, Pathans, and Indo-Muslims. Distinctions in their respective sects further segmented these bigger ethnic groupings. Notably, there were significant economic disparities among Turks, Iranians, Afghans, and Indian Muslims. According to Satish Chandra, inter-marriage between these groups was



rare, leading to a level of exclusivity.

◆ *Relation between the Hindus and the Muslims*

Interaction between the Hindu and Muslim upper classes was limited during this era. The Muslims also faced caste-like restrictions imposed by the Hindu upper castes, similar to those applied to the *Sudras*. The early Muslims were considered to be *Mlechchas* by the Hindus, who accorded them a social standing that was significantly lower than that of the *Sudras*. However, it is important to note that these caste restrictions did not completely prevent social interaction between Muslims and upper-caste Hindus or *Sudras*. Hindu soldiers served in Muslim armies, nobles enlisted Hindus as personal managers, and the local administration machinery remained predominantly in the hands of Hindus. The prevailing notion that both communities remained isolated from each other is not accurate and is not supported by available evidence. Some of the distinctive social practises that are unique to Hinduism have been preserved by Hindus who have converted to Islam. Conflicting interests and differences in social, and cultural ideas, practices, and beliefs did contribute to tensions, hindering the processes of mutual understanding and cultural assimilation.

### 2.3.4 Women in Medieval Society

◆ *Position of women*

The status of women in Hindu society underwent minimal changes during the medieval period. Traditional regulations advocating early marriage for girls and emphasising the wife's duty of service and devotion to her husband persisted. Some scholars argue that marital dissolution was permitted under specific circumstances such as abandonment or serious illnesses. Widow remarriage remained prohibited, particularly among the three upper castes in the Kali age. As for the practice of Sati, opinions varied among writers, with some expressing strong approval while others supported it under certain conditions. Numerous travellers documented its prevalence in different regions of the country. Ibn Battutah, in particular, recounted a disturbing incident where a woman immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre amidst loud drumming.

During this era, the practice of secluding women and requiring them to veil their faces in the presence of outsiders, known as *purdah*, became prevalent among upper-class women. The tradition of isolating women from public view was observed among upper-class Hindus and had historical roots in ancient Iran, Greece, and other regions. The Arabs and Turks adopted this custom and introduced it to India,

◆ *Purdah or Veil system*

where it gained widespread acceptance, especially in northern regions. R.C. Majumdar asserts that the Hindus implemented the practice of *purdah* as a preventative precaution to preserve the honour of their women and the integrity of their social order. The concern that Hindu women would be taken captive by the invaders, as women were considered potential prizes of war, is said to be the driving force behind the expansion of *purdah*. A crucial factor contributing to the growth of *purdah* was its adoption as a symbol of higher social classes. Many sought to emulate it as a mark of respectability. Religious justifications were also found to support this practice.

◆ *Early marriage*

A system of early marriage was prevalent during the medieval period. Up to the time of Akbar, nobody made any effort to investigate the system of early marriage. Before they could get married, he issued decrees that stipulated that the male counterpart had to be sixteen years old and the ladies had to be fourteen years old. On the other hand, subsequent emperors did not strictly implement this command and did not continue to uphold it.

◆ *Widow remarriage and divorce*

The dowry system was a norm during this period. Marriages between members of different castes were not permitted in Hindu society. In traditional Hindu society, remarrying a widow was not common, with a few exceptions for members of lower castes. Even though Akbar made widow remarriage legal, he did not execute the legislation. Widows were not allowed to inherit property. The Hindu religion did not encourage or support the practice of divorce. Some of the upper- and middle-class Muslim families followed polygamy. Monogamy was practised by Muslims who belonged to the lower social strata of society since these individuals were unable to support extra wives and the children that were born to them. The practice of having only one spouse was often frowned upon among Hindus. Only a very tiny percentage of affluent people and princesses have had more than one spouse in their lifetime. Under Hindu law, a man was not allowed to divorce his wife except under exceptional circumstances, such as if his wife turned out to be sterile or was caught engaging in adultery.

During the medieval period, many regions of India continued to uphold the tradition of *Sati*, under this ritual, the woman would sacrifice herself by setting fire to herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband to demonstrate her devotion and love for him. This custom was especially prevalent among the noble classes, most notably the Rajputs.



◆ *Practice of Sati*

The most credible evidence for the existence of the practice of *sati* in various regions of India may be found in historical sources. Friar Odoric, who lived during the years 1321 and 1322, observed that the Indians of Quilon, who lived along the Malabar Coast, had a strange ritual. Near Dhar in Malwa, the monk Jordanus, who lived between the years 1323 and 1330, was a witness to the practice of *Sati*. Both Nicolo Conti and Duarte Barbosa, writing at the beginning of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively, provide an account of the practice of *Sati* that was common in the Vijayanagar Empire. Abul Fazl documented several incidents in which recalcitrant widows were coerced into performing *sati* as a result of pressure from their families or the opinion of the general public.

◆ *Efforts to put an end to Sati*

Several of the sultans of Delhi and Mughal made an effort to put an end to the practice of *sati*, which was practised by a significant portion of the Hindu population at the time. It was possibly Muhammad Bin Tughlaq who placed some constraints on the practice of this ritual. For a widow to engage in *Sati* inside his dominions, she was required first to get permission. It is stated that Humayun put an end to the practice of widows who were still fertile being burned at the stake. In order to discourage the practice even more, Akbar made it illegal to force a widow who did not want to be burned to death.

◆ *Jauhar*

Another custom that was common among Hindus, particularly Rajputs, was called *Jauhar*. In most cases, when confronted by outsiders, Rajput females would do *Jauhar*, which meant there was no chance of winning the battle. This was done with the primary intention of avoiding dishonour at the hands of the adversary if victory was not achieved. When Hamir Deva, the Chauhan ruler of Ranthambhor, realised he had no chance of defeating Alauddin Khalji, he decided to take his own life by committing *Jauhar*. The *Jauhar* that the Rajput ladies of Ranthambhor perpetrated was vividly described by Amir Khusrau, who had accompanied Alauddin Khalji during the Ranthambhor expedition.

◆ *Female infanticide*

There were certain households in whom the birth of a daughter was considered to be a tragedy, but the birth of a son was cause for tremendous joy and celebration. Women who gave birth to several daughters in quick succession were looked down upon as well. Certain groups of Rajputs were known to engage in the despicable practice of infanticide, which consisted of the swift and brutal murder of newborn

female infants shortly after their birth.

◆ *Subordinate position*

The relationship between a woman and her husband was traditionally viewed as one of dependent but honourable servitude. In the work known as the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Jahangir argues that according to the Hindu belief system, males are unable to carry out any kind of socially beneficial activity in the absence of their wives, whom they see as being one-half of their entire being. This suggests that even though wives were relegated to a low position in comparison to their husbands, they were still accorded the appropriate amount of significance. The situation of a woman was pretty unhappy when she was a girl, a bride, or a widow. However, because of her role as a mother, she was accorded a high level of respect and honour. The Rajputs accorded the highest respect to their mothers and did what they were told the majority of the time. There are a few instances of Mughal Emperors travelling to meet their mothers that are recorded in contemporary sources.

◆ *Property rights*

It was customary for a Muslim lady to inherit a predetermined portion of either her husband's or her father's property. Additionally, she had complete discretion over how to get rid of it. A Muslim woman, in contrast to a Hindu woman, was allowed to keep the right even after she was married. A Hindu woman had no claim to the property that belonged to her husband's parents. However, a Hindu woman was entitled to costs related to her upkeep and housing, in addition to moveable goods like ornaments, jewellery, and so on. Therefore, from a legal standpoint, women were relegated to a position of reliance in every aspect of life. Commentators support the widow's entitlement to her soneless husband's property if it was not jointly owned and had been divided. The widow not only served as the guardian of this property but also had the full right to manage and dispose of it. This suggests an improvement in women's property rights within Hindu law.

Although the women were compelled to live a solitary existence and were prevented from attaining a position of pride in the social order, some of the more intellectual and gifted women distinguished themselves as administrators and authors of exceptional value. Razia Sultan was able to demonstrate her prowess as an effective ruler and administrator during the early medieval period in India. She was also a skilled fighter, and she led her army personally into combat on many occasions. During the later part of



◆ *Women in administrative roles*

the Medieval period, some women who belonged to royal families distinguished themselves via their work in the administration of their various kingdoms. Between the years 1560 and 1564, Maham Anga, who was Akbar's foster mother, exercised full authority over the administration of the kingdom. Chandella princess, Gondwana Rani Durgavati, Chand Bibi of Ahmadnagar, and Makhduma-i-Jahan, who governed the Deccan as regent on behalf of Nizam Shah, provided an outstanding description of their capacity to not only repel the invaders but also to run their domains. Makhduma-i-Jahan was the regent for Nizam Shah and controlled the Deccan region throughout his reign. The true force behind Jahangir's rule was Nur Jahan. In the struggle for independence that the Marathas fought against the Mughals, Tara Bai, the widow of Rajaram, the Maratha ruler, emerged as a significant guiding force for her people. She was exceptionally adept in the areas of organisation and administration.

◆ *Literary contribution*

Gulbadan Begum, the author of *Humayun-nama*, and Jahan Ara, who wrote the biography of Moinuddin Chishti titled *Munis-al Arwah*, were both significant female figures who contributed to the literature of that period. Poets of note include Mira Bai, Salima Sultana, Nur Jahan, Sith-un-nisa, and Zeb-un-nisa. Zeb-un-nisa, the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb, was also an accomplished writer. Ramabhadramba, Madhuravani, Mohanagi, Aka Bai, Kena Bai, and many other influential women writers of the medieval period include some of the others.

◆ *Duties of the Iqtadars or Muqti*

### 2.3.5 Administrative Institutions

#### 2.3.5.1 Iqtadars or Muqti

There are references to *walis* or *Muqtis* who served as commanders of military and administrative tracts called *Iqtas* or *wilayat* under the Khalji era. The *Muqti*, responsible for an *Iqta*, collected taxes, transferred funds to the state treasury, and upheld law and order within their *Iqta*. They were expected to keep a portion of the earnings for their use and deliver the remaining sum to the Sultan. Auditing procedures were carried out on the *muqti's* revenue and spending records. If a *muqti* engaged in corrupt behavior or illegal activity, they were severely punished and the sum was taken back from them. It was expected of the *muqti* to do military duty if the Sultan required assistance from the armed forces, and any non-compliance was considered an act of

◆ *Muqti's administration*

defiance. *Muqti* were incapable of waging war or negotiating peace on their own and were required to obtain orders from the king before embarking on conquering missions. It was forbidden for any *muqti* to hold his court or to make use of a royal symbol insignia.

The *Muqti* was not allowed to claim ownership of the property that had been given to him. Instead, he was given money generated from the land in exchange for his duties. The land grant, known as an *iqta*, could range from a single town to a province. It was possible to transport the *Muqti* from one location to another. But he could not consider it an inherited possession. The central government's control over the *Muqti's* administration increased, with the *Naib Diwan*, or *Khwaja*, supervising the *Iqtas* income administration. An intellectual officer, *Barid*, was responsible for monitoring *Muqtis'* activities in their individual *Iqtas*.

### 2.3.5.2 Zamindars

*Zamindars* held the most important position in the agricultural hierarchy of Mughal India. They were responsible for the distribution of taxes. Since the reign of Akbar, the term has been used to refer to any individual who has a hereditary claim to a direct part in the peasant's production. According to Nurul Hasan, *Zamindars* are classified into three categories.

◆ *Classification of Zamindars*

- i. Primary *zamindars* who owned a portion of the land and had some proprietary rights to it.
- ii. Secondary *zamindars* were individuals who possessed the rights of an intermediary and assisted the state in the process of collecting land income.
- iii. Autonomous chiefs were granted certain powers within their territories in exchange for a predetermined monetary contribution to the Mughal State.

*Zamindari* rights were a claim on the output of the soil coexisting with the state's demand for money from the land. They were inheritable and divisible, allowing heirs to split fiscal claims and perquisites in line with land law. *Zamindars* earned their privileges due to historical precedent and authority over the peasantry. In Gujarat, the *Zamindari* claim was called *banth* or *vanth*, while in Northern India, it was called *malikana* and distributed in cash. In the Deccan region, it was called *chauth*, meaning "one-fourth," representing one-fourth of the income connected. Another fiscal claim, *Sardeshmukhi*, was equal to ten per cent of the income. The



◆ *Zamindari Rights*

cesses of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* were realised during the rule of the Marathas, not as a legal claim based on a true *Zamindari* right but as a direct result of the use of power in its purest form.

### 2.3.5.3 *Mansabdars*

◆ *Military reorganisation*

The Mughal administration was led by a bureaucracy consisting of military officers referred to as *mansabdars*. When Akbar took the throne, the Mughal army was inadequate, with *Jagirs* restricting the empire and *amirs* responsible for a specific number of riders. The majority of troops that the *amirs* kept were ineffective and unsuitable for military duty. When there was a muster for review, the *amirs* would come together, and Badauni describes what happened next: "Numbers of artisans, weavers, cotton cleaners, carpenters, and grocers, both Hindu and Muslim, would be mustered for review, and then they would disappear." They did not have the necessary equipment or discipline." Akbar recognised the need for changes to the military and in 1571, when Shahabaz Khan was promoted to *Mir Bakshi*, he drew out a plan for military reform. The *mansabdari* system was used as the foundation for an extensive reorganisation of the entire military force. According to Satish Chandra, "The *mansabdari* system, as it developed under the Mughals, was a peculiar and unique system which did not have any similar system outside of India."

◆ *Ranks in Mansabdari System*

Abul Fazl, in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, claims that there were sixty-six grades or *mansabs*, but it seems that there were not more than thirty-three classes in actual existence. It is possible that there were even fewer grades than that. The decimal system was used to organise the army; the smallest unit of command was 10, and the greatest unit of command was ten thousand or more, whose leader was given the title of *Khan*. Members of the royal family were the only people allowed to achieve ranks of 5,000 and above. This highest rank was increased to 50,000 during the rule of the later Mughal dynasties.

In the final years of Akbar's rule, he made changes to the *mansabdari* system by introducing the ranks of *zat* and *sawar*. The ranks of *zat* and *sawar* are unique from one another in certain ways. The *zat* rank served as the *mansabdar's* personal rank inside the organisation. It denoted the number of mounted infantrymen that a *mansabdar* was supposed to retain in order to perform their duties for the state. This position was expanded to accommodate numerous

◆ *The Zat and Sawar ranks*

additional horsemen, for which the *mansabdar* was granted the authority to receive additional allowances. This position was referred to as his *sawar* rank. The *mansabdar* was entitled to an increase in compensation for each additional horseman. His *zat* pay was enhanced by two rupees for each additional *sawar* that he was responsible for maintaining. *Sawars* were paid a wage that was based on their nationality; for instance, a Muslim *sawar* was paid a higher income than a Rajput or an Indian Muslim *sawar*. The *mansabdar* was required to retain twenty or twenty-two horses for every 10 warriors in his troop. This allowed for the possibility of horse replacements in the event of battle.

◆ *Categories of mansabdars*

Because of this differentiation, the *mansabdars*, except for those who possessed *mansabs* of 5000 or above, were divided into the following three categories: If a *mansabdar's* rank in *zat* and *sawar* were equal, he was considered to belong to the first category; if his *sawar* rank was half of his *zat* rank, he was considered to belong to the second category; and if his *sawar* rank was less than half of his *zat* rank or there were no *sawars* at all, he was considered to belong to the third category. Blochman, who had made a more in-depth study into the military system of the Mughals, believes that the *zat* rank indicated the number of soldiers the *mansabdars* were expected to maintain, and the *sawar* rank indicated the number of soldiers maintained by the *mansabdar*. His viewpoint does not appear to be accurate. Later on in his reign, possibly during Akbar's wars in the Deccan or Salim's uprising, Akbar established the rank of *sawar* for his soldiers. The Mughals desired to have a diverse force of soldiers comprised of Irani, Turani, Indians, Afghans, Rajputs, and Mughal warriors. This was done to prevent any one ethnicity from having a monopoly on the military. During the reign of Akbar and his successors, it was required of a commander to provide one-third of his *sawar* rank in Northern India, one-quarter of his *sawar* rank in the Deccan, and one-fifth of his *sawar* rank for duty outside of India.

The *mansabdar* was required to take money out of his income to cover his expenses. In addition to this, he was required to have a specified number of horses, elephants, camels, mules, and carts at his disposal. The *mansabdar* was given a very generous salary. A *mansabdar* with the rank of 5,000 could get a salary of 7,000 rupees per year. The *mansabdar* spent around one-quarter of the cash from his pay on the upkeep of his army. It was stated that the *mansabdar* of the Mughal empire was the highest-paid official in the world at the time.



◆ *Pay and Jagirs*

In some circumstances, rather than being compensated in cash, the *mansabdars* were given a *jagir* instead. When there was a lag in the payment of currency from the treasury, the *mansabdars* favoured this alternative as well. The social reputation of the nobility was further enhanced when they were given a *jagir* or a piece of land in lieu of a wage. The Department of Revenue maintained a registry that displayed the *jama*, also known as the assessed income of the various regions. The transactions were recorded using *dams*, and each rupee was equivalent to forty *dams*. This record was referred to as the *jama-dami*, which means “evaluated earnings based on *dams*.”

### 2.3.5.4 The Jagirdars

◆ *Relocation of Jagirdars*

When Akbar was in power, the government officials, particularly the *mansabdars*, received their salaries in cash. On the other hand, Akbar’s successors made certain adjustments to this system. The Mughal officials who worked in the imperial service were compensated not in cash but rather with revenue-generating land that was personally allotted to them. The role of the person responsible for the assignment was known as the *Jagirdar*. The *mansabdar*’s standing and rank determined whether or not he was awarded a *jagir*. He supported himself financially thanks to his *Jagir*. The *wizarat* carried out the evaluation of the assignments. Because of their positions as state officials, *Jagirdars* carried the risk of being relocated every few years. This was done to prevent them from developing any vested interests in a specific area. These *Jagirdars* did not make significant contributions to the improvement of the lives of the people who lived on their *Jagir*. The imperial authority did not exercise any kind of consistent control over the *Jagir* at any point in time. The *Jagirdari* system turned into a hereditary structure during the control of the later Mughals. One of the causes of the fall of the Mughal Empire was a crisis that occurred inside the *Jagirdari* system.

## Summarised Overview

In medieval India, various non-agricultural activities thrived in rural and urban areas. These activities included textile production, metalworking, sugar processing, mineral mining, papermaking, glassworks, and arms manufacturing. Craft production was organised through systems like the *Jajmani* and *Dadni* systems, while luxury goods were produced by the Imperial *Karkhanas*. The caste system remained deeply rooted during this period, with minimal changes in Hindu society. The social hierarchy consisted of four main castes - *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas*, and *Sudras* - arranged in descending order of rank and status. Discrimination against lower castes, particularly *chandalas* and “outcastes,” persisted. The changing political and economic aspects led to the emergence of new castes, such as the *Kayasthas* in the north and *Chettiars* in the south.

As for the status of women in Hindu society, little change occurred during the medieval period. Traditional practices like early marriage, the duty of service to husbands, restrictions on widow remarriage, and practices such as *Sati*, *Jauhar*, *purdah*, female infanticide, and the dowry system continued. Despite these circumstances, women made significant contributions in administration, literature, and poetry during the medieval era.

During the Sultanate period, the *Iqtadars*, or *Muqtis*, were responsible for tax collection, law enforcement, and military duty. During the Mughal period, *zamindars* played a crucial role in the agricultural hierarchy, with primary, secondary, and autonomous chiefs categorised based on their roles in tax distribution and contribution to the state. *Jagirdars*, who were government officials, received revenue-generating land as their salary, which later became hereditary. The *Mansabdars*, part of the Mughal military bureaucracy, underwent reforms during Akbar’s rule, introducing ranks like *Zat* and *Sawar* to regulate the number of soldiers under their command.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the impact of non-agricultural activities in Medieval India. Explain the craft production, technological advancements and organisational structure during the period.
2. Analyse the influence of the caste system in the medieval period. How did it impact the social relationships, particularly with the lower castes?
3. Discuss the emergence of new castes along with the changes in the socio-economic structure of medieval Indian society.



1. Examine the status of women in medieval India. Explain the traditional practices, attempts at reform, and the contributions of women in various fields.
2. Examine the role of *Iqtadars*, *Zamindars*, *Mansabdars*, and *Jagirdars* in medieval Indian society. How did these institutions function, and what roles did they play in administration, taxation, and military organisation?

## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



# Urbanisation, Trade and Commerce

**BLOCK-03**



## Medieval Urbanisation

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the significant urban centres of Medieval India
- ◆ explain various types of markets existed in Medieval India
- ◆ examine the economic, social and cultural dynamics of the Medieval period

### Background

Understanding the economic, social, and cultural intricacies of medieval India begins with an understanding of urban areas and marketplaces throughout the period. It sheds light on how India's historical growth was impacted by urbanisation, communication, and transportation, with the outside world profoundly shaping the nation's cultural legacy. Studies on urban centres and urbanisation throughout the medieval era have mainly remained an untapped and understudied area of research. All of these topics are crucial to examining the development of urban centres and the process of urbanisation throughout the medieval period.

### Keywords

Urbanisation, market regulations, *Mandi*, *Sher-i-adl*, *Sarai*, *Quasba*, *Nagaram*, *Bandar*

### Discussion

#### 3.1.1 Urbanisation in Medieval India

The process of urbanisation in medieval India, which roughly runs from the sixth to the eighteenth century, was intricate and multi-dimensional. In the medieval period, urban areas had a profound impact on the subcontinent's economic, social, and cultural environment. Urbanisation is the process of transforming a region into a city where people may live, work, and have greater opportunities. In the medieval period, cities grew as a result of increased



◆ *Process of Urbanization*

international commerce and the development of local kingdoms. Due to political circumstances, the rate of urbanisation was relatively modest during the beginning of the medieval period. Locations near rivers, rich land, and important travel routes started to emerge in urban centres, and as a result, trade and commerce increased. The places where goods like swords, carpets, perfumes, and so on were manufactured become important commercial hubs, turning them into cities. Trade and commerce were carried in port cities and industrial towns. Visitors from all over the world brought traders, which led to the town's transformation into an urban hub. In medieval India, trade, commerce, and urbanisation all developed in this way.

### **3.1.2 Factors for the Formation of Urban Centres in Medieval India**

◆ *Strategic Locations of Administrative Centres*

In medieval India, the development of urban centres was a complicated and varied process that was influenced by a number of variables, including economic, administrative, cultural, and strategic concerns. During this time, urban centres began to arise and expand as a result of certain circumstances. Numerous kinds of urban centres existed in the medieval period. Administrative towns or towns that served as capital of the kingdom developed into urban centres. These cities were constructed to house the ruling class, the government apparatus, and the armed forces. For example, Delhi was the seat of several empires, such as the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals. To prevent invasions, several urban centres were placed in defensive locations, frequently on elevated land. These towns developed into significant administrative and military centres. For instance, Vijayanagara, a fortified city in South India, was built on elevated terrain to enhance its defences.

◆ *Craftsmanship*  
◆ *Commercial Hubs*

Urban centres were formed as a result of the growth of trade and commerce. Due to their importance in enabling economic operations, cities situated along trade routes or close to significant ports have prospered. For example, Surat, a major port city on the western coast, was a bustling centre of trade during the medieval period. Urban areas frequently attracted experienced craftsmen and artisans with expertise in a variety of crafts, including textiles, jewellery, and metalwork. These craftsmen's presence contributed to the economic and cultural development of these cities. Jaipur, in Rajasthan is known for its skilled artisans and the establishment of craft clusters.

◆ *Pilgrimage Hubs*

There were frequently large numbers of tourists in the temple towns, which led to the growth of trade in these towns. The pilgrimage hubs started to transform into settlements. In temple towns, several non-agricultural professions were developed. Ajmer in Rajasthan, known for its religious coexistence, is an example of a temple town.

◆ *Role of cities*

The emergence of urban centres in medieval India was the consequence of a complicated interaction between a number of different variables. During this period, these cities acted as centres of political authority, trade and commerce, culture and learning, and had a crucial role in establishing the social dynamics, economic landscape, and cultural landscape of the region.

### **3.1.3 Market Regulations in Medieval India**

#### **3.1.3.1 Market Regulations and Maintenance of Law and Order**

◆ *Market Rules*

The Regulation of markets in medieval India was necessary for the preservation of order, the promotion of commerce, and the defence of the rights and interests of purchasers and vendors alike. Several different governing entities, including regional kings, administrators, and guilds, were responsible for establishing and enforcing these norms. The following are some of the most important characteristics of market rules that existed in medieval India.

#### **Weights and Measures**

◆ *Standardisation and Inspection*

In order to combat fraud and guarantee the reliability of business dealings, regulations mandated the use of standardised units of measurement for weights and measures. These measurements comprised the length as well as the weight and volume. The weights and measurements that were used in the markets would undergo routine inspections and checks by officials to ensure that they were accurate and consistent.

#### **Taxation**

◆ *Tax Collection*

In medieval Indian markets, taxation was widespread. The purchase and selling of products, as well as the transit of goods and the renting of market stalls, were all subject to various forms of taxation. Taxation was an important source of money for the authorities in power, and this cash was used to support the provision of public goods and services.



## Maintenance of Marketplace

- ◆ *Infrastructure Facilities*
- ◆ *Market Operating Hours*

The upkeep of market infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and drainage systems, was frequently required by the regulations in order to guarantee that customers had easy access to the markets. In order to stop the spread of infectious diseases, several rules and regulations were imposed in marketplaces, emphasising the importance of good cleanliness and sanitation. The opening and closing times of marketplaces were regulated by the local government and adhered to certain working hours. This assisted in crowd control and maintained order during market hours.

- ◆ *Quality Control*

Various products, including textiles, metals, and food items, were frequently subject to quality requirements mandated by regulations. The enforcement of these criteria was done with the intention of shielding customers from products of a lower quality. Many of the time, artisan guilds were responsible for establishing and enforcing quality standards for the goods that their members produced.

- ◆ *Mechanisms*

### 3.1.4 Market Regulations and Dispute Resolution

The norms of the market created methods for the settlement of disputes, such as the appointment of authorities or arbitrators to settle disagreements between purchasers and vendors. The judgments made by these systems were legally binding, which made them extremely important for preserving people's faith in the market system. In some circumstances, authorities impose price limits on vital products in order to prevent price manipulation and guarantee that the general public is able to purchase these items at reasonable prices.

- ◆ *Guild Regulations*

Price restrictions were monitored to prevent the activities associated with black marketing and the stockpiling of products. Many merchant guilds had their own set of internal laws that governed trade, membership, and other aspects of the guild's operations. They were crucial in the process of regulating commerce and mediating disagreements between traders. The members of a guild were supposed to adhere to a code of conduct, which was created to ensure that ethical commercial practices were followed.

### 3.1.5 Market Regulations

Public marketplaces were frequently staffed with security personnel such as guards or watchmen to deter criminal activity such as shoplifting and vandalism. Sometimes the

◆ *Safeguarding Property*

regulations would include restrictions that were designed to protect the property of both the purchasers and the sellers. In order to ensure that the markets continue to operate normally and efficiently, checkpoints and toll booths were established. These checkpoints and toll booths efficiently monitor and regulate the flow of commodities, as well as collect taxes and fees.

◆ *Market Regulation of Alauddin Khalji*

In the medieval Indian context, the market regulation of Alauddin Khalji deserves special attention. Alauddin Khalji's market-control measures extended beyond rural economies to urban markets. To control prices, he established three separate markets for various commodities in Delhi. The markets included the grain market (*Mandi*), the cloth market (*Sarai Adl*), and the horse, slave, and cattle market. He issued seven regulations, including fixed commodity prices, appointed market controllers (*Shahna-i mandi*), *Barid* (intelligence officers), and *Munhiyan* (secret spies), placed grain merchants under the *Shahna-i mandi*, demanded sureties, and received daily reports separately from these sources. *Ihtikar* (regrating) was prohibited. Despite strict market controls, Khalji prioritized a steady supply of grains and other essential commodities. His meticulous planning and execution ensured the success of his market-control measures. The Sultan established granaries in Delhi and Chhain, Rajasthan. The land tax from the *khalisa* in the Doah was paid in kind. The grain was delivered to the state granaries. The Multanis, who were cloth merchants, were given an advance loan of 20 lakh *tankas* to purchase and bring cloth to market. The Sultan placed a high value on control of horse price because the army's efficiency could not be guaranteed unless it had access to good horses at a reasonable price. The horse market's low prices were ensured by prohibiting horse dealers and brokers (*dalals*) from purchasing horses in the Delhi market. The Sultan was successful in maintaining low prices and enough supply in the market.

◆ *Effective communication systems*

It is widely acknowledged that the development of transport and communication was an essential component in the expansion and prosperity of the medieval economy. The degree to which a society has advanced in terms of its transport and communication infrastructure is a



reliable indication of the vitality of its economic activity. Effective communication systems facilitate the movement of commodities and goods both within and across regions.

◆ *Effective Transportation Systems*

Additionally, it encourages interactions between the cultures of other areas and, over the longer term, the interchange of thinking and ideas, which are two essential components for the health and wellness of a community. The rise of transportation is supported by the development of communication systems as well; the two together encourage travel. The degree to which communication and transportation are dependent on one another is consistently high. Both the society and the economy of medieval India profited from the robust communication and transportation system that existed during that period.

◆ *Emergence of Monetary Economy*

From a primarily rural setting, a monetary economy emerged as a result of the new state's policies and practices regarding the extraction of agricultural surplus. The expansion of the money economy occurred at a breakneck speed, and its geographical reach was unparalleled. One of the most significant results of this process was an increase in the amount of economic activity not just between distinct areas but also between distinct locales within those regions. Because of this, the communication network also saw a boost, and in order to support the communication network, a system of transportation was built, even if it was in its infancy at the time. As time went on and the outlines of the monetary economy grew clearer, more characteristics of the system of communication and transportation also became apparent.

### 3.1.6.2 *Sarais*

◆ *Resting Places*

*Sarais* were several types of buildings that provided travellers in medieval India with a place to rest their heads. Travellers of all social classes, but especially merchants and pilgrims, required more frequent places of rest and shelter than the widely spaced 73 towns and cities. The cities were able to provide shelter because of the harsh conditions and inhospitable countryside in most regions of the country. The *sarais* that were positioned along with the main highways provided a location for the people and their animals to spend the night in safety, as well as a place where they could be certain of having access to food and water.

It is believed that the Turks were the ones who first brought the *sarais*. They are characterised by vast rectangular enclosures accessible by wide gateways and an interior that

◆ *Sher Shah's contributions to sarais*

has a number of cells lined up along the walls. In order to accommodate the needs of the travellers, the institutional structure and the physical representation of the *sarais* may have undergone significant transformations. Around the middle of the thirteenth century, construction of *sarais* had commenced in the bigger towns that the Delhi Sultanate ruled. Sher Shah made the most substantial contributions toward the creation of the *sarais*. The chronicles praise him nearly uniformly for his efforts to erect *sarais* for the comfort of travellers at regular intervals along every main road in the empire.

◆ *Sarais in north and north - west*

The northern and northwestern routes each have a sufficient number of *sarais*( resting facilities) for travellers to take advantage of. According to the testimony of European travellers who used this route, there were plenty of *sarais* located at regular intervals along the path. This allowed travellers to safely store their things and stay *sarais* at the end of a day.

◆ *Assistance to travellers*

The road that headed eastward was equipped with sufficient travel assistance. The travellers describe the frequent occurrence of *sarais* along this road, which were typically equipped with conveniences such as the provision of prepared food and the availability of cooked foods. In the larger cities, there were typically numerous *sarais*, and some of these *sarais* had warehouse spaces for keeping foods transported by the merchants, as well as by other types of travellers.

◆ *Construction of Bridges*

It was a common practice to take a ferry across the larger rivers because only the smaller rivers, which seldom exceeded a certain width, had permanent bridges built across them. A bridge made of boats was created in order to allow vehicles travelling from the east to visit the capital city of Delhi. This bridge allowed for the passage of the Yamuna.

◆ *Evidences of sarais*

Both the European travellers and the Persian chroniclers attest to the presence of an extensive network of *sarais* in Mughal India. These *sarais* were strategically located both along the major thoroughfares and inside the urban and suburban areas of the empire. Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* (circa 1595) refers to an order that was "given to the workmen" towards the end of 1578 that "they should erect *sarais* in the various quarters of the capital, and make them over to benevolent and generous persons so that the poor and needy of the world might have a home without having to look for

it, or to endure the pain of waiting.” This order was made in reference to the city of Agra.

### 3.6.1.3 Qasbas

#### ◆ Qasba as an administrative centre

According to the definition provided by Nizamuddin Ahmad in his *Tabaqat-i- Akbari*, a *Qasba* is an administrative centre that serves as the *pargana* headquarters. In Akbar’s dominion, there were around 3,200 *Qasbas* and 120 cities (*Shahr*), according to his estimations. Subsequently, in the early 18th century (about 1720), the total number of *Qasba* grew to 4716. However, it was not required that a *pargana* contain only one *Qasba*. This was a flexible requirement.

#### ◆ Fortification

At the beginning of the 18th century, there were twenty *Qasbas* located in the *Pargana Barsana* region of western Rajasthan. The *Qasbas* in western Rajasthan are often enclosed by forts (*Garhi*) or fortifications (*Garh*) with town walls. In the context of medieval times, a *Qasba* was essentially an extension of the surrounding hamlet. A sizable hamlet that had a central marketplace had all the ingredients necessary to become a *Qasba*. Harigarh, Kundi, and Kakurmi, which were all stated to be villages in the 17th century and upgraded to *Qasbas* in the early 18th century records, are located in Barsana, which is located in western Rajasthan. Sometimes, in order to take advantage of the protection that a fort provided, settlements evolved into *qasbas* and became linked to the fort.

#### ◆ Development of Qasbas

A great number of *Qasbas* originated from the development of market towns. *Qasbas* with the suffix *ganj* were predominantly towns known as “markets,” and they hosted both weekly markets (known as *hats*) and fairs (known as *melas*). These *Qasbas*, on the other hand, began to appear more often beginning in the middle of the 18th century. According to research conducted by B. L. Bhadani and Sato on the development of *Qasbas* in western Rajasthan, population expansion in market towns from villages and other settlements proceeded uninterrupted throughout the 18th century.

### 3.6.1.4 Exclusiveness of a Town

The question that has to be answered here is what, exactly, separates a town from a *Qasba* in the first place. According to Satish Chandra, the significance of a *Qasba* changed from one era to the next, as well as from one place to the next. His account suggests that a *Qasba* was a settlement that included a fort during the time of the Sultanate. By the time

◆ *Nature of a Qasba*

the Mughal era rolled around, the people began to refer to it as a community that had a market. Not only did these centres function as markets for agricultural commodities, but they also functioned as “centres” of production for various types of handicrafts.

◆ *Mandis*

Throughout the 13th century, these locations did not fulfil the function of “market” centres. Instead, they were referred to as “fortified encampments,” and they were not always “connected” with a major city (*Shahr*). These *Qasbas* were used for the disposal of various agricultural goods. Around some *sarais*, *Qasbas* would occasionally form. Some of the *sarais*, such as the Mughal *sarai*, and others like them eventually developed into *Qasbas* or small towns. The nobles made their contributions as well. In other instances, these *Mandis* (markets) eventually evolved into *Qasbas*.

### 3.6.1.5 *Nagaram*

◆ *Development of Nagarams*

The Deccan can be compared to the *nagaram* of the south, which was the market centre of South India. In each *nadu*, there was evidence of the existence of at least one *nagaram*, also known as market centre. The hinterlands were a significant source of provision for the coastal communities. Villages in the area might be connected to the *Nagarams*. Itinerant merchants would “negotiate” the price of the local food in exchange for cash or other goods that were not produced locally. In this instance, it is likely that local merchants purchased items from itinerant merchants on a wholesale level and subsequently distributed them locally on a retail level. It’s interesting to note that administrative orders were responsible for the development of *nagarams* at one point. Sometimes *Nagaram* and *Nadu* worked together to transform a nearby hamlet into a commercial centre. It functioned as a centre for gathering and redistributing goods and was the primary link between local merchants, producers and itinerant merchants.

### 3.6.1.6 *Bandars*

Medieval Persian literature uses the terms *balda/shahr* (city) and *qasba* (small town, township) to differentiate between a large and a small town. Similarly, the larger ports were referred to as *bandar*, while the smaller ones were referred to as *bara*. Even in the south of India, such a hierarchy of towns may be seen rather plainly. *Pattinam* were considered to be “emporia,” whereas *Valarpuram* were thriving seaside communities. In the spaces in between, there were *nagarams*



that, while they were comparable to the qasbas of the north and the Deccan, nevertheless retained their district characteristics.

◆ Condition of Peasants

Protests and uprisings were occasionally the result of the tribulations and frustrations experienced by the peasants because of high land tax imposed on them. A major agricultural insurrection occurred in the region during the time of the Sultanate because Muhammad bin Tughlaq attempted to increase the taxes in the Doab region. This effort was unsuccessful. When Emperor Aurangzeb was in power, there were major rebellions on the part of the Jats, Sikhs, Marathas, and Satanamis. One of the things that contributed to these acts of defiance was dissatisfaction on the agricultural front.

## Summarised Overview

The complex economic, social, and cultural aspects of the time may be comprehended in their entirety via the study of urban centres, marketplaces, and commerce in Medieval India. The urban centres served as major economic hubs that supported commerce, artisanal production, and economic specialisation, all of which greatly contributed to the region's overall development. The study of urban centres, markets, and trade during the Medieval period in India reveals a rich tapestry of economic, social, and cultural elements that are essential to the understanding of the historical development of the region and its enduring impact on India's heritage.

## Assignments

1. Define the urbanisation process in medieval India.
2. Explain the statement that urban centres were vital economic hubs that facilitated trade.
3. Explain the role of transportation in the growth of a town.
4. Write a short note on the importance of 'Sarais'.

## Suggested Reading

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2. Ray, A., *Towns and Cities of Medieval India: A Brief Survey*, Routledge, London, 2017.
3. Bhushan, B., *Medieval India*, Maxford Books, New Delhi 2008.

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1. Chandra, Satish., *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals Part - II*, Har-Anand Publications, 2005.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, *Essays in Medieval Indian Economic History*, Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi 1987.
3. Puri, B.N., and Das, M.N., *A Comprehensive History of India: Comprehensive History of Medieval India*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2003.

## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU



## Trade in Medieval India

### Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ list the commodities of import and export during medieval India
- ◆ know the pattern of local, regional and inter-regional trade in medieval India
- ◆ have an idea about the pattern of India's foreign trade in medieval India

### Background

The first stage of commercialisation for agricultural goods was the land itself. Similarly, business transactions of handcrafted goods first took place in the homes of the artisans. All of this activity took place on a number of different levels, including the local, regional, inter-regional, and international levels. In this section of the course, inland and international trade patterns during the seventeenth century will be the topic of discussion. Trading operations received a boost during this period as a result of increased output as well as increased political stability. The amount of goods exchanged skyrocketed to unprecedented heights. An additional element of significance was the participation of a number of important European nations in India's commercial activity. By the beginning of the 16th century, the Portuguese had already established colonies in the western areas of India. During the 17th century, France, the Netherlands, and England were all active participants in large-scale commercial activity. A growing number of specialised organisations that are active in trade emerged along with the expansion of commercial endeavours. During the same period, a number of fundamental business practices were also developed.

This Unit focuses on the study of weights, measurements, coins, and transactions in medieval India. It provides various outcomes and insights into the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of the period. This view sheds light on how economic systems, trade, and transactions shaped society as well as its interaction with the rest of the world. In addition to that, this Unit goes into the long-distance coastal and inland trade in India.



## Keywords

Dadni, Hundi, Seer, Bigha, Raati, Mansabdar, sarrafs, Sub Continental Trade, Commerce, Merchants, Production

## Discussion

### 3.2.1 Medieval Coinage

#### ◆ Subsistence and commercial economy

The medieval Indian economy was divided into two parts: a subsistence economy, characterised by socially formed barter exchange networks in village communities, and a commercialised economy, characterised by market relations of exchange in both rural and urban centres, with relatively low importance of money and limited commercial opportunities.

#### ◆ Usage of money

India's metropolitan centres and trading hubs were more involved in market exchange due to their high population density of administrative workers, soldiers, merchants, and artists. They required consistent food supplies, artisan items, and services. Cities collected taxes in cash for administrative expenditures and consumption expenses of governing elites. The money was used to pay for these expenses.

#### ◆ Foreign trade ◆ Money gained importance

The trade involved seasonal supply of commodities for export from rural areas to urban distribution hubs. Villages produced and processed major exportable goods like textiles, indigo, saltpetre, and sugar. These goods were then exported via sea and land to markets in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and the Philippines. Departing ships often brought uncoined gold or foreign currency to initiate new trade cycles. Commercialised trade networks required money at every level, spread across marketplaces, shops, and offices. Money was used to represent prices, wages, salaries, and taxes. The mint, a state-owned institution controlled by administrative authorities, was responsible for supplying money to the market, serving trained artisans and supplying money to the market.

#### ◆ Mint

The first chapter of Abul Fazl's *Ain-i Akbari* provides a detailed account of mint operations in 16th century India. Open coinage allowed providers to obtain coins from the monetary authority in exchange for minting fees and taxes. Mints were situated in major commercial and administrative towns. The medieval Indian market's structure shifted due to population changes, technology, skill development, state

economic policies, and international markets. Businesses' structures also adapted to these changes.

◆ *Coinage under Delhi Sultanate*

During the Delhi Sultanate, a new coinage method was invented, with Delhi as the capital. Muhammad of Ghur minted gold coins imitating Hindu rulers of Kanauj, featuring the goddess Lakshmi on the obverse. Copper and metal were the primary components of money for the first four decades of its existence.

◆ *Different types of coins*

Iltutmish produced various silver tankas, with the earliest featuring a monarch mounted on a horse. The most recent form is a diploma in investiture bestowed by Al Mustansir, the *Khalifa* of Baghdad. Gold coin was produced by Masud, Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, Balban, and Jalal-ud-din Khalji, but became widely used after Alauddin Khalji expanded his coffers in South India. The weight and design of gold coins are identical to silver counterparts, with the name of the Caliph removed from the obverse and replaced with Alauddin Khalji's self-laudatory titles. Mubarak Shah's gold, silver, and Bullion coins use the traditional Indian square design, making them some of the finest in the series.

◆ *Other coins*

The title of Ghazi, was first used by Ghiyas-uddin Tughlaq, the first Sultan of Delhi. The majority of bullion coins minted by these early Sultans were nearly identical in size and weight. There are various types, including the Indian variety known as *delhiwala*, which featured a humped bull with the name of the sovereign written in Nagari and a horseman called the Delhi Chauhan on the obverse. Another type, with the horseman on one side and the Sultan's name and title written in Arabic, was in circulation until the reign of Nasir-uddin Mahmud. Dates were originally included on Alauddin Khalji's silver coins. Some coins and bullion pieces contain the inscription *adl*, which may only signify cash in its most basic form. Muhammad ibn Tughluq was referred to as "the Prince of moneyers" due to his large output of gold, numerous issues of all denominations, interest in inscriptions, and experiments with coinage.

◆ *Token currency*

Muhammad bin Tughluq's reign saw the emergence of gold and silver coins of similar types as his predecessors. In the 14th century, India faced a silver shortage, leading the Sultan to issue copper coins instead. He introduced the Jittal (copper coin) as an equivalent to the tanka. However, this new token currency was difficult for traders and common people to accept. The government failed to prevent people



from forging new coins, leading to a flood of new coins in the markets. People began minting token currency in their houses, but common people failed to distinguish between royal treasury and local-made coins. As a result, the Sultan was forced to withdraw the token currency.

◆ *Copper coins*

Six different varieties of Firoz Shah Tughlaq's gold coins were circulated, with the Caliph's name on the front and his own on the back. Coins were issued with both Firoz's name and his son, Fath Khan, beside each other. Gold and silver coins from future rulers are scarce. Only three pieces of silver currency belonging to Firoz have been found, but copper coins are abundant. Despite the variety, most coins were made of copper.

◆ *Currency as a popular means of commerce*

Throughout the entirety of the time, with just two notable exceptions, only one mint name, Delhi, is mentioned. The lengthy reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq appears to have established his currency as a popular means of commerce, and this is presumably what explains the protracted series of his posthumous billion coins that has extended over forty years at this point. Despite the fact that they used a different standards, the coinage of the Lodi family is strikingly similar to the currency used during the reign of the Sharqi monarchs of Jaunpur.

◆ *Mughal coins*

Although the Mughal empire was created after the destruction of the Delhi Sultanate, the currency system was really established during the reign of Babur. This occurred despite the fact that the Mughal kingdom was established after the loss. The name "Shah Rukh" was given to the silver coins that were produced under Babur's reign. On one side of the coin was the name of the monarch, along with his title and the date. The other side included an image of the coin. Initially, coins were spherical but were subsequently altered to take on a square configuration. In addition to silver coinage, gold and copper coins were also brought into circulation. During his reign, the name of Prince Salim appeared on a number of coins issued in medieval India. On one side of the coins that were minted during this period was the word "Kalima," while the other side of the coin had the words "Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir Badshah Ghazi" written on it.

On one side of the coins struck under the reign of Shah Jahan was the word "Kalima" and the name of the mint, while on the other side was his name and the title "Sahib-

◆ *Coins of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb*

qiran Sani Shihabuddin Muhammad Shah Jahan Badshah Ghazi." The names of the Caliph's were written on the other side of the margin from the titles that were written on one side. On the obverse side of the currency that was in circulation at the time of Aurangzeb's reign, his name and title were written as "Abu-al-zafar Muiuddin Muhammad Bahadur Shah Alamgir Aurangzeb Badshah Ghazi." The size of the coins that were minted at that time was lowered to that of a "Dam" as a result of the rise in the price of metal at that period. During the reign of Akbar and Jahangir, there were a restricted number of locations that issued coins, but during the reign of Aurangzeb, the number of locations increased.

◆ *Rajput coins*

The design of the Rajput currency, in its most basic form, included the name of the Ruler on one side and an image of Goddess Laxmi on the other. The Devnagiri script was used to write the inscriptions on the coins. These gold coins have always weighed 4.5 *Masha*, which is the same as 3.6 gms and has been the standard for centuries.

◆ *Coins of Vijayanagara Empire*

The coins that were used during the time of the Vijayanagara Empire were exceedingly well-liked and even served as a model for subsequent generations of coinage. The Ruler's likeness appeared on one side of the coin, while his name appeared on the other. This design was used for all of the coins. The Devanagiri script was utilised for the most part on these coins. Gold and copper were the two most common metals used to strike coins in the kingdom of Vijayanagara. The front of the majority of gold coins minted in Vijayanagara had a religious picture, while the reverse featured a regal legend. The important gold coins of the Vijayanagara Empire were those that had the image of the god of Tirupati, which Lord Venkatesvara depicted either single or with his two consorts. These coins served as the impetus for the Dutch, French, and English to design "Single Swami" pagodas, while the English East India Company created "Three Swami" pagodas.

◆ *Features of coins*

The Vijayanagara Empire was responsible for the production of a large quantity of gold coins, along with coins made of pure silver and copper. On pagodas representing higher denominations, there is an image of a runner with the insignia of a dagger. Earlier, Vijayanagara coins were produced at a number of mints and were known by a variety of names. Some examples of these names were Barkur gadyanas and Bhatkal gadyanas. Inscriptions written in Kannada and Sanskrit have been discovered. Among the



pictures that were found were a bull, an elephant, a two-headed eagle with an elephant held in each of its beaks and claws, as well as numerous depictions of Hindu deities. On one side of the gold varahan coin that was produced during the reign of Krishna Deva Raya (1509–1529) was a sitting Vishnu, while the other side included a three-line Sanskrit inscription that read Shri Pratap Krishna Raya.

### 3.2.1.1 Various Types of Weights and Measures of Medieval India

#### ◆ Division of Indian measuring system

Before the metric system, Indian measuring systems were divided into three periods: the era before Akbar's reign, the period of the Akbar system, and the period under British colonial rule. The weights and measures varied depending on region, commodity, and rural or urban setting. Akbar decided to standardise the system using barley grain, which introduced a barley corn standard (*Jau*) for length and weight determination. The width of a *jau* was used as the standard, while the weight of a *jau* was used as the measure.

#### ◆ Standardized measurements

In the era of Shah Jahan, the *Ilahi Gaz*, spanning 840 to 860 millimetres, held crucial significance with one *Gaz* consisting of sixteen *Grehs*, each equal to two pais. Standardised measurements were pivotal for trade, commerce, and administration in medieval India, showcasing variations across regions and periods while maintaining common themes. Ancient and medieval India utilised the *yojana* for length, a measure reflecting a day's walk.

#### ◆ Weights

For weight, the *ratti*, based on a carob seed's weight (around 0.121 grams), assessed pearls, while the *tola* (around 11.66 grams) gauged precious metals. The *masha*, weighing approximately 0.972 grams, served various applications. Volume saw the *kudava*, averagely 600 to 700 milliliters, in business and trade. The *bigha* quantified land area, varying from a third to an acre. Grain measurement featured the *seer* (roughly 933 milliliters) and the *maund* (about 37.3 liters) assessed bulk products. Varied values in medieval India necessitated later efforts to standardise measurement systems, eventually replaced by the metric system in modern India.

## 3.2.2 Trade and Commerce

### 3.2.2.1 Development of Trade and Commerce in Medieval India

During the medieval period, there was a significant

◆ *Medieval trade boom*

surge in the monetary gains derived from trade and business activities on the Indian subcontinent. Numerous non-agricultural industries flourished concurrently with the expansion of urban centers, fostering an increase in international commerce. In the realm of business, the predominant members of the middle class were merchants or engaged in other non-agricultural professions such as *Vaidya*. While a select few merchants focused on retail trading, the majority of business owners concentrated on wholesale transactions.

◆ *Merchants' roles defined*

Merchants predominantly involved in wholesale dealings were known as *Seth*, whereas those primarily engaged in retail transactions were referred to as *Banik*. Individuals engaged in commerce traversed various locations, utilising *banjaras* to transport goods, including food grains, salt, numerous oxen, and other everyday items. Transactions were often facilitated through the exchange of *hundis*, representing an agreement for payment at a specified future date. Over time, British and Dutch invaders in India recognised the already well-established trade and commerce system.

◆ *Metropolitan hubs vital for trade*

Metropolitan towns played a pivotal role as primary trading hubs for international commerce during medieval India. Numerous organisations dedicated to trade and commerce emerged during this period. The arrival of English and Dutch merchants in the early 17th century further propelled India's involvement in global trade. India actively welcomed merchants from other countries, aiming to challenge the Portuguese monopoly on maritime commerce. The Indian market became increasingly integrated with global markets, particularly the European market.

### 3.2.2.2 Inland Trade

◆ *Buying and selling of goods*

During the medieval period, the land revenue was collected in cash. Traditional grain traders, known as *banjaras*, handled most transactions, which were then transported to other cities and markets. According to Tavernier, a French traveller who visited India in the latter part of the 17th century, every hamlet had a market for various goods, including rice, wheat, butter, milk, vegetables, sugar, and even goats, sheep, and chickens. Every significant town or community had a *sarraf* or money changer. Additionally, nearby cities had marketplaces for buying and selling goods, frequented by both buyers and sellers. There were also hat and penth marketplaces where people from surrounding villages could sell or buy their daily needs. These marketplaces took place on predetermined days



throughout the week, with occasional caps for specific types of merchandise.

◆ *Mandis*

Food grains, salt, rudimentary tools and equipment made of wood and iron for agricultural and home purposes, and coarse cotton fabrics were all possible to be purchased in these neighbourhood markets. These kinds of marketplaces may be found in every little municipality and the larger community. In the 17th century, Banarsi Das described Jaunpur as having 52 parganas, marketplaces, and 52 *mandis*, or wholesale markets. This suggests that every pargana had both retail and wholesale markets. Economic operations were managed by a network of large and minor markets, such as hats, penths, and *mandis*, and individual merchants. Tapan Raychaudhuri suggests that each village was part of a limited trading circuit, including *mandis*, which mediated the flow of goods.

◆ *Commercial centres*

Smaller business centers in an area were connected to larger commercial centers in the region, such as the Mughal provinces. These regions had larger commercial centers that acted as nodal centers for all goods produced in different parts of the *suba*. The administrative headquarters of the *suba* were typically located in these significant towns. Examples of such commercial hubs include Patna, Ahmedabad, Surat, Dacca, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Ajmer, Thatta, Burhampur, Masuliputnam, Bijapur, Hyderabad, and Calicut. These locations were significant commercial hubs not only for their local goods but also for acting as emporia for commerce between regions and other countries. Ahmedabad, a town in the 17th century, had access to 19 *mandis* and an estimated income of 42,860 dams per annum from commercial taxes levied in its market. This income was based on the size of the market, as the income from commercial taxes was a significant indicator of the town's economic status. The area around Ahmedabad was a hub for commerce.

Delhi, Agra, Dacca, and Lahore each had their own unique market for specific items. J. Linschoten's account of Goa in the late 16th century describes daily auctions on the city's main thoroughfare, lined with stores offering various fabrics. These cities had a large population of merchants, brokers, and *sarrafs*, and numerous *sarais*, or rest houses, for the convenience of traders and travellers. These cities were known for their diverse offerings and bustling trade scene. The goods produced in neighbouring cities, suburbs, and villages eventually reached these centers, such as Patna,

◆ *Imports and exports*

which imported silk, cotton clothing, fruits, vegetables, opium, and sugar from various regions of the subcontinent. Some cities, such as Burhampur, Ahmedabad, Cambay, Surat-Sarkhej, and Agra, were known for their expertise in trade, such as cotton *mandi*, cotton textiles, gems market, and indigo. Each major commercial hub had a mint producing silver, copper, and gold coins in specific locations.

◆ *Trade of goods across regions*

During the medieval period, India experienced advanced commerce, with a massive trade of goods across regions. The goods, manufactured in one location, were transported over considerable distances, often covering hundreds or thousands of kilometers. Food grains, textiles, luxury goods, metals, and weapons were the primary items traded. Long-distance commerce also involved luxury goods, metals, and weapons. However, discussing the specifics of this trade in various commodities is difficult due to the vast number of them.

◆ *Commercial hubs in Bengal*

Bengal, located in the east of India, has strong commercial ties with other regions. The cities of Hugli, Dacca, Murshidabad, Malda, Satgaon, Tanda, Hijili, Sripur, and Sonargaon are significant commercial hubs. Hugli is a notable center of commerce, where items from Bihar, Orissa, and other regions are brought in for sale. Food grains from other parts of the country were also transported to Bengal. Rice and sugar from Yatna were transported to the market. Bengal also offers a variety of textiles from Bihar, Benaras, and Jaunpur, with Lakhawar textiles being purchased by merchants from across India and abroad. Gujarat and Bihar's silk manufacturing relied heavily on raw silk from Bengal, which was then exported to India and other countries. The Bengali and Bihari marketplaces were abundant with Kashmiri saffron, making it easily accessible to buyers. Burhanpur was a key source of Bengal's cotton chintz, which was also used in the production process.

◆ *Textile and spices*

Bengal and northern cities like Agra and Banaras established commercial connections, with textiles from various regions being shipped to Ahmedabad and Surat. Gujarat made silk from raw silk from Bengal and distributed it across the northern market. Pepper and spices were supplied from the Malabar coast, and Multan and Lahore received Gujarat-originating textiles. Gujarat also exported Sarkhej indigo, a renowned quality indigo, from Bengal. The towns of Gujarat, Konkan, and Malabar engaged in



significant commercial activity, with textiles from Bengal and Sarkhej indigo being exported throughout India.

◆ *Imported items*

Bengal's finest silk was shipped to Agra, while regions like Gujarat, Bengal, Patna, Lahore, and Multan received rugs and textiles from the Awadh area. Saffron, wood products, fruits, woollen shawls, and other goods were exported from Kashmir to various markets in India. Ice was exported from Kashmir to Lahore, Multan, Agra, and Delhi. Paper from Shahzadpur was distributed across India, while indigo from Bayana was shipped to southern cities. Rajasthan's marble was distributed to Agra and Delhi. Foodgrains were transported from the north to Gujarat, with most business conducted along the shoreline. Masulipatam was responsible for selling Bengal indigo, white pepper and spices from the Malabar coast, which were transported to Bijapur, Coromandel, and the Konkan coast. Tobacco grown in Gujarat was transported from Masulipatam to Bengal. Diamonds mined in the Golconda region were distributed throughout India.

◆ *Minerals*

During Mughal Empire, India was a major producer of minerals and metals, with salt primarily produced in Rajasthan and Punjab being transported to all regions. Iron was sourced from central India, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Sindh, while high-quality steel was produced in Kutch, Gujarat, and other regions in Deccan and South India. Rajasthan was the primary source of copper, and saltpetre was sourced from Bihar, Sind, Rajasthan, and northern India. Coastal areas were responsible for salt production through seawater evaporation.

◆ *Sea trade*

### 3.2.2.4 Coastal Trade

Due to the long distances and slow interregional transportation, commerce was primarily carried out via the sea route, involving numerous coastal communities. The western shore was the hub of this trade, while the eastern shore saw significant commercial activity. Each shore had distinct organisational differences, with the western shore facing piracy issues, leading to convoy traffic. On the eastern shore, small boats were in constant activity throughout the year.

From May to September, commercial vessels undertook two or three voyages connecting Goa to Cochin and Goa to Cambay, ferrying a range of commodities such as wheat, oil, legumes, sugar, and textiles. The Cambay convoy

◆ *Trade during the monsoon*

typically included approximately 200-300 boats and ships, while the Cochin-Goa route transported a diverse array of goods. Coastal boats from Bengal and the Coromandel coast rendezvoused with ships from Malacca and the east near the coast of Ceylon, and the entire fleet received protection through convoying on its journey to Cochin.

◆ *Coromandel Trade routes*

The Coromandel coast served as a prominent trade route for the transportation of goods such as copper, zinc, tin, tobacco, spices, and chintz from Vijaynagara and Golkonda. Gujarat supplied spices to the Coromandel coast, while Malabar provided additional spice trade. Coastal towns in Orissa were also connected with both the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. The Coromandel route played a vital role in transporting textiles, groceries, iron, steel, and various metals from Vijayanagara and Golkonda. From the Bengal coast, rice, textiles, and diverse goods embarked on their journey to the western shore. Key coastal trade routes included Sind to Cambay, Gujarat to Malabar, Bengal to Coromandel, and Malabar to Coromandel.

◆ *Expansion of foreign trade*

### 3.2.2.5 Foreign Trade

India has maintained commercial links with a number of different nations for many generations. Throughout the time, there was a shift in the customary pattern of commerce and commodity exchange. During the 16th and 17th centuries, India enjoyed a prosperous commercial relationship with a wide number of different nations around the world. The Europeans' monopoly on corn was the most important factor in the international trade that took place during this period. This resulted in a significant expansion in India's commerce with other countries. The majority of this commerce consisted of the export of Indian wares and products. The amount of goods imported was quite low.

◆ *Textile exports*

### Exports and Imports

The majority of India's exports consisted of textiles, saltpetre, and indigo at one point in time. Sugar, opium, spices, and other assorted goods were also among the key products that were traded. During the 17th century, India's textile manufacturing reached unprecedented success due to increasing exports. Prior to European arrival, Mughals, Khorasanis, Iraqis, and Armenians were the primary customers of Indian cotton textiles. These goods were transported to Central Asia, Persia, and Turkey via the land route through Lahore. The Dutch and English later focused



on the textile industry in India, sourcing various types of cotton fabrics such as Baftas, Samanis, Calico, Khairabadi and Daryabadi, Amberty and Qaimkhani. Later, various types of Eastern shore cotton fabrics were produced, including chintz or printed cotton textiles, and carpets from Gujarat, Jaunpur, and Bengal regions.

◆ *Silk and Cotton trade*

Silk fabric from Gujarat and Bengal was a significant export in the 16th century, with demand for cotton and silk yarn increasing. According to Moreland's estimations, the demand from the English Company alone was 200,000 pieces in the year 1625, 1,50,000 pieces in the year 1628, and around 1,20,000 pieces in the year 1630. The supply was affected by Gujarat famines in the 1630s, but cargo from Surat carried over 50,000 pieces annually from 1638 to 1641. After 1650, exploration continued along the eastern coast, with Madras providing almost one lakh pieces annually. The Netherlands also had over 50,000 pieces. In 1661, Armenians purchased cotton textiles worth around 10 lakh rupees to send to Persia. Although these figures are approximations, they offer insight into large-scale textile exports.

◆ *Saltpetre - Gunpowder production*

During the 17th century, saltpetre, a key component in gunpowder production, was in high demand in Europe. The Dutch and English began shipping saltpetre outside the Coromandel region, exporting moderate quantities from Coromandel, Gujarat, and Agra. Trade from Bihar to Orissa and Bengal ports began in the second half of the 17th century, with Bihar becoming the most significant provider. By 1658, the English imported over 25,000 maunds of saltpetre annually from Bengal ports.

◆ *Indigo - Colonial cash crops*

Indigo, a key ingredient in blue dye production, was primarily produced in the Punjab, Sind, and Gujarat regions of northern India. The indigo from Sarkhej in Gujarat and Bayana in the vicinity of Agra was in high demand on the export market. Before reaching Europe, it was sent to the Persian Gulf and distributed in Aleppo markets. In the late 16th century, the Portuguese began trading with other countries, leading to a high demand for dyeing woollen fabrics in Europe. In the 17th century, the Dutch and English began exporting the product, with merchants from Persia and Armenians also purchasing significant quantities. The Dutch and English managed to acquire between 25,009 and 30,000 maunds annually during the middle of the 17th century. The demand for indigo continued to rise in subsequent years.

◆ *Arabian Sea trade*

Indian ports such as Chaul, Diu, Goa, Dabhol, Calicut, and Bhatkal, as well as Arabian and Persian ports such as Aden, Jeddah, Ormuz, and Esh-Shihr, participated in a robust and lucrative trading network around the beginning of the fourteenth century. This commerce was known as the Golden Age of Trade. Cloves, cardamoms, pepper, ginger, saffron, sandalwood, indigo, and other spices make up the good leaving Indian. In exchange, India was given a large number of commodities, most notably Arabian horses.

◆ *Textiles dominated Mughal exports*

Between the 16th and 19th centuries CE, the Mughal Empire controlled South Asian territory. European trading enterprises, participating in the Asia-Europe-intra Asian trade market, increased foreign commerce in India, engaging with countries like Egypt, Arabia, Central Asia, China, Japan, Persia, Nepal, Holland, France, England, and Portugal. India's textile export market share reached 25% before the 17th century. European merchants exported muslin, silk, and cotton textiles, with cotton fabric being a significant export. Other goods like sugar, spices, opium, saltpetre, and pepper from Malabar were also exported.

◆ *Imports*

India's importable goods during the 16th century CE included velvet, equine products, firearms, wine, fragrances, and fruit. Traders also brought horses and carpets from Arabia and Persia. The Portuguese monopoly on India's international trade led to a shift in commercial exchanges by the 17th century CE. The English established the East India Company in the 17th century CE, relocating the Portuguese to Goa and the French to Pondicherry. The British ensured low-cost manufactured items reached India's marketplaces, creating a captive market for their companies. India transitioned from an exporter of high-end items to an exporter of raw materials, particularly in the textile sector. The British also influenced Indian farmers to plant crops that met their needs, altering agricultural patterns due to the shift in commerce.

◆ *Colonisation of India's trade*

During the medieval period, India had significant commercial relationships with other nations. European merchants arrived, leading to the establishment of ports in Goa, Quilon, Cochin, and Calicut. India's vast resources attracted merchants from around the world, transforming the commercial relationship between India and Europe.

### 3.2.3 Trade and Development of Towns

The thriving economy led to the establishment of new



◆ *Thriving trade economy*

towns to promote economic growth. Ethnic groups like the Banias, Marwaris, and Multanis relied on commerce as their primary means of subsistence. The banjaras carried their business via caravans, constantly moving between locations. Delhi was the centre of entry and exit for goods from the East, Kanauj, Doab, and South. Luxury items like metalware, ivory, jewellery, and cotton fabrics were also exported. Other goods from East Africa, Arabia, and China are also sourced from Delhi. Ibn Batuta described Delhi as a wonderful city during his visit. The expansion of commerce increased the use of money, leading to the introduction of the silver tanka (coin), devised by Iltutmish. The system of weights used during this time remained in use until the recent adoption of the metric system.

◆ *Decline in international trade*

### 3.2.4 The Decline of Trade and Commerce

The seventh to eleventh century saw a significant decline in commercial activity and trade in India. Villages' economic independence led to a decrease in commerce, impacting town expansion. Arab geographers observed fewer cities and towns in India compared to China. Warfare between neighbouring kingdoms also impeded trade. The fall of the Western Roman Empire and the expansion of Islam, which led to the downfall of ancient empires like the Sasanid Empire in Iran, also impacted India's international trade. The favourable trade that had brought gold and silver back into India was also hindered.

◆ *Significance of maritime routes*

The opening of Central Asia to traders from the Persian Gulf and West Asia led to a decline in North Indian overland commerce with China. Conflicts between Chinese, Tibetans, Turks, and Arabs made the land path to China dangerous. As a result, the maritime route between India and China became more significant. The Mongol conquests in the thirteenth century ended India's connection to Central Asia, halting overland commerce.

◆ *State support for trade*

### 3.2.5 Trade Routes and Means of Transport

#### 3.2.5.1 Inland Trade Routes

The Mughal Emperors established a complex network of trade routes linking the Empire's economic centres by the 17th century. The state or chieftains maintained these roads, sometimes crossing rivers using fords or bridges. The state or nobility also constructed fords and bridges. However, the roads' condition during monsoons was poor, with some becoming impassable due to rain. The state built *kos minar*

towers to display distance and roadway alignment, but only found them along more frequent paths. *Sarais*, marketplaces on major roads, served as resting areas for travellers and traders, providing living places and storage spaces for their belongings. These *Sarais* were essential for the economy and the lives of nomadic travellers.

### 3.2.5.2 Various Trade Routes

#### ◆ Trade routes from Agra

The historic trade routes from Agra encompassed diverse paths, each weaving through significant regions. The Agra-Delhi-Kabul route traversed Agra, Faridabad, Delhi, Sonapat, Panipat, Kamal, Ambala, Ludhiana, Fatehpur, Lahore, Rohtas Fort, Rawalpindi, Shamsabad, Peshawar, Fatehabad, and finally reaching Kabul. Another route led from Agra to Burhanpur and Surat, winding through Dholpur, Gwalior, Narwar, Sironj, Handiya, Talner, Nandurbar, Kirka, and concluding in Surat. The Surat-Ahmedabad-Agra route ventured through Surat, Broach, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Palampur, Jalore, Merta, Ludana, Hinduan, Fatehpur Sikri, and returned to Agra. Lastly, the Agra-Patna-Rengal route covered Firozabad, Etawa, Sarai Shahzada, Allahabad, Banaras, Sahasram, Daud Nagar, Patna, Munger, Bhagalpur, Rajmahal, Dampur, and Dacca. These routes played a pivotal role in historical trade and cultural exchanges.

#### ◆ Silk Road

### 3.2.5.3 Routes for Foreign Trade

1. Overland Route: During the medieval period, the path that was associated with the so-called “great silk road” was the land route that was travelled the most. The so-called “great silk road” started in Beijing and wound its way across Central Asia, stopping in Kashigar, Samarqand, Balkh, and Kabul along the way. Lahore served as a connection point for territories further inland in India via this important route. It went through Multan, Qandahar, Baghdad, and after crossing the Euphrates, it arrived in Aleppo. The route began in Afghanistan and ended in Syria. The goods were then transported to Europe via ships after being unloaded there.

#### ◆ Oceanic trade

2. Overseas Route: Before the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, marine routes via the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal were popular in the north, transporting goods from regions like Cambay, Surat, Thatta, Dabhor, Cochin, and Calicut to Aden and Mocha. Alexandria was a hub for goods delivery into European nations. Following the circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope, European countries gained access to previously unavailable opportunities and worked directly



with India and South Asia. Indian traders conducted seaborne commerce with China and the Indonesia Archipelago, shipping goods to Achin, Batavia, and Malacca from Hugli, Masulipatnam, and Pulicat. Historically, traders would travel to Macau and Canton in China across the Straits of Malacca.

#### 3.2.5.4 Means of Transportation

##### ◆ *Land Transport*

Oxen were crucial for carrying loads and acting as pack animals, with grain traders moving in caravans with 10,000-20,000 pack animals. They were used for transportation by various merchants, including banjaras. Oxen carts could carry four maunds, while wagons could hold forty. Oxens could travel for up to 30 days, covering 20-25 miles daily. Camels were used for transporting commodities in the western region, while mules and hill ponies were used in high mountainous areas for large goods, with human labour also used.

##### ◆ *River transport* ◆ *Transformations in subcontinental trade and commerce*

During the ancient period, a substantial number of rivers created a system of waterways for transportation, with Bengal and Sindh having the highest boat traffic. The boats carrying goods from Agra to Bengal were consistent, with hundreds travelling between Agra and Bengal. Around 2,000 boats were present at Rajmahal, and around 40,000 in Sindh. Flatboats, known as 'patella,' could transport 130-200 tonnes of cargo. They moved faster in the same direction as the river and took less time than road travel. River transportation was also more cost-effective, with products from Multan to Thatta costing Rs. 314 per maund, compared to Rs. 2 per maund for land transport.

##### ◆ *Merchants held significant capital*

#### 3.2.5.5 Potentialities of Capitalist Development

Medieval Indian merchants held significant capital, as evidenced by European records. In 1663, some merchants in Surat had over 5-6 million rupees, while Mulla Abdul Ghafur of Surat owned property valued at 8 million rupees and owned twenty ships. English factors testified that his trading transactions were similar to those of their organisation. Virji Von, another businessman in Surat, owned an estate worth 8 million rupees. Manrique (1630) was amazed by the extraordinary wealth of merchants in Agra, observing money stacked up in their homes like grain mounds.

Merchants and non-mercantile tribes, including Mughal Emperors, royal women, princes, and nobles, contributed to the commercial economy. Their investments were lower

◆ *Expanding money market*

than those of merchants, but their participation expanded the size of the “money-market.” The Mughal Empire had a well-developed financial infrastructure, including a robust banking and credit system. The *Sarraf*, a banker responsible for money transfer and issuance of bills of exchange, played a crucial role in expanding the “money-market.” Their participation expanded the size of the “money-market” in its own way.

◆ *Bottomry and Respondentia*

The *Sarraf* reduced merchants’ *hundi* value, increasing trade funds. A developed method of finance involved insurance for products in transit. Commercial institutions resembling bottomry and respondentia lent money and charged interest. By the 17th and 18th centuries, fundamental monetary and economic institutions were operational, possibly leading the medieval economy towards capitalism. These developments contributed to the development of the medieval economy. During the medieval era, large-scale manufacturing of commodities, particularly textiles, saltpetre, and indigo, was conducted on a massive scale. The establishment of brokerage simplified the procurement process for Indian and foreign merchants, while well-established transportation methods adapted to the limitations of the medieval era.

◆ *Artisans ruined by capitalism*

Capitalist relations only exist when capital dominates and controls a significant portion of the production process. Industrial and mercantile capital differ in their involvement in the manufacturing process. Industrial capital is not directly involved; rather, it involves works by self-sufficient artisans who own tools and raw materials to produce finished products. This system, known as the Domestic Craft System, was eradicated by capitalism, which transformed these artisans into wage labourers. As a result, industrial capital eventually gains control of the means of production and the entire system.

◆ *Sellers Market*

The transition from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism in Medieval India was not sudden but rather a gradual domination of labour and production by capital. This transition was known as the putting-out system, which was an established practice even before the 17th century. The putting-out system allowed for the introduction of commercial capital into the existing artisan-level mode of production. The putting-out system involved brokers, as advances provided to primary producers by merchants were executed via brokers. The Indian economy of the 17th century was a sellers’ market, with high demand and a large number



of customers eager to compete for purchases. Merchants, particularly those involved in international trade, excluded competitors and ensured timely delivery of goods at agreed rates. The primary producers agreed to accept advance payment to fulfil large orders.

## Summarised Overview

In medieval India, the intricate web of coins, transactions, and standardised weights and measures played a pivotal role in facilitating commerce, cultural exchange, and maintaining market order. While the rural economy relied on barter systems, urban centres thrived with markets and monetary trades, particularly in the Mughal era, where Chettiars, Baniyas, and Bohras were notable social groups in the open market.

A standardised multi-metallic monetary system initially spurred commerce. However, during the 14th and 15th centuries, the Indian economy faced a setback due to a global scarcity of silver. Southern India responded by creating a bi-metallic coinage by mixing copper with gold. Robust partnerships and the prominence of Sarrafs, influential money lenders, characterised the financial landscape. The term “money transfer” referred to bills of exchange. At the local and regional levels, commerce predominantly revolved around food grains, coarse cloth, salt, and everyday commodities, with markets like hats or penths serving as hubs. Villages supplied goods to towns, forming an economically interconnected network through land and water routes. Coastal areas participated in commerce through sea routes, with the West Coast as a central hub.

India maintained a strong trade surplus, exporting textiles, indigo, saltpetre, and sugar to various Asian and European destinations. The arrival of the English and Dutch bolstered international trade, particularly in indigo and saltpetre. Import restrictions were imposed, with silver, woollen fabric, and luxury goods being the primary items brought into the country. The Mughal administration levied taxes and customs on traded goods, occasionally exempting certain European enterprises. The commercial activities of high-ranking officials and nobles occasionally complicated matters for merchants and European businesses.

## Assignments

1. Explain Inland and overseas trade in medieval period.
2. Discuss the decline of trade and commerce during the Medieval period.
3. Critically explain the growth of coinage during the medieval period.
4. Explain standardized weights and measures used in the medieval period.

## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

# New Variants of Religious Systems

**BLOCK-04**



# Confluence of Ideas and Practices

## Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ examine the origin of *Bhakti* Movement in Medieval India
- ◆ explain the factors that facilitated the emergence of the *Bhakti* Movement
- ◆ define the *Saguna* and *Nirguna* Schools of *Bhakti* cult
- ◆ explore the main preachers of *Bhakti* Movement in medieval India

## Background

A silent social revolution led by a wide range of socio-religious reformers, the *Bhakti* movement played a significant role in the cultural history of medieval India. It alludes to the theistic devotional movement, eventually transforming medieval Indian society. The *Bhakti* movement promoted the growth of regional literature and offered individuals at the bottom of Indian society greater clout. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the *Bhakti* movement began in the seventh and eighth centuries. In the 15th century, it made its way to North India via Karnataka and Maharashtra. In the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the *Bhakti* movement reached its peak. The Alvars and Nayanars initiated the *Bhakti* Movement in South India. The followers of Lord Shiva are known as Nayanars, and the followers of Lord Vishnu are known as Alvars. Singing praises to their gods, these believers travelled from one location to another. Several temples constructed during this period are now revered as sites of worship. In this unit we will discuss the *Bhakti* movement in Medieval India and its important preachers.

## Keywords

*Bhakti*, *Saguna* and *Nirguna*, Kabirpanthis, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ramanuja, Namdev, Ramananda



## Discussion

### 4.1.1 Medieval Culture and Religion

#### 4.1.1.1 Life and Culture of Medieval India

##### ◆ *New Religious Trends*

The Indian languages, folk art, and religious developments during the Medieval period have played significant roles in the development of the country's composite culture. New religious movements like the *Bhakti* movement, Sufism and Sikhism aided this trend. You may observe how Islam has influenced many facets of Indian culture by just looking around. You may have noticed India's most well-known monuments. These structures serve as representations of the hybrid character of India's Indo-Islamic culture.

##### ◆ *Influence on Indian Culture*

Additionally, you may observe the ways in which India's diverse religions—Islam included—have impacted one another. Furthermore, folk art of one kind or another is renowned to have originated in all parts of India. Another important facet of Indian culture is the growth of folk arts, which allow the common people to express their creativity. The fascinating history of the several regional languages that we speak now also developed during this time.

##### ◆ *Advent of Arabs*

Upon their arrival, the Muslim invaders chose to settle in India. They married Indian women and adopted an Indian way of life. Ideas and customs were exchanged with each other. The two had a huge impact on one another's manners, attire, speaking patterns, and philosophical perspectives.

##### ◆ *Become One with God*

### 4.1.2 The *Bhakti* Movement in Medieval India

#### 4.1.2.1. The *Bhakti* Movement

The *Bhakti* saints were well-liked religious teachers in the era besides the Sufis. Though they had been teaching for a longer period, their teachings were comparable to those of the Sufis. The businessmen, artists, and craftsmen all regarded them favourably. The villagers gathered around to hear them as well. The saints of *Bhakti* and Sufis shared similar beliefs and customs. Their central conviction was that they had to become 'one' with God. They emphasised that the foundation of a connection with God is love or devotion.

The *Bhakti* saints criticised religious dogma and the objects of devotion. They welcomed women to participate in their religious events and disregarded caste. The *Bhakti* saints



◆ *Disregard Caste system*

imparted their knowledge entirely on vernacular language, ensuring that even the most basic brains could understand it. Though they came from a variety of backgrounds, the *Bhakti* saints were mostly from lower castes. Many were from the less affluent class of peasants, or they were artisans. They emphasised the need for religious tolerance. The Alwars and Nayanars of the Tamil *Bhakti* Cult established the practice of teaching *Bhakti* through songs and tales.

#### 4.1.2.2 Origin of the *Bhakti* Movement

◆ *Originated in the South*

The *Bhakti* movement originated in south India, mostly in Tamil Nadu, between the seventh and the twelfth century. It had progressively moved to the north by the end of the fifteenth century. The two prominent *Bhakti* saint groups in South India, the Nayanars (Shiva Devotees) and the Alvars (Vishnu Devotees), rejected Buddhist and Jain austerities in favour of teaching devotion to God as a method of salvation. Most of their poetry dealt with the holy relationship between the worshiper and the Almighty.

◆ *Meaning of Bhakti*

The *Bhakti* saints wrote and spoke in vernacular languages like Tamil and Telugu so that the common people could read and repeat them. The *Bhakti* tradition did not necessitate the presence of a priest. As a consequence, the movement gained more popularity. The word '*Bhakti*', which denotes a devotee, comes from the Sanskrit word '*Bhaj*', which means 'to share', 'participate in', or 'be a part of'. The *Bhakti* is a spiritual term meaning 'total devotion'.

#### Reasons for the Origin of *Bhakti* Movement

##### 1. Political Reasons

◆ *The Rise of Turks*

There were many factors that led to the emergence of the *Bhakti* movement in medieval India. The rise of Turkish political hegemony and the spread of Islam reduced the Brahmins' authority and stature. As a result, the groundwork for non-conformist movements with anti-Brahmanical and anti-caste ideologies was laid. The Brahmins had duped the people into thinking that the idols and pictures in the temples were real gods with divine power and the ability to affect people, rather than just representations of God. The Brahmins lost their temple wealth and official support when the victorious Turks took over. As a result, the Brahmins experienced material and intellectual suffering.

◆ *Role of artisans*

## 2. Socio-economic Reasons

The growing urban classes especially artisans were not satisfied with the traditional Brahmanical hierarchy, attracted towards the Bhakti movement because of its egalitarian ideas. The development of cities, urban crafts production and the opening of new markets were also facilitated the growth of Bhakti movement.

◆ *Rituals in Hinduism*

## 3. Complexity in Religion

The teachings of the Upanishads and Vedas were difficult for the common man to follow. Hinduism had also become extremely ceremonial, and the caste system had taken roots. Both Buddhism and Jainism lacked adherents and encouraged severe austerity. Conversely, the Sufi movement was growing in popularity due to its egalitarian beliefs and simple prayer style. The People were looking for ways to satisfy their spiritual and emotional demands. These elements contributed to the growth and dissemination of the *Bhakti* tradition. The *Bhakti* saints opposed conventional religious practices and advocated for certain changes. Many rituals and complex religious practices were being followed across the country. Nonetheless, there remained a desire to adhere to more direct worship of god, other spiritual practices, and social conventions. There was more clarity in the presentation of the *Bhakti Marga*.

◆ *Bhakti saints*

## 4. Role of Religious Reformers

Many *Bhakti* saints have had a lasting impact on common people. The saints like Ramanuja, Shri Chaitanya, Namdev, Ramananda, Mirabai, Shankara, Kabir, Nanak, Surdas, Nimbarka, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Chandidas and Vallabhacharya influenced them a lot.

◆ *Two streams*

### 4.1.3. *Saguna and Nirguna Cults of Bhakti Movement*

There were two streams of *Nirguna* and *Saguna Bhakti* in northern India. The two schools of *Bhakti* saints were divided by their respective conceptions of God.

#### *Saguna Cult*

The *Saguna* School of thought held that the God has a distinct form and attributes. The *Saguna* School believed that God takes human form and attributes good deeds, such as Rama and Krishna. The *Saguna* School stood for saints who



◆ *Belief in Incarnations*

composed poetry extolling a God according to the attributes or structure. The saints like Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Surdas, and Meera belonged to the *Saguna* School. The *Saguna* school upheld the caste system and supported the Brahmin dominance. They encouraged the worship of idols and advocated a religion of subordination and uncomplicated faith in a personal God. They acknowledged the Vedas' spiritual value and the necessity of a human teacher serving as a conduit between the divine and his followers.

### *Nirguna Cult*

◆ *Belief in Monotheism*

The poetic-saints who glorified God beyond all attributes or forms were symbolised by the *Nirguna*. Another name for them is monotheistic *Bhakti* saints. The two biggest supporters of *Nirguna* were Nanak and Kabir. The *Nirguna* saints denounced idolatry, caste-based customs, and the *Brahmin* authority in general. Although they referred to their God by a variety of names and titles, they prized intimate relationships with the divine. They believed that their God was formless, eternal, non-incarnate, and indescribable. Their perspectives seemed to combine three traditions: Sufism, the Nathpanthi movement, and the Vaishnava notion of *Bhakti*.

### **4.1.4 Important Preachers of the Bhakti Movement**

◆ *Idea of Supreme God*

During the Middle Ages, caste-based Brahminism gained popularity. However, there was also resistance to the same. People sought solace in the teachings of the Buddha or Mahavira. Some were drawn to the idea of a 'Supreme God' who, if approached with dedication, might free them from such servitude or *Bhakti*. The *Bhagavad Gita's* advocacy of this concept gained traction in the early Common Era. The legacy of the Sufi and *Bhakti* traditions that have developed since the eighth century is an intense love or devotion to God. The concept of *Bhakti* gained so much popularity that the Buddhists and Jains also embraced it.

### **Kabir (1440 CE- 1518 CE)**

◆ *Oneness of God*

Kabir was the disciple of Swamy Ramananda, the Vaishnava saint. Similar to Nanak, he advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity. While criticising the current societal structure, Kabir vehemently objected to the worship of idols and the performance of formal religious rituals like the *Namaz*, pilgrimages, and ritual bathing. His goal was to spread a universally accepted religion that would bring all religions together. He emphasised the 'oneness of God'. He referred

to Him(God) as Allah, Gobinda, Hari, and Rama. You have probably read his Hindi “*Dohas*,” or “couplets.” His views were revealed through an extensive collection of lyrics known as *Sakhis* and *pads*, which are performed by itinerant *Bhajan* singers and purportedly penned by him.

◆ *Devotion to God*

The core of Kabir’s teachings was a total rejection of the caste system and major religious traditions. He held that devotion, or *Bhakti*, was the sole road to salvation and that there was only one formless Supreme God. His poetry was written in a simple style that was even understandable to the common people. He attracted both Muslims and Hindus as followers.

### Kabir Panthis

◆ *Followers of Kabir*

The people who follow the great saint Kabir and his teachings are known as Kabirpanthis. Kabir made an effort to bridge the gaps in the religious landscape of north India and increase understanding between Islam, Hinduism, and other non-Hindu religious faiths. His eclectic spirituality was centred on devotion to God, or *Bhakti*.

◆ *Kabir Vani*

Kabir was a master of what is known as “inner religion,” which is the loving submission to the heart’s dwelling God. *Sabda*, the word, is the central doctrine of Kabir. Instructions of Kabir Das were given verbally; nothing was recorded in written form. The *Kabir Vani*, or Kabir’s words, were composed after his death. The earliest known written account dates to around 1604 CE., and it may be found in the Sikh *Guru Granth*. Two more updated versions of the *Kabiroanis* exist: the *Bijak*, which was popularised, though not assembled, by the Kabirpanthis of Bihar, and the *Kabir Granthavali*, which was put together by the Dadupanthis of Rajasthan about 1600 A.D

◆ *Criticise religious evils*

Kabir himself belonged to the lowest caste, the sudras, and many of his followers were women. Kabir disapproved of the extraneous aspects of religion, including Hindu pilgrimages, image worship and the *Hajj*. Even though Kabir opposed sectarianism, his pupils and followers eventually established a sect after his death. The Kabirpanthis of today are identified as the Hindus. Today, its doctrine and practices have deviated from the original teacher’s goals, as is the case with all religious movements.

The Kabirpanthis hold that Kabir was a miraculously born incarnation. They have followed ritualism, although they



◆ *Practices of Kabirpanthis*

still adhere to monotheism and reject image worship. Even though Kabir disapproved of caste, they still engage in some exclusivity today. The Kabir Chaura Math is located where Kabir used to lecture his followers customarily. The *Gaddi*, Kabir's pillow, and the *Khanraon*, a pair of wooden sandals that symbolise the man's feet, are both kept at the *math* or monastery. Images of Mahants, Kabir, and Ramananda adorn the walls of the *math*.

◆ *Spread of Kabirpantis*

There were 843,171 Kabirpanthis in the 1901 Census. There are still a lot of Kabirpanthis that exist today, mostly centred in Benares and stretching to Bihar in the east and Gujarat in the west. The majority of members are Hindus from lower castes, with merchant class having a significant influence, particularly among the *Dharmadasis*. The *Bhajans*, or devotional songs, are a major source of influence for the *Sant* tradition and are immensely popular in India and among the Hindu populations abroad.

◆ *Rama Cult*

### **Tulsidas(1511 CE - 623 CE)**

Tulsidas, was a renowned poet who gave *Bhakti* religion a literary expression. His lyrics helped to popularise the Rama cult. By honouring Lord Rama as the divine embodiment in human form, he elevated the ethical standards of Hinduism. Through his writings, Tulsidas popularised the heavenly tale of Lord Rama. Tulsidas composed his writings in the regional vernacular of Avadhi, a subset of Hindi, the primary language spoken in the central regions of India. Because it was the language of the people, Tulsidas' writings were immediately comprehensible, accessible, and beloved by the general public.

◆ *Practices of Rama Cult*

He wrote in a literary style that skillfully combined Indian traditional music with classical music's many Raagas (tones, and notes) to tell the glorious story of Lord Rama. The people instantly accepted this over speeches that were too dry and monotonous for the general public or the staccato chanting of hymns. Through his writings, he disseminated the idea that the simplest and most practical way to find *Mukti* (liberation and deliverance), *Shanti* (peace and tranquillity), *Sukha* (happiness and joy), and *Anand* (bliss) is to have love, devotion, faith, and submission for Lord Rama, who is none other than the incarnate Supreme Being known as Parmeshwar, the Supreme God and the Lord God.

### **Guru Nanak (1469 CE - 1539 CE)**

Guru Nanak was born to a Khatri family from Talwandi,

◆ *Approach to God*

a hamlet now known as 'Namlama'.. Guru Nanak enjoyed the companionship of saints and Sufis. He departed from his home to join the *pirs* and saints. He wrote hymns and performed them with the use of a musical instrument called "Rabab." His songs are still popular, and he placed a strong focus on love and adoration for God alone. He vehemently disapproved the use of idolatry, pilgrimages, sacrifices, and ceremonies to approach God. He stated that the prerequisite to approaching God was to be pure in both behaviour and character. He believed that everyone may attain a spiritual life while carrying out their home tasks, and he founded a centre named 'Dera Baba Nanak' on the bank of river Ravi in Kartarpur. Dharamshala is the name given to the hallowed area that Guru Nanak so established.

◆ *Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib*

Guru Angad, was chosen by Guru Nanak as his heir before he died. The writings of Guru Nanak were collected by Guru Angad, who also contributed his own works to a brand-new character called *Gurmukhi*. The writings of Guru Angad's successors, who also wrote under the pen name "Nanak," were collected in 1604 by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru who was executed Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Guru Gobind Singh verified the authenticity of this collection in 1706. We now refer to it as the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

◆ *Establishment of Khalsa*

The town of Ramdaspur (Amritsar) sprang up around the main Gurdwara, Harmandir Sahib, in the early 17th century (Golden Temple). It was known as "a state inside the state" and was essentially self-governing. This enraged Mughal Emperor Jahangir, which resulted in Guru Arjan's execution in 1606. The 17th century saw the politicisation of the Sikh movement, which culminated in Guru Gobind Singh's establishment of the *Khalsa* in 1699 – the organisation known as the *Khalsa Panth*. Since Guru Nanak believed that freedom was the pursuit of an active life with a strong sense of social obligation rather than a state of inactive joy, his concept of equality had social and political ramifications.

◆ *Vedantic Philosophies*

### **Ramanuja(1017 CE - 1137 CE)**

Ramanuja, also called Ramanujacharya, was a prominent member of Sri Vaishnavism and a philosopher, theologian, and social reformer. The *Bhakti* movement benefited from his devotionism-based philosophy. The three most significant Vedantic philosophies of the second millennium were Madhavacharya's *Dvaita* philosophy (theistic dualism), Adi Shankara's *Advaita* (non-dualism), and Ramanuja's *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism).



◆ *Vishishta Advaita*

As a way of achieving spiritual emancipation, Ramanujacharya highlighted the epistemic and soteriological relevance of Bhakti, or devotion to a personal God—in Ramanuja’s case, God Vishnu. His beliefs uphold ‘unity’, while claiming plurality and differentiation between the Atman (soul) and Brahman (metaphysical, ultimate reality). He holds that the creative process, which includes all that is created, is real and not illusory as Shankaracharya believed, and that God is Saguna Brahman. Ramanuja, therefore, holds that the matter, God, and the soul all are real. On the other side, God is the core essence, and the remaining elements are his attributes.

◆ *The Brahman and the Cosmos*

In *Vishishtadvaita*, the *Brahman* and the cosmos are seen as two equally real entities, much like in dualism. But rather than existing independently of *Brahman*, the cosmos is created from it. It is believed that the *Brahman* is an omniscient, personal god who created the cosmos out of himself. Consequently, the universe carries the relationship of a part to the whole or the relationship of a “qualified consequence” to *Brahman’s* basis. According to the well-known analogy, *Brahman* is the sea and things, living and non-living, are the waves upon this sea.

◆ *Individualized God*

Ramanuja claims that *Brahman* is a totally individualised God who is believed to be Vishnu or one of his *Avatars*. He thought that Vishnu presided over the cosmos at all times and that he created it out of his love for humans. Additionally, he thought that Vishnu had all the qualities of a personal deity, including omniscience and omnipotence. The statement “mankind has a superior rank and is closer to God than in pure dualistic devotion” distinguishes *Vishishtadvaita* from dualism. In *Vishishtadvaita*, the cosmos and *Brahman* are seen as equally existing; unlike in dualism, they are not seen as two distinct realities. Ramanuja advocated for giving oneself up to God. He also preached the restoration of *Bhakti* and welcomed Vaishnavism to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Among his writings are *Sribhashya*, *Vedanta Dipa*, *Gita Bhasya*, and *Vedantasara*.

### ***Vishishtadvaita***

Among the *Vedanta* schools of Hindu philosophy, *Vishishtadvaita* is one of the most well-known. The Sanskrit term meaning “End of the Vedas” is called ‘*Vedanta*.’ *Vishishtadvaita* is a non-dualistic school of *Vedanta* philosophy. It is a school of *Vedanta* philosophy that holds that there is an underlying unity that subsumes all varieties. Four key concepts form the

foundation of *Visishtadvaita*:

◆ *Non-dualism*

**Tattva:** *Tattva* refers to three distinct entities: *Jiva*, who are sentient living souls; *Ajiva*, who are non-sentient; and *Ishvara*, who are the same (Vishnu-Narayana, also known as *Parahbrahman*; the ultimate self, the source of all manifestations, and the residing grace-giver; dependent on *karma*).

**Hita:** *Hita* can be attained by practises like *Bhakti* (devotion) and *Prapatti* (self-surrender).

**Vivishta:** The most exclusive (apart from the rest)

**Purushartha:** The desired outcome, such as *moksha* (freedom from enslavement).

### Namdev (1270 CE -1350 CE)

◆ *Varkari Tradition*

Within the *Varkari* school of Hinduism, Namdev, also known as Namdeo, and Namadeva, was a Marathi Vaishnava saint from Narsi (Maharashtra). He was a Pandharpur-based devotee of Lord Vitthal(a form of God Vishnu). He is recognised as the originator of the *Varkari* tradition. Vaishnavism had an impact on Namdev, who rose to fame in India with his musically structured devotional songs (*Bhajan-kirtans*). His theory has monistic themes and features of both *Saguna* and *Nirguna Brahman*. In North Indian traditions of the Dadu Panthis, Kabir Panthis, and the Sikhs, he is also acknowledged.

◆ *Devotion to Vitthal*

Renowned saint Namdev was a follower of the Vithoba religion. His real name would have been Namdeo Relekar. His seventh-generation descendant, Yadusheth, adhered to the *Bhagavata-Dharma*. Soon after his conception, his family moved to Pandharpur, a holy place of the Lord Vitthal, also known as Vithoba.

◆ *Records of Namdev*

According to legend, Namdev is a manifestation of Uddhava, one of Lord Krishna's closest friends and most devoted followers. The eleventh *Skanda* of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, which is known as the *Uddhava-Gita*, has 24 portions in which the Lord speaks with Uddhava. Scholars claim that texts written decades after Saint Namdev's passing include numerous miracles and specifics about his life. For instance, *Mahipati's Bhakta Vijay*, which was composed in 1762, is the first source to mention the birth theory of Namdev. Furthermore, with time, Namdev biographies written after reveal fresh biographical details and other marvels.



◆ *Abhangas*

Namdev placed a strong emphasis on a persistent, sincere devotion to having a direct, profound relationship with *Brahman*. Namdev left a vast amount of *Abhanga* (short devotional poems). However, he did not produce any notable treatises. About 4,000 *Abhangas* are left, although most have been lost.

◆ *Belief in Equality*

Ramananda was born in Allahabad, and received education at Varanasi. He delivered sermons in different parts of the region. His goal was to purge the Hindu faith of its immoral traditions. He wished people understood that there was no such thing as a high birth and that all individuals were created equal in God's sight. His supporters came from a variety of backgrounds. Sena was a barber, Kabir was a weaver, Sadhana was a butcher, and Ravidas was a cobbler.

◆ *Devotion to Lord Rama*

Ramananda worshiped Lord Rama. He believed that in order to fully devote oneself to Lord Rama, one must give up social standing and caste affiliation. According to Ramananda, "Let no one ask a man's race with whom he feasts." A guy becomes Hari's slave if he dedicates himself to Hari (God Vishnu). Adherents of Saint Ramananda hail from diverse backgrounds. Ramananda was a gifted and charismatic speaker who drew sizable audiences everywhere he went, but his verses have almost completely perished.

◆ *Ramanandi Cult*

With the help of the impoverished, especially members of lower castes, he created a radical philosophy. With the aid of women and members of lower castes, the Ramanandi cult led a socialist revolution on the Gangetic plain following the death of Ramananda. Moreover, the growing acceptance of Lord Rama's worship may be attributed to Saint Ramananda.

◆ *Spread of Ramanandi cult*

Today the most important Vaishnava monastic order in Northern India today is the Saint Ramananda tradition of religious instruction. There are Ramanandi temples spread over several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gurgaon, Punjab and Karnataka (Shri Hathiramji Temple at Mathura and Visakhapatnam). Ramananda was well-known for taking followers from all castes and for speaking in a colloquial Hindi accent.

## Summarised Overview

The *Bhakti* movement disapproved of sacrifices and rituals as a form of worship, placing more stress on devotion, humanism, and purity of heart and mind as the surest ways to realise God. Fundamentally monotheistic, the *Bhakti* movement worshipped a single personal God who may be formless (Nirguna) or have a form (*Saguna*). Adherents of *Nirguna Bhakti* disapproved against idol worship. They asserted that God resides in man's heart and is all-pervasive. The philosophy of *Advaita* was followed by both the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna* schools, with minor modifications offered by different *Bhakti* saints. The *Bhakti* saints of both North and South India acknowledged knowledge (*Njana*) as a component of *Bhakti*. Acquiring true knowledge from a *Guru* was highly valued in the *Bhakti* movement since it could be acquired through a teacher or *Guru*. For numerous centuries, the whole Indian subcontinent was consumed in the *Bhakti* tradition, which was a massive movement. Slowly, it became a popular movement. Its core beliefs in love and devotion to a personal God and the concepts of the oneness of the Godhead served as the foundation of the *Bhakti* movement.

## Assignments

1. Mention the factors that facilitated the emergence of the *Bhakti* Movement.
2. Explain the *Bhakti* movement and its significance in medieval Indian society.
3. Discuss the features of the *Saguna* and *Nirguna* schools of *Bhakti* cults.

## Suggested Reading

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1. Chandra, S., *Historiography, Religion, and State in Medieval India*, Har-Anand Publications, 1996.
2. Hasan, SN & Chandra, S., *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008.
3. Sharma, K, *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1987.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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## Sufism

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the emergence of Sufism in medieval Indian Society
- ◆ discuss the causes that led to the spread of Sufi Movement
- ◆ explain the important Silsilas of Sufism and its main preachers

### Background

In the seventh century, Arab traders from Saudi Arabia brought Islam to India with their commerce. Following that, in north India, the faith spread to Multan and Sindh, when Muhammad Bin Qasim conquered those areas in the eighth century CE. However, under the patronage of sultans of the Delhi Sultanate in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Sufism rose to prominence. Sufism in India absorbed many indigenous ideas, including dance, music, and yoga practices. Sufism has followers in both Hinduism and Islam. Islam refers to mysticism as sufism, or *tasawwuf*. Sufis are those who follow Sufism, which is a philosophy and set of activities that seeks direct communication between God and humanity. The emergence of sufism and its principles are examined in this unit. It also analyse the contributions and impact of sufism.

### Keywords

Sufism, *Silsilas*, Chishti, Suharvadi, Nakshabandi, *Kanqas*

# Discussion

## 4.2.1 Emergence of Sufism

### 4.2.1.1 Social Change and New Identities

#### ◆ Advent of Islam

Mostly as traders, Muslims initially arrived in India in the seventh century CE. They chose to settle in India because they were enthralled with the socio-cultural landscape of the nation. Traces of Indian knowledge and culture were brought back to India by traders from Central and West Asia. They therefore spread this knowledge throughout the Islamic world and then to Europe, serving as cultural ambassadors for India. Additionally, the Muslim immigrants learnt how to coexist peacefully with the locals by forming marriage relations with them. Ideas and customs were shared with one another. Muslims and Hindus had an equal impact on one another's speech, etiquette, attire, traditions, and intellectual interests. Islam, which the Muslims brought with them, has had a significant influence on Indian society and culture.

#### ◆ Principles of Islam

In this Unit, let's learn more about the Prophet Muhammad and Islam. In the seventh century CE, the prophet Muhammad spread Islam throughout Arabia. He was born in the *Quraysh* tribe of Arabia in the year 571 C.E. When he moved from Mecca to Madina in 622 CE, the *Hijira* Era officially began. Muslims believe that the *Quran* is the word that *Allah* gave to Muhammad through Gabriel, the archangel. The first of Islam's five guiding principles is *Tauhid* (belief in *Allah*) (2) *Namaz* (prayers, five times a day), (3) *Roza* (fasting in the month of Ramzan), (4) *Zakat* (giving of alms) (5) *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). The collection of sayings attributed to Prophet Mohammed is known as the *Hadith*. The Caliphate was created upon his demise. Islam preached about the oneness of God, equality, and fraternity. Its introduction had a particularly significant effect on Indian society's customary patterns.

#### ◆ Similarity of Bhakti and Sufi ideas

In this sense, the growth of the Sufi and *Bhakti* movement was quite significant. The *Bhakti* and Sufi traditions had the same beliefs: God is almighty, all people are created equal, and salvation can only be attained with devotion to God. Islamic mysticism is commonly referred to as Sufism. The religious perspectives of the Sufis were quite liberal. They held that all faiths are fundamentally the same. Through their music and teachings that proclaimed oneness with God, they propagated spirituality. Originating in Iran, Sufism found a friendly home in India during the Turkish era. Many Hindus,



mainly from lower social groups, were drawn to Islam by its feeling of devotion, tolerance, empathy, egalitarianism, and amiable demeanour. The Sufi saints advocated, nearly the same things as the followers of the *Nirgun Bhakti* movement: the oneness of God and self-surrender unto Him. Everyone is drawn to music, regardless of language. Such music gradually drew Hindus, who began pouring into the dargahs in droves. The influence of Hinduism on Sufism was also evident in siddhas and yoga poses.

#### 4.2.1.2 Origin of Sufism

##### ◆ Origin of Sufism

Within Islam, Sufism was a liberal reform movement. In the eleventh century, it originated in Persia and moved to India. The majority of Sufis, or mystics, were people of great devotion who disapproved of the ostentation of wealth and the moral decay that followed the fall of the Islamic empire. They emphasised love as the connection that exists between God and each person's soul. The Sufis held that service to mankind was equivalent to the service to God since they loved God and loved humanity.

##### ◆ Beliefs of Sufism

In Sufism, self-control was seen as a necessary prerequisite for developing a sense of awareness in order to understand God. The Sufis place more emphasis on inner cleanliness than on outward behaviour. While the Sufis considered love and devotion as the sole paths to salvation, but orthodox Muslims believe in mindless adherence to rituals. Sufism also placed a strong emphasis on ascetic activities such as meditation, fasting, charity, repentance for sins, prayers, pilgrimages, fasting, and restraining passions.

##### ◆ Silsilahs

#### 4.2.1.3. Divisions in Sufism

The Sufis were divided into 12 orders or *Silsilahs*, or religious orders in the 12th century. These *Silsilahs*, which included Chishti, Suhrawardi, Qadri, and Naqshbandis, were named after their founders. Abul Fazl, states that there were as many as fourteen *Silsilahs* in India in the sixteenth century. Typically, well-known mystics who resided in a *Khanqah*, functioned as a refuge for impoverished people and Sufi saints before evolving into a centre of scholarship.

Ancient Indian Sufi saints like Moinuddin Chisti, Nizamuddin Auliya, and Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar are still revered, adored, and honoured even today. The Sufi system relied heavily on the relationship between the instructor, also known as the *Pir* or *Murshid*, and his students, also known

◆ *Pir -Muridi Tradition*

as the *Murids*. Each *Pir* designated a *Wali* or successor to continue his duties. The Sufi cities of Ajmer, Nagaur and Ajodhan, also known as Pak Pattan (now in Pakistan), sprang to prominence. These also initiated the *Pir-muridi* tradition (teacher - disciple). The Sufis listened to poetry and music (*Sama*), first written in Persian, but later translated into Hindawi or Hindustani in order to achieve a state of spiritual bliss.

◆ *Establishment of Khanqahs*

The *Khanqahs* became significant preaching and learning hubs for these students. In their *Khanqahs*, many Sufis delighted in the *Sama*, or musical assemblage. Indeed, it was around this time that *Qawwali* (a Style of Sufi devotional music) emerged. With the establishment of *Khanqahs*, or “abode of Sufis” the sufis became popular in north India.

◆ *Wahdat-al-Wujud*

#### 4.2.1.4. Teachings of Sufism

The “oneness of being,” or *Wahdat-al-Wujud*, is the core tenet of Sufism. This clearly derives from the Islamic *Shahada*, which is considered to mean both “there is no Reality save Reality” and “there is no God but God.” It is true that one of God’s names is *al-Haqq*, which translates to “Reality” or “Truth.” According to Sufis, the finite has no existence other than the infinite, and the relative has no reality other than the absolute.

◆ *Dhikr*

The Sufi traditions hold that the heart, not the head, is where God is present. The Intellect or Spirit (*ar-Ruh*), which permeates reality and transcends mental forms, resides in the heart, not feelings. It is thought that human awareness is trapped in a dreamlike, forgetful condition known as *Ghafla*. Due to this, man has to be “reminded” of the things he has forgotten. This is the rationale for *Dhikr*, which Sufis practise in a wide range of methods. *Dhikr* basically incorporates the ideas of invocation, awareness, concentration, and memory into itself. Poetry and the visual arts are two other areas where Sufism finds expression outside of the mind. The primary reason for its widespread popularity among its adherents is its ability to freely communicate with both the general public and more erudite believers.

#### 4.2.1.5. Principles of Sufism

One of the greatest Sufi saints of the Naqshbandi order, Abdul Khaliq al Ghujdawani, compiled a list of Sufi principles. These tenets basically sum up the several fundamental demands and goals of Sufism as well as the



◆ *Compilation of Sufi principles*

most effective approach to adhere to them. Muhammad Bahauddin Shah Naqshband later added three additional principles to the list that he had created. One of the greatest Sufi *saints* of the Naqshbandi Order of Sufis, Abdul Khaliq al Ghujdawani, articulated the fundamental ideas of Sufism.

◆ *Practice of Dhikr*

The Sufis practised loud *Dhikr*(remembering God), also known as *Jikr, Japa*. This involved them reciting the name of the Almighty aloud. The practice of *Dhikr* was first established and advanced by Shaikh Gujdawani. He was regarded as the maestro of *Dhikr* as he was the first Sufi order member to employ it. Shaikh Muhammad Parsa, a biographer and associate of Shah Naqshband, said in his book *Faslul Khitab* that all forty *Tariqats* (Sufi Orders) accepted and extolled the teachings of Shaikh Khwaja Abdul Khaliq al Ghujdawani.

The tenets of Sufism that he established are as follows:

◆ *Practice of Breathing*

*Hosh dar Dam* (Conscious Breathing): A sincere seeker must always be aware that every breath he takes is infused with God's memory. Every breath he takes must be spent in God's presence. Every breath that is intentionally taken is alive, and every breath that is recklessly taken is lost. Every breath should be used to make sure that one is not committing a sin or an injustice. To truly understand the essence of the Creator, one must remain in the presence of the Almighty at all times. Seekers find it hard to protect themselves against carelessness, though. As a result, they need to protect it by asking for forgiveness, which will sanctify and cleanse it and get them ready for the true appearance of God everywhere.

◆ *Practice of walking*

*Nazar bar Kadam* (Walking Consciously): Every action made should be done so mindfully; in other words, one should avoid doing anything that might hinder or derail their spiritual development. It also implies that since the mind creates impressions by sight, one should refrain from idly glancing here and there. For this reason, Sufi saints advise their disciples to walk while simultaneously staring at their feet. From a spiritual perspective, it might imply that one must always have their goal in sight and that if they do, they will undoubtedly arrive at their destination.

◆ *Journey to the kingdom of God*

*Safar dar Watan* (Journey Homeward): This implies that in order to reach the realm of the Creator, the seeker must leave the world of creation. '*Safar dar Watan*' is the process of eschewing human frailties and worldly cravings in favour of holy virtues. Two sections make up this voyage according to the Naqshbandi Sufi Order. The first is external, when

the seeker looks for the Master out of desire. The Master's blessings and kindness usher in the interior journey. His heart becomes pure as a result of the internal journey, which also qualifies him to receive the divine gift.

◆ *Being alone*

*Khilawat dar Anjuman* (Solitude in the Crowd): "*Khilawat*" refers to both internal and exterior isolation. In order to practise external seclusion, a person must withdraw from society, live alone, and dedicate his time to remembering God. This facilitates achieving the condition of interior solitude and regaining control over sensuous impressions. Internal solitude involves keeping one's eyes fixed on God at all times, whether one is walking, standing in a crowd, or engaged in any other activity.

◆ *Remembering experiences*

*Yad Kard* (Essential Remembrance): "*Yad*" signifies memory, while "*Kard*" denotes the substance of memory. The crucial memory is to consistently practise repeating the "*Japa*," or internal exercise as instructed by the Master, in a way that causes the seeker to begin sensing the Almighty or the Master's presence in his heart.

◆ *Practice of returning*

*Baj Gasht* (Returning): "*Baj Gasht*" literally means "to return to the beginning." However, in its real sense, it refers to advancements made during the internal practice phase, during which the seeker may have various experiences like seeing lights, activating the mystique centres, gaining miraculous powers, and so on. But since they might prick the ego, these encounters frequently lead to the seeker's demise.

◆ *Practice of Thought*

*Nigah Dasht* (Attentiveness): This implies that the seeker constantly keeps on remembering the Almighty. He should always check his thoughts and protect his mind from ill thoughts.

◆ *Recollecting memory*

*Yad Dasht* (Recollection): It denotes ongoing memory. *Yad Dasht* is the state in which the practitioner remembers to the point that it naturally occurs in the heart via practice.

## 4.2.2. Customs of Sufi Movement

### 4.2.2.1. Rituals

The practice of paying respects at the graves and tombs of revered Sufi figures is among the religion's most well-attended rites. These places have been transformed into Sufi shrines and are now an important part of India's cultural and religious landscape. *Ziyarat* is the term used to describe



◆ *Practice of Ziyarat*

the practice of paying a visit to a significant location; the most frequent example of this would be paying a visit to the Masjid Nabawi. A saint's tomb is a location of great devotion since it is believed that the departed holy person's blessings, also known as *Baraka*, continue to reach the tomb after death and are believed by some to assist followers and pilgrims who visit the tomb.

◆ *Distribution of waqf*

To demonstrate their respect for the Sufi saints, monarchs and nobles made substantial payments, known as *waqf*, to the cause of preserving the tombs and renovating their architectural design. Donations, rituals, and yearly celebrations have, over time, evolved into a complex system of generally acknowledged standards. Many adherents of orthodoxy or Islamic puritanism frown upon the practice of visiting graves, particularly when it is done with the anticipation of getting blessings from revered saints. Despite this, these traditions have been passed down through the centuries and show little sign of disappearing any time soon.

#### 4.2.2.2. Musical Influence

◆ *Practice of Sa'ma*

All Indian faiths have a rich legacy that has always included music as an important component. People have been attracted to music for many centuries since it is an influential medium that can transmit ideas. The audience in India was already accustomed to the hymns that were performed in the regional tongue. As a result, Sufi devotional music became an instant hit among the populace. The Sufi ideas were effortlessly imparted via music. In Sufism, the word for music is "*sa'ma*," which literally translates to "literary audition." Poetry would be chanted here to the accompaniment of instrumental music, and this practice would frequently send Sufis into a state of mystical rapture.

◆ *Popular Music*

When you hear the word "*sa'ma*," your mind probably immediately conjures up an image of whirling dervishes draped in white robes. Poetry and music were considered an important aspect of education in many Sufi cultures. The teachings of Sufism were packaged in popular songs, which allowed them to reach a large audience. This contributed to the religion's widespread dissemination. Women were particularly impacted, and Sufi melodies were frequently sung throughout the day and at other times when women got together.

*Qawwali* is the modern name given to meetings of Sufis. Amir Khusro was a significant figure in the Sufi musical

◆ *Role of Amir Khusro*

heritage and one of its most important contributors. Amir Khusro was widely regarded as the most skilled musical poet who lived during the early period of the Muslim rule in India. He was renowned as a pupil of Nizamuddin Chishti. It is generally agreed that he was the one who initiated the Indo-Muslim devotional music traditions. Amir Khusro, sometimes known as the “Parrot of India,” contributed significantly to the Chishti affiliation by fostering the development of Sufi culture in India.

◆ *Sufi Orders*

There are several different Sufi orders, and they are referred to as *Silsilas*. Abul Fazl enumerated a total of fourteen of these different directives. Some of them are mentioned below.

#### 4.2.3.1 *The Chisti Silsila*

◆ *Formation of Chisti order*

Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chisti, who was also known by the name ‘Gharib Nawaz’, is credited with founding the Chisti order in India in 1192 CE. After living in Lahore and Delhi, he moved on to Ajmer, which was a significant political centre and already had a substantial Muslim community when he arrived there. He passed away in the year 1235 CE and the Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq paid a visit to his grave. Subsequently, in the 15th century, Mahmud Khalji of Malwa built a mosque on the site, which included a dome above the prayer area. The patronage of the *dargah* reached new heights after receiving backing from the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who was known for his generosity.

◆ *Major centres of Chisti order*

Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar (about 1175–1265 CE), commonly known as Baba Farid, was a Chisti saint. Hansi and Ajodhan (in modern Haryana and the Punjab, respectively) were the only major centres of the Chisti order. Because of the Muin-ud-din Chisti’s perspective was so inclusive and humanitarian, some of his poems were subsequently found to be referenced in the *Adi Granth*, which is the holy book of the Sikhs.

The Chistis lived a life that was austere and simple, and they communicated with the people around them using Hindawi, their native tongue. They were not at all engaged in bringing about conversions; yet, in subsequent years, many families and groups credited their conversions to the “well intentions” of these saints despite the fact that they had little interest in bringing about conversions. These Sufi saints



◆ *Chisti practices*

rose to prominence after they began performing musical recitations known as *Sama*, which were intended to evoke a sense of being close to God. As a result of Nizamuddin Auliya's dedication to yogic breathing practices, other yogis referred to him as a *Sidh*, which literally means "perfect." The Chistis tried to keep their distance from state politics and avoided associating with aristocrats and others in positions of power.

#### 4.2.3.2 The Suhrawardi *Silsila*

◆ *Suhrawardi Order*

The Suhrawardi order's influence was mostly limited to Punjab and Multan. This *Silsila* was initially formed in Baghdad by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, whereas Bahauddin Zakariya was responsible for its foundation in India. In contrast to the Chishtis, the Suhrawardi actively participated in political affairs while accepting maintenance funds from the Sultans. According to the Suhrawardi school of thought, a Sufi should have three qualities, which are property, knowledge, and *hal* (mystical enlightenment). However, they were not in favour of imposing extreme austerities and engaging in self-mortification. They advocated combining *ilm* (religious study) with mysticism in their teachings.

#### 4.2.3.3 The Naqshbandi *Silsila*

◆ *Silent Sufis*

Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi is the one who initially developed this *Silsila* in India. Later on, his successors, Shiekh Baqi Billah and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1563–1624), continued to spread the doctrine. Because they engaged in the heart meditation in silence, people referred to them as "silent Sufis." In contrast to the Chistis, who felt that the relationship between man and God was more like that of a lover and their beloved, the Sufis of this *Silsila* held the belief that the relationship between man and God was more akin to that of a slave and his master.

◆ *Distinctive Sect of Sufis*

The Sufis were required to uphold the *Sharia* (Islamic law) in its most pristine form and were adamant in their rejection of all *biddats* (innovations in religion). They were opposed to the liberal policies that the Mughal emperor Akbar implemented, such as providing high status to a large number of non-Muslims, doing away with the *jizya* tax, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows. They were also opposed to the practice of *Sama*, which is a means of meditating on God through listening to music, singing and chanting. After Sirhindi's passing, the Order continued to be guided by two significant mystics, each of whom had a distinct approach to

their work. Both a conservative and a liberal approach were taken under the leadership of Shah Waliullah and Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Jahan, respectively.

#### 4.2.3.4 The Qadri *Silsila*

During the time when the Mughals ruled Punjab, Sheikh Abdul Qadir and his sons, Sheikh Niamatullah, Mukhdum Muhammad Jilani, and Miyan Mir, founded the Qadri *Silsila*. This religious order spread its branches throughout Punjab. Shah Badakhshani was yet another well-known saint who belonged to this order. This *Silsila* had among its students the Mughal princess Jahanara as well as her brother Dara. The *Wahdat-al-Wajood* doctrine, also known as the “Unity of Existence” or “Unity of Being,” was central to the Qadri order. This doctrine holds the view that God and his creation are essentially the same thing. The saints of this *Silsila* disregarded aspects of conventional religion.

#### ◆ Doctrines of Qadri Order

#### 4.2.4 Impact of Sufism

The Shattari, Raushaniyah, and Mahdhawi were the other three mystic groups that emerged during this period. They took their cues from the dominant school of thought in Islamic philosophy at the time, emphasising the essence of religion rather than its outward manifestations. In this sense, Sufism was really a religion, or more specifically, an intellectual and emotional reserve for thinkers, writers, and mystics that was free from discrimination.

#### ◆ Sufism as a religion

The school of Sufism is primarily an extension of the *Vedanta* philosophy, the Hindu practice, and it saw a period of fast expansion during Akbar’s reign. In a nutshell, the Sufi concept had a tendency to bring people closer together. The Sufis were considered to be heretics because of their adherence to such beliefs, which were condemned by more traditional adherents of Islam. Because of this, they started keeping to themselves, became withdrawn, and ultimately chose to live in isolation. Their language evolved into something that was deeply symbolic and mysterious.

#### ◆ Sufis as Heretics

As a kind of protest against what they saw as a misunderstanding of the *Quran* on the part of the *Ulema*, the Sufis in India distanced themselves from the established centres of orthodoxy. They held the belief that the latter, in that they combined religion with political policy and cooperated with the Sultanate, were departing from the original democratic and egalitarian values that were



◆ *Confrontation with the Ulema*

outlined in the *Quran*. The *Ulema* condemned the Sufis for their progressive beliefs, while the Sufis accused the *Ulema* of giving into worldly temptations. The *Ulema* also attacked the Sufis for their liberal principles. The Islamic insistence on equality was observed more thoroughly by the Sufis than it was by the *Ulema*, and this resulted in the mystic groups coming in touch with the artisans and cultivators. As a result, the Sufis rose to prominence as more effective religious leaders among the peasantry than the more remote *Ulemas*.

◆ *Development of Mysticism*

#### 4.2.5 The Contributions of Sufi Movement

The Sufi movement has been quite active across India, which may help to explain the widespread geographical presence of Islam in the country. In South Asia, the practice of Sufism had a pervasive influence on the region's religious, cultural, and social life. The Sufi saints are credited with the development of the mystical branch of Islam. The Sufi intellectuals from all across continental Asia contributed significantly to the social, economic, and philosophical development of India. In addition to preaching in large towns and other centres of intellectual thought, the Sufis also went out to impoverished rural populations. They preached in local languages such as Urdu, Sindhi, and Punjabi as opposed to Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. It was other religious traditions, such as Hinduism, that had a significant impact on the development of Sufism as it evolved as a "moral and complete socio-religious force."

◆ *Attitude of Sufis*

All kinds of individuals were drawn to their customs of practising spiritual rituals and living a simple life. Even in modern times, mystical stories and traditional melodies continue to accompany their lessons on mankind, as well as their love for God and the Prophet. The Sufis were adamant about avoiding conflicts of any kind, especially those of a religious or communal nature, and they worked hard to be a peaceful part of civil society. In addition, the attitude of adaptability, flexibility, piety, and charisma is what continues to enable Sufism to endure as a cornerstone of mystical Islam in India.

#### 4.2.6 Significance of Sufism

The Sufi movement was extremely important to the development of Indian society. In the same way that the *Bhakti* saints were working to break down the boundaries within Hinduism, the Sufis were working to introduce a

◆ *Liberal Views*

new liberal viewpoint into Islam. The dialogue that took place between early Sufi and *Bhakti* concepts created the groundwork for more liberal movements in the fifteenth century. You will see that Kabir and Guru Nanak preached a religion that was not sectarian and was built on love for all living beings.

◆ *Translation of Hatha Yoga*

Ibn-i-Arabi is credited with popularising the idea of “*Wahdat-ul-Wajud*,” also known as “Unity of Being,” which was adopted by the Sufis (1165-1240). In his opinion, all living things may be reduced to a single entity. There was no difference between the various religions. This philosophy became widely accepted across India. The Indian Yogis and the Sufis had a lot of conversations and shared a lot of ideas. The *Hatha-Yoga* text was translated into both Arabic and Persian. This is one of the most noteworthy contributions that the Sufis made to Indian society. The Sufi saints kept a strong relationship with the common people, in contrast to the Sultan and the Ulema, who frequently maintained a distance from the day-to-day issues that plagued the populace.

◆ *Selflessness*

Nizamuddin Auliya was noted for his generosity towards those in need, regardless of their faith or caste. It is believed that he did not stop speaking until he had listened to each person who came to the *Khanqah*. Serving one’s fellow humans was considered by the Sufis to be the most selfless and devoted form of worship of God. They did not differentiate in their treatment of Muslims and Hindus.

◆ *Development of Hindi*

Amir Khusrau (1252-1325), a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya, is considered to be the most significant writer to come out of this period. Khusrau was extremely proud of his Indian heritage and considered the history and culture of Hindustan to be an integral part of his own customs and practices. He composed lines in Hindi (sometimes spelt Hindawi) and used the metre of Persian poetry in his Hindi writings. He was the one who developed the new poetic form known as *Sabaq-i-Hindi*. By the fifteenth century, Hindi had already started to take on a defined form, and the *Bhakti* saints like Kabir made great use of the language at this time.



## Summarised Overview

The *Bhakti* saints of medieval India were profoundly influenced by more progressive and unconventional aspects. In subsequent periods, the theological viewpoint of the rulers was affected by the concepts of Sufism, and these beliefs also served to remind the rulers of their moral responsibility. For instance, both the religious viewpoint and the religious policies of the Mughal Emperor Akbar were heavily influenced by Sufism. Sufism had a profound effect on the masses in terms of their political beliefs, social and cultural practices. It became popular in both rural and urban areas. The attainment of spirituality took precedence over all other goals, and the populace was given the opportunity to speak out against all varieties of religious dogmatism, hypocrisy, and orthodoxy. The Sufis endeavoured to bring about peace and harmony in a world that was ripped apart by violence and conflict.

The most significant contribution that Sufism has made is that it has assisted in the formation of a link of solidarity and fraternity between the communities of Hindus and Muslims. The tombs of the Sufi saints are respected not just by the Muslims but also by a sizable number of Hindus, and this has led to the tombs becoming a regular location of pilgrimage for both of these religious groups.

## Assignments

1. Examine the origin of Sufism in India.
2. Explain the social and political role of the Sufi saints in medieval India.
3. Analyse the impact of sufism on Medieval Indian Society.
4. Explain Silsila. Discuss various orders of Sufism.

## Suggested Reading

1. Hussain, MF, *Sufism in India: Harmonising socio-cultural Worldview*, Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2017.
2. Iraqi, S 2009, *Bhakti Movement in Medieval India: Social and Political Perspectives*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2009.
3. Trimingham, JS, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1998.



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1. Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sufism*, Islamic Book Trust, 2015.
2. Bakshi, SR, *Advanced History of Medieval India*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2003.
3. Mahajan, V.D. and Bhatnagar, *History of Medieval India: Muslim Rule in India: Sultanate Period & Mughal Period*, S. Chand & Company, New Delhi, 2018.
4. Taneja, A, *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture*, Northern Book Centre, 2018.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU



## Religion under Akbar

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain the religious policy of the Mughal Emperor Akbar
- ◆ describe the influence of Abul Fazl on Akbar
- ◆ discuss the significance of *Ibadat Khana*
- ◆ explain the principle of *Din-i-Ilahi*

### Background

Akbar was not only a great military conqueror and an effective administrator, but also a tolerant and liberal statesman who tried to bring harmony among the various religious sections that existed in India. This is evidenced by Akbar's establishment of the *Din-i-Ilahi*, which shows that he tried to bring this harmony. *Din-i-Ilahi* was the product of his interaction with adherents of different faiths throughout the course of his life. Akbar made an effort to develop a national religion that was universal to all by bringing together the high concepts and goals of the several religions that existed at the time. *Din-i-Ilahi*, on the other hand, did not survive after Akbar. Reviewing the fanaticism that existed at the time of Akbar's accession, as well as the elements that were responsible for shaping his religious policy, is necessary in order to comprehend and value the liberalism and religious tolerance that he practised.

### Keywords

Monotheistic Movements, *Ibadatkhana*, *Din- I- Ilahi*, *Mahzarnama*



## Discussion

### 4.3.1 Akbar's Idea of Religion

#### 4.3.1.1 Religious Outlook of Akbar

##### ◆ *Mahzarnama*

The Mughal Emperor, Akbar was born, raised, and lived, was distinguished by a fresh awakening of broad-mindedness. It was natural that Akbar to be inspired by the concepts and ideals that were prevalent throughout his time. Akbar desired to break away from the dogmatism that was prevalent among the Muslim priesthood elites. Despite the fact that Sufi profoundly impacted his thoughts, he was not fond of the political intervention that the *Mullahs* and *Qazis* carried out. In 1579, he published the *Mahzarnama*, which was a proclamation of unwavering authority, in which he said that he was the most authoritative figure in all subjects pertaining to religion. The *ulemas* and *qazis* in the community did not approve of these actions.

##### ◆ *Ibadat Khana*

Akbar was certain that without the support of the Hindus, who made up the bulk of his people, he would not be able to construct a powerful kingdom. In 1575, he laid the foundations for what would later become known as *Ibadat Khana*, a place where he would meet with religious thinkers of a variety of faiths and engage in conversation with them. This is when his idea of *Sulh-i-Kul* received a boost, which allowed it to develop further. Even though he was forced to close it down a few years later, the conversations that took place in the *Ibadat Khana* had a profound impact on him. Akbar was known to conduct experiments in many fields, from theology to metallurgy.

##### ◆ *Influence of inheritance*

#### 4.3.1.2. Factors that Influenced Akbar's Religious Policy

There were several factors that contributed to Akbar's personality development, which, at the end, led him to form a new religion known as *Din-i Ilahi*. The first factor was the effect of inherited characteristics. His mother, Hamida Banu Begum, was of the *Shia* faith of Iran, despite the fact that his father, Humayun, was a *Sunni*. She ingrained in his head the significance of having an open mind. He was born in the palace of the Rana of Amarkot, a powerful Hindu leader. Bairam Khan, his most devoted protector and regent, was also a member of the *Shia*. His marriage to the Rajput princesses, as well as his interaction with the Hindus and the

cross-currents of the various reform groups, had a significant impact on the development of his thinking.

◆ *Influence of Academics*

The most influential of Akbar's teachers, Abdul Latif, instilled in him the importance of liberal values and principles. He instructed him on the *Sulh-i-kul* guiding principle (universal brotherhood). Shaikh Mubarak Nagori, together with his sons Abul Fazl and Abdul Faizi, were three renowned liberal-minded academics who had a significant impact on Akbar's religious orientation. His friendship with these academics weaned him away from the path of Islamic orthodoxy and compelled him to strive actively to gain the happiness of direct touch with divine truth. Therefore, Akbar's religious policy moved in the direction of liberalism as a result of a combination of hereditary traits and other factors.

#### 4.3.1.3 Influence of Abul Fazl

◆ *Belief in Secularism*

Despite being Akbar's loyal courtier, Abul Fazl truly admired and respected the emperor. He attributed his strong conviction in religious tolerance to his early years, during which he and his family went through the worst of being persecuted by the traditional *Ulema*. It turned out that this was the beginning of a long friendship with Akbar. His religious ideas were grounded in secularism, which valued religious brotherhood, *Sulh i-Kul* (Peace with all), and the equality of all religions.

◆ *Akbar and Abul Fazl*

Abul Fazl was regarded as a scholar and a thinker who valued the virtues found in all faiths. He admired creativity and reason in all spheres of life. Orthodox, conventional, and customary values did not appeal to him. He mentioned that religious and legal reforms ought to happen gradually over time. The thoughts of Akbar, who declined to be a conservative himself and instituted novel policies and practices during his reign, mirrored his modernity and religious logic. It makes sense that Abul Fazl saw in Akbar the traits of a hero, king and philosopher. Because of his official role and his personal political and religious beliefs, Abul Fazl was obliged to support, legitimise, and exalt Akbar and his actions.

#### 4.3.1.4. Contact with Other Religious Exponents

Akbar was influenced by the practices of Hinduism from the caste Brahmins like Purushottam and Devi. He remained steadfast in his conviction in the doctrines of rebirth and the reincarnation of the soul. Hira Vijay Suri, Vijaya Sen Suri,



◆ *Interest in Hinduism and Jainism*

and Bhanuchandra Upadhyaya were among the Jain teachers who had a significant impact on Akbar. Hira Vijaya Suri was successful in persuading the emperor to liberate captives and birds that had been confined to cages, as well as to forbid the killing of animals on particular days. Akbar was influenced by Dastur Meherjee Rana, the religious head of the Parsis in Navsari in Gujarat. Under his guidance, Akbar accepted several rituals of the Zoroastrians, such as worshipping the sun and fire, amongst other things. In addition to that, he instituted the Persian holiday known as *Nauroz*.

◆ *Interest in Christianity*

Akbar showed a serious interest in the teachings of Christianity and he sent an invitation to the Christian clergy of Goa. The first Jesuit Mission to come to Fatehpur Sikri was from Goa, and it arrived in February 1580. It was made up of a Persian convert named Francis Henriquez, an Italian priest named Father Rudolf Aquaviva, and a Spaniard named Antony de Monserrate. Francis Henriquez served as the translator. When the priests gave Akbar a copy of the *Bible*, he responded with immense awe and devotion to the sacred text. It was at this time that he entrusted Abul Fazl with the task of translating the Gospel, and it was also at this time that he requested that Monserrate instruct Prince Murad in Christianity. In addition, Akbar constructed a modest chapel in the palace for the use of the Jesuit priests and engaged in lengthy conversations with them. Agra and Lahore both had new churches at this time.

◆ *Interest in Sikh faith*

*The Adi Granth*, the holy book of the Sikhs, was considered by Akbar to be a volume “deserving of veneration” by the Mughal emperor. As a result, we see that Akbar attempted to appease his religious curiosity by establishing relationships with the adherents of a variety of faiths. Because of the depth to which he engaged with each religion, various individuals had valid reasons for presuming that he was either a Zoroastrian, a Hindu, a Jain, or a Christian. He went to such lengths with respect to each faith. On the other hand, he did not become a follower of any of them. It is a fact that his disillusionment with Islam led to him studying various faiths through the methods of conversations and arguments, which ultimately culminated in his “eclecticism.”

#### 4.3.1.5 The Infallibility Decree

Akbar was not a fan of the power that was held by the *ulema*, since it served as a check on the total political control he had over India. Akbar agreed with Shaikh Mubarak’s assessment that he had the potential to be the highest authority

◆ Akbar as Imam -i- Adil

in the realm of religion as well. Therefore, on Friday, June 26, 1579, in order to emulate the Caliphs and his famous ancestor Timur, Akbar ascended the pulpit of the mosque at Fatehpur Sikri and read the *Qutba* penned by Faizi in his own name. In order to emphasise his position as a supreme head of religious affairs, a document was drafted that would later become known as the Infallibility Decree. This document was created in order to emphasise his position. The top *ulema* handed over their power in spiritual issues to Akbar as a result of this proclamation, which said that it was “for the glory of God and the promotion of Islam.” With the passing of the Infallibility Decree, Akbar was elevated to the position of *Imam-i-Adil*, which is the highest spiritual authority.

### 4.3.2. Akbar and *Ibadat Khana*

#### 4.3.2.1. Decoding Akbar’s *Ibadat Khana*

◆ Establishment of *Ibadat Khana*

*Ibadat Khana*, also known as the House of Worship, was a meeting house constructed in 1575 CE by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) at Fatehpur Sikri. Its purpose was to bring together spiritual leaders of various religious grounds for the purpose of conducting a discussion on the teachings of the respective religious leaders. He did this because he was interested in learning many religions of the world.

◆ Akbar’s conversations

At this location, Akbar hosted gatherings for a limited group of mystics, philosophers, and theologians, during which they discussed many aspects of religious and spiritual life. He welcomed religious and philosophical thinkers from a wide range of traditions, including Hinduism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and even some atheists. He engaged these individuals in discussions about various religions. They went to *Ibadat Khana*, where they had a conversation with Akbar about their religious beliefs. The conclusion that all religions ultimately point to the same destination was reached as a direct result of the conversations that took place in the Hall of Prayer (*Ibadat Khana*).

*Ibadat Khana* was primarily intended to serve the purpose of mediating disagreements between members of different communities. *The Dīn-i-Ilāhī* known during its time as *Tawhīd-i-Ilāhī* (“Divine Monotheism”, lit. ‘Oneness of God’) or Divine Faith, was a new syncretic religion or spiritual leadership program propounded by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1582, intending to merge some of the elements of



◆ Purpose of Ibadat Khana

the various religions practised by his subjects and create a new religion for his empire, and thereby reconcile the differences that divided his subjects. According to Alam Khan, it was founded on the *Timurid* notion of *Yasa-i Changezi* (Code of Genghis Khan), which states that all sects should be considered to be the same. The primary sources for the components were Hinduism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism, but Christianity, Jainism, and Buddhism were also used for parts of the elements. The Mughal Emperor Akbar, along with several of his closest officials, abandoned Islam and became followers of the new faith of *Din-i-Ilahi*.

◆ Peace with all

#### 4.3.2.2. *Sulh-i Kul*

*Sulh-i Kul* is an Arabic phrase that derives from a Sufi spiritual principle. Its exact translation is “peace with everyone,” “universal peace,” or “perfect peace,” and it refers to a state of tranquillity. When utilised by Akbar, it represented a connection that was peaceful and cordial among the people who practised other religions. Akbar suggested *Sulh-i-Kul*, which translates to “unity and harmony among all human beings,” as part of his efforts to integrate his subjects who lived within his domain. The idea encompasses not just a willingness to accept differences as they are, but also the kind of equilibrium, politeness, respect, and compromise that are necessary to preserve peace among members of a varied society.

◆ Purpose of Sulh-i-Kul

*Sulh-i-Kul* was the result of a synergistic effect brought about by the *Bhakti* and Sufism that existed during that period. It was a liberal ideology, which literally meant peace for all people everywhere. According to Irfan Habib, the purpose of it was to educate all people with the primary spiritual truth.

◆ New Religion

### 4.3.3 Towards New Religion

#### 4.3.3.1 *Din-I-Ilahi*

At the *Ibadat Khana*, Akbar realised that the core beliefs of all universal faiths may be summed up in a single statement. He sought to promote harmony and understanding among his subjects with whom he came into contact. With all of this in mind, he brought together all other religions and created a new religion that is now known as *Din-i-Ilahi*. In addition to these names, it is sometimes referred to as *Tauhid-i -Ilahi* or *Sulh-i Kul*. This is due to the fact that some critics assert that the *Din-i-Ilahi* did, in fact, demonstrate that despite

social, political, and religious differences, the people can come together on a common platform and unite for god and the king.

◆ *Din- i-Ilahi*

Additionally, Akbar was responsible for establishing a number of doctrines within this faith, which holds God to be the supreme authority. It emphasises the betterment of the general populace. In addition to this, Akbar requested that the hint be followed all the way into *Din-i-Ilahi*. Therefore, *Din-i-Ilahi* presents to the people the model that they can use to generate the forces of national integration by overcoming their respective religious pride and prejudices as well as any other separatist or diverse tendencies they may have. This is done in light of the fact that the model is presented to them by *Din-i-Ilahi*. Akbar was able to offer not only political but also moral and spiritual leadership to the people of India throughout his time; hence, he is deserving of a position of honour and pride in the annals of Indian history for all future generations.

◆ *Purpose of Din-i-Ilahi*

After conducting an in-depth and penetrating analysis of the various theological issues that Akbar raised throughout his time, we are in a position to assert that he had faith in the beneficence of all world faiths. At the same time, he detested the hypocritical behaviours that individuals engaged in under the guise of their religious affiliation. It would be incorrect to state that his imperialist mindset entirely influenced his religious policy because it was helpful to him in gaining the support of Hindus and Rajputs. His religious policy may be praised in the sense that it helped him a lot to obtain the support of Hindus and Rajputs. Even though he was a devout adherent of *Din-I-Ilahi* and several other religious philosophies, he never tried to force the people to adhere to the same beliefs. It is possible to say that as an emperor, he was quite liberal when it came to the idea of religion, and the primary goal that he sought to achieve was to try to please the adherents of all religions to a significant degree.

#### 4.3.3.2 Nature of *Din-I-Ilahi*

It is challenging to define the *Din-i-Ilahi* due to the fact that Akbar, the religion's creator, did not describe it. It was neither the result of any revelation, nor was it founded on any clear-cut philosophical or theological principles. It was a religion that did not have any priests or holy books associated with it. It was a form of moral rationalism that was supposed to lead to the goal of mystically uniting one's soul with the



◆ *A New Religion*

Divine. According to the Jesuit priest Bartoli, *Din-i-Ilahi* was a new religion that was “composed out of numerous components, taken partly from the *Quran*, partially from the scriptures of the Brahmins, and to some measure, as far as suited his purpose, from the Gospel of Christ.”

◆ *Synthesis of Worldly faith*

The *Din-i-Ilahi* was an ingenious synthesis of the essential tenets of all world faiths. Akbar was of the opinion that the many religions were simply alternative routes that ultimately led to the same destination. The *Din-i-Ilahi* enjoined such ethical and social reforms as recommending giving alms and sparing of animal life, permitting re-marriage of widows, prohibiting child marriage and marriage among close relations as well as forced *sati*, recommending monogamy, enforcing chastity, and controlling gambling and drinking by restricting the sale of drink.

#### 4.3.3.3. Membership

◆ *Practice of Sijda*

In the book *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazl gives details about the *Din-i-Ilahi*. A unique ritual was utilised in order to inaugurate a new member into the *Din-i-Ilahi*. The initiation of a new member was scheduled to take place on all Sundays. Abul Fazl, who served in the capacity of the “high priest,” was the one who initiated the process that a person needed to go through in order to become a member of the *Din-i-Ilahi*. The new member, holding his turban in his hands, bowed his head to the feet of the emperor, known as the *Sijda*. The emperor then raised him by touching his shoulders, replaced the turban on the new member’s head, and gave him the *Shast*, which was his own portrait and bore the inscription “Allah is Great” (God is Great).

#### 4.3.3.4. Practices of *Din-i-Ilahi*

◆ *Customs of Din-i-Ilahi*

The members of the *Din-i-Ilahi* were obligated to follow specific rituals and customs. They welcomed one another by saying *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Jalle Jalal Hu* respectively. One of the members chose to celebrate his birthday by hosting a meal for the other members of the group. In addition, throughout the course of his life, one of the members hosted a banquet in his honour, in which he celebrated the fact that his passing would finally free him from the constraints of this materialistic world. The members of the *Din-i-Ilahi* attempted to avoid eating meat as much as possible, and they did not eat with or use the utensils of those who made their living from hunting animals, fishing, or gathering birds. They undertook charitable work and did not marry elderly

ladies or girls under the age of 18.

◆ *Devotion to Akbar*

There were four different levels of devotion to Akbar among the followers of the *Din-i-Ilahi*, who regarded him as their spiritual teacher. These were, in order of increasing significance, religion (*Mas*), one's life (*Jan*), one's honour (*Namus*), and one's property (*Masdin*). One level of devotion was possessed by a person who committed to sacrificing only one of these things for his spiritual guide; two levels of devotion were possessed by someone who committed to sacrificing two things; and so on. Akbar was a staunch believer in the idea of universal toleration, and he did not make any attempt to push the *Din-i-Ilahi* on other people with the zeal of a fanatic during his reign. There were only eighteen members in *Din-i-Ilahi*, with Abul Fazl, his brother Faizi, their father Shaikh Mubarak, and Raja Birbal being the most significant members.

#### 4.3.3.5. An Assessment of the *Din-I- Ilahi*

◆ *Views of Vincent Smith*

Some contemporary authors argue that *Din-i-Ilahi* was not an entirely new religion but rather a reformation of Islam. *Din-i-Ilahi* was criticised by the well-known British historian Vincent Smith, who stated that "The Divine faith was a monument of Akbar's stupidity, not of his wisdom." In order to arrive at their conclusions, the European authors relied on an analysis of the writings of Badauni as well as the stories provided by Jesuit missionaries.

◆ *Failure of Din-i-Ilahi*

After the death of Akbar, the *Din-i-Ilahi* ceased to exist as a distinct faith. Akbar had the ambition to form a religion at the same time as he established an empire. After establishing the fundamental tenets of the *Din-i-Ilahi*, he went on to develop and organise the specifics of the religion. However, it is essential to emphasise that despite the fact that *Din-i-Ilahi* as a religion was a failure, Akbar's motivation in founding this new religion should be respected. It was the physical embodiment of Akbar's strong desire to bring together and comprehend the people who belonged to a variety of religions and civilisations. Akbar's goal in doing so was to construct a state in India that was really national, secular, and welfare-oriented.

#### 4.3.3.6 Akbar and Other Religions

Mughal emperors followed Islam and the bulk of the Indian subjects who served under the empire adhered to the Hindu religion. Akbar made it a habit to pay his respects to the grave of a famous Sufi saint who had established the



◆ *Relation with Chisti Order*

Chishti order in India at the tail end of the thirteenth century. Sheikh Salim Chishti was a Sufi saint, who was residing in a hermitage near Sikri at the time, and Akbar paid him a visit in 1569. He sent orders for a new capital to be constructed in the nearby little hamlet of Sikri, where Sufi saint Salim had been living. Between 1571 and 1584, he made Fatehpur Sikri his primary seat of government.

◆ *Confluence of religions*

Between 1571 and 1584, he initiated a programme in which he invited religious scholars from other religious traditions, including Christians, Jains, Parsis (who are followers of Zoroaster), and Hindus, to discuss theological concerns with one another. The Jesuit missionaries who were present at these talks ventured to have the hope that they would be able to convert the emperor since he was so open and tolerant during these discussions.

◆ *Relation with Hindus*

In addition, Akbar introduced a variety of changes with the goal of appeasing the Hindu people who were under his rule and making them more loyal to him. In order to demonstrate his tolerance, he gave permission to Salim's mother to worship a sacred tulsī tree that she had planted in the middle of the courtyard of her home in Fatehpur Sikri. In addition to that, she hung pictures of numerous Hindu deities on the walls of her courtyard. Even though most of Akbar's marriages had been arranged for political reasons, the impact that his Hindu women must have had on him is likely to have been significant. A number of Akbar's wives were Hindus.

◆ *Banned forceful conversions*

In 1562, Akbar put an end to the practice of forcing prisoners of war and their families to convert to Islam and banned the enslavement of prisoners of war and their families. In 1563, he got rid of the levy that pilgrims had to pay. The next year, he abolished the degrading tax that was levied on non-Muslims, levelling the playing field between Muslims and Hindus.

◆ *Translation of Epics*

Akbar also formed a translation department and instructed academics to translate the Hindu epics into Persian so that those who were not Hindu might read them and have an appreciation for them. This let non-Hindus comprehend and appreciate the Hindu epics. In addition to Urdu and Persian, he promoted the adoption of Hindi as an official court language.

He switched to a diet that was mostly vegetarian, eating meat for only a few months out of the year. He commanded

◆ *Nomination of Hindus as Mansabdars*

that steak and all other forms of red meat be avoided in the diet. If a person who was raised as a Hindu was later converted to Islam as a kid, they had the opportunity to go back to the Hindu faith if that was the person's choice. He was a staunch opponent of child marriage but supported the institution of free and equal marriages between Hindus and Muslims. He gave employment opportunities to those who had served him well and had demonstrated a high level of talent, and he also nominated Hindus to important positions. 14 out of the 137 high officials (*Mansabdars*) were members of the Hindu religion.

## Summarised Overview

Despite the fact that his detractors said that he disbelieved in the *Prophet* and the *Quran*, Akbar remained a devout Muslim throughout his life. Akbar never said that he was a *Prophet* of God. His sole goal was to bring peace to the empire that was always at war. It is unacceptable for someone to be persecuted because of the religious beliefs that they have. Badauni states that Akbar renounced his faith in Islam at some point in his life. The intention behind the Infallibility Decree was solely to deny theologians the authority to discriminate against individuals on the basis of their religious beliefs.

Tolerance for all religions and ideologies was a principle that Akbar was deeply committed to. The period he lived in may not be ready for his ideas to be implemented. The fact that there were only eighteen people who followed the *Din-i-Ilahi* is evidence of his policy of toleration. "The *Din-i-Ilahi* was the culminating manifestation of the Emperor's national idealism," says S.R. Sharma's interpretation of the historical record. Badauni's idea that Akbar became an apostate from Islam is not shared by historians writing in the modern era. According to Satish Chandra, there is very little evidence to support the claim that Akbar planned to or actually did establish a new religion. The term "Divine Monotheism" was the one that Abul Fazl and Badauni used to refer to the so-called new route. *Tauhid-i Ilahi* is an Arabic phrase that literally translates to "New Path". It was not until 80 years later that the name *Din*, which also means trust, was attached to it. In reality, the *Tauhid-i-Ilahi* was a Sufi order of some kind. Those individuals who were willing to join, as well as those individuals who had the approval of the Emperor, were granted membership.



## Assignments

1. Discuss the factors that influenced Akbar in framing his religious attitude.
2. Discuss the practices of *Din- I- Ilahi*.
3. Analyse Akbar's attitude towards other religions.
4. Explain the *Sulh-i- Kul* policy of Akbar.

## Suggested Reading

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3. Moosri, Shireen, *Episodes in the Life of Akbar*, National book Trust, India, 2015.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU





## Promotion of Indian Legacies under Mughal Court

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ describe the promotion of Sanskrit in the medieval period
- ◆ analyse the development of Sanskrit literature under the Mughals
- ◆ identify the role of Dara Shikoh in medieval literature

### Background

The Mughal period produced significant advancements in the fields of learning and education. *Pathshalas*, *Vidyapeeths*, *Makatabs*, and *Madrastas* were all kinds of educational institutions that the Mughal emperors established. These emperors had a deep affection for education and made significant contributions to the area of education. Akbar supported several educational organisations by providing financial aid. Near the Jama Masjid, he established a new educational institution. At that time, education was not a subject that was taught in public schools. In most cases, places of worship like temples and mosques served as the primary educational institutions. They were reliant on the charitable contributions made by kings, wealthy men, and other philanthropists. At that time the languages like Sanskrit and Persian were taught in religious institutions.

The Mughals paid repeated attention to Sanskrit texts, intellectuals, and knowledge systems for approximately one hundred years, beginning in 1560 and continuing almost all the way until 1660. This allowed them to cultivate an imperial image that was thoroughly multicultural and multilingual. In a variety of ways, monarchs and communities outside of the governing class reacted to this process of self-fashioning, and the Mughals were undoubtedly encouraged by these responses to continue engaging in these sorts of dynamic contacts. The Mughals did not pursue this series of transactions for the good of their populace; rather, they did it primarily for their own advantage. They were interested in learning just what it took to become the ruler of India.

### Keywords

Dara Shikoh, *Majma-ul-Bahrain*, *Padmavat*, Krishna Lila



## Discussion

### 4.4.1 Dara Shikoh and *Majma-ul-Bahrain*

#### 4.4.1.1. Dara Shikoh

##### ◆ Early Life of Dara Shikoh

Son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and brother of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, Dara Shikoh, was born on 20th March 1615. At the Taragarh Fort in Ajmer, Dara Shikoh was born to Prince Khurram, who would eventually become Emperor Shah Jahan, and Mumtaz Mahal, who was his wife. He was promoted to the rank of military commander at an early age, just like every other royal Mughal prince was. In 1652, he was appointed as Governor of Kabul and Multan. It's possible that he didn't have as much success in the military as he had as a philosopher and poetic diviner.

##### ◆ Translation of Upanishads

Reading about faiths that were different from his own was something that piqued Dara Shikoh's curiosity. He was educated in both Hinduism and Christianity by the *pandits* and the Christian priests, respectively. He became fluent in the ancient language of Sanskrit. He translated the *Upanishads* into Persian because he was so moved by the philosophy contained inside them. In addition to being a mystic and a poet, he was also an enthusiastic disciple of Sufism and a role model of tolerance. Dara Shikoh developed cordial relations with the seventh Sikh Guru, Guru Har Rai. Because of all of this, he gained popularity among the general populace but lost favour with the religious establishment.

##### ◆ *Majma-ul-Bahrain*

#### 4.4.1.2 *Majma-ul-Bahrain*

The book '*Majma-ul-Bahrain*' (The Confluence of The Two Seas) written by Dara Shikoh is arguably the most well-known of all of his works. It is a comparative study of *Vedanta* and Sufism, and its name literally translates to "The confluence of the two oceans." He founded a library in Delhi, which is still working and is run by the Archaeological Survey of India. In addition to it, he commissioned a great number of artworks and architectural marvels.

##### ◆ Content of *Majma-ul-Bahrain*

Dara has attempted to identify the similarities between Sufi and Vedic conceptions of the Ultimate Truth in this book. He aims to prove that the Islamic and Hindu conceptions of the 'Unity of God' are essentially comparable. Jibrail, Mikail, and Israfil are three significant angels that he associates with Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara (Shiv). "Dara identifies the angels with *Devata* once more, the Absolute and Necessary



Being with *Nirgun* and *Nirankar*, Allah with *Om*, *Huma* (he) with “*sab*” and “*Mazhar-i-Atam*” with *Awatara* (incarnation), and he believes that incarnation is the source from which His Power (*Qudrat*) forms.”

◆ *As a Fakir*

Dara presented himself as a ‘fakir’ possessing esoteric knowledge (*Ilm-i-Batin*), with which he hoped to be familiar with the principles of Indian monotheism. Through learning about *Tawhid* (monotheism) and *Irfan* (divine wisdom), Dara was able to investigate and comprehend Upanishadic monotheism. After translating “*Jug Bashist*” into Persian, he proceeded to transcribe the Upanishads into Persian prose, known as *Sirr-i-Akbar*.

◆ *Battle of Samugarh*

The fact that Shah Jahan favoured him more than any of his other sons contributed to the rivalry that existed between Dara and his brother *Aurangzeb*. *Aurangzeb* was a more effective military leader than his father. The power battle for the throne between Shah Jahan’s sons started after their father got an illness. In the battle of *Samugarh* (1658), *Aurangzeb* made a decisive victory over Dara.

◆ *Rivalries with Aurangzeb*

Later *Aurangzeb* overthrew his father and took control of the empire. At *Deorai*, *Aurangzeb* and Dara engaged in combat once more, and Dara suffered another loss at the hands of *Aurangzeb*. After suffering such a setback, he travelled to *Sindh* and sought asylum with an Afghan chieftain there. Dara’s misfortune was compounded when the chieftain acted treacherously against him and turned his handover to *Aurangzeb*’s troops. On August 30th, 1659, he was executed.

## 4.4.2. Textual Productions under Mughals

### 4.4.2.1. Persian and Arabic Literature

◆ *Indo- Persian Culture*

During the time when the Mughals ruled, the Persian, Sanskrit, and regional languages all evolved. In the administrative system of the Mughal Empire, Persian was the language of choice. The establishment of Urdu as a common language of communication for the people whose native languages were distinct from each other was the Mughals’ most important contribution to the area of literature. As a result of India’s wealth, including gold, natural resources, human resources, ores, and others, it has been the target of several invasions. In addition to this, it has always had a significant amount of cultural variety due to the large number of different religions, dialects, and celebrations. A great number of foreign powers conquered India and were

controlled for the greatest length of time by the Mughals during the medieval period and then by the British after that. These conquerors brought their own way of life to India and attempted to blend it into the indigenous culture. Because of this, there is now a greater variety of Indian cultural practices.

◆ *Introducing Persian language*

The Mughals dominated India for about two centuries. At the beginning of their reign, they attempted to exert such a high level of control over the Indian people that they attempted to convert their religion and force them to use the Mughal language. The Mughal dynasty is responsible for introducing the Persian language to India, where it was eventually included in the country's official educational system. Because of this, a significant number of literate Indians were fluent in the Persian language.

◆ *Sanskrit replaced Persian*

The language known as Persian, which also goes by the name *Farsi*, has its roots in the south-western region of Iran and has many grammatical features with European languages. Babur established Persian as the official language of government in his empire. Sanskrit was the most well-known language spoken in India before the Mughals came to power. However, due to the fact that Persian was the language that was utilised the most in business, Sanskrit was replaced by Persian. A number of Indian languages, including Bengali, Marathi, and Gujarati, among others, have adopted some of its vocabulary. *Sukhandan-e-Fars* found that the origins of Sanskrit and Persian were connected to one another.

◆ *Development of Persian*

The Mughal period was most fruitful for the development of the Persian language. Even throughout the Turko-Afghan era, the language continued to enjoy some measures of success. The Turko-Afghan kings encouraged Iranian intellectuals, including academics, journalists, authors, and rationalists, to produce outstanding works with their backing. The Hindus and Muslims, whose primary language was not Persian, competed with one another to actualise this language of culture throughout the Archaic period. As a result of this competition, India produced Persian writings in all of its branches, which contrasted well with the writings of Persia.

There is a massive archive of Arabic and Persian writings that dates back to the time of the Mughal emperors. The majority of the world's religious texts were written in Arabic. Following the arrival of the Turks, Persian was established



◆ *Indo-Persian Literature*

as the language used at the royal court and among the most learned and affluent members of society. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a significant influx of intellectuals from Central Asia into India. As a direct consequence of this, Indo-Persian literature came into being.

◆ *Translation of Arabic and Persian*

Babur, Humayun, and Akbar were all known to support the intellectual community. During the Mughal period, chronicles, histories, letters, biographies, autobiographies, and works on mathematics, science, philosophy, and poetry were written. In addition to the original works, many literary works that are now considered to be classics were also translated into Sanskrit and other Indian languages. Sanskrit became less important in the north as a result of the rise of Persian as the dominant language. Sanskrit was given a place of prominence in the royal courts of the Vijayanagara Dynasty. Poetry, plays set in historical times, and dramas were all written in Sanskrit.

◆ *Abul Fazl and Abul Faizi*

Abdul Rahim Khan -i- Khana's *Baburnama* was a Persian translation of *Tuzuk-i-Baburi* that was written in Turkish language by Babur. Both the *Akbarnama* and the *Ain-i-Akbari* were written by Abul Fazl. A great number of the literature that was originally written in Sanskrit were subsequently translated into Persian. Abul Faizi, a court poet of Akbar who was also the brother of Abul Fazl, was in charge of providing interpretations of the *Mahabharata*. Badauni was considered to be Akbar's most authoritative commentator. He translated the *Mahabharata* into Persian, and the translation was given the name *Razmnama*.

◆ *Shahnama*

The most significant piece of writing produced during this period was the *Shahnama* by Mansur Ibu Hasan, which was known as Firdausi. Firdausi, in his magnificent book, chronicled the myths and stories that were prevalent in Iran before the advent of Islam.

#### 4.4.2.2. Sanskrit Literature

◆ *Sayanacharya*

The monarchs of Vijayanagara Empire were known to support academic endeavours. They did not discriminate on the basis of caste or faith when they promoted or rewarded scholars of any creed or caste. Every scholar who contributed was honoured with a prize, whether they were from the Jain religion or any other religion. Studies of Sanskrit were given a significant boost by the patronage of the kings and queens who ruled the Vijayanagara empire. Commentaries, or *Bhasyas*, were written by the eminent scholar Sayanacharya

during the 14th century on the *Rig Veda Samhita*, the *Kanva Samhita*, the *Taittiriya Brahmana*, the *Satapatha Brahmana*, and the *Aitareya-Aranyaka*. His understanding of the Vedic literature will ensure Sayana's place in the history books for generations to come.

◆ *Vyasaraaya and Vedanta Desika*

Vyasaraaya was another famous Sanskrit scholar who flourished under the patronage of Krishnadeva Raya. The majority of his works were centred on the *Dvaita* philosophical tradition. A Jain scholar named Bhatta Akalankadeva penned a grammar of Kannada written in Sanskrit along with a commentary on the work. Vedanta Desika was a talented scholar who lived from 1268 to 1369 CE. and published a variety of works in the Sanskrit language. The most significant of them is the epic poem known as *Yadavabhyudaya*, which is about the life of Lord Krishna, and the *Hamsa Sandesha*, which is based on the *Meghaduta* written by Kalidasa.

◆ *Madhavacharya*

Madhavacharya was a renowned Sanskrit scholar who had close ties to the Vijayanagara royal family. He is credited with establishing a number of Sanskrit schools. In addition to that, he served as a minister in the court of Vijayanagara ruler Bukka I. Irugappa Dandanatha, who served as a minister of Harihara II, was a respected scholar. It is commonly known that he compiled the *Nanartha Ratnamala* (dictionary).

◆ *Gangadevi*

Gangadevi, was a prominent figure of this period. Her renowned work, *Madura Vijaya* (The Victory of Madurai) is written in *Mahakavya* form, and deals with her husband's conquest of Madura. The text known as *Saluva Narasimha wrote Ramabhyudayam*. During the time of King Achyutaraya, Rajanatha Dindima held the position of a court poet. Mohanangi is credited with writing a love song *Marchhiparinayam*. Tatacharya was widely regarded as the most significant scholar to serve in the court of Venkata I, the subsequent monarch of Vijayanagara. The *Lakshmi Niyudam* and the *Satvika Brahma Vidya Vilasa* were two of his most well-known works.

### 4.4.3. Literature in Regional Languages

#### Hindi Literature

The Hindi language saw a golden period around the middle of the sixteenth century. Malik Mohammad Jayasi wrote the *Padmavat*. It is an allegorical story written in rhyme about Padmavati, the queen of Chittor, and it is about her life.



◆ *Scholars of Akbar's Court*

Birbal, who was Akbar's most famous courtier, was given the title of *Kavi Priya* by Akbar. Other notable figures who served in Akbar's court include Tulsidas, Surdas, and Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. Tulsidas, a renowned poet, is credited with writing the *Ramcharitamanas*, more often referred to as the *Ramayana*. Surdas composed *Sur-Sagar*, *Sur-Saravali* and *Sahitya Lahari*. Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, one of Akbar's most important generals, penned many *Dohas*. It is known as *Rahim Dohavali*.

◆ *Devotional Songs*

A lovely poem titled "*Prem Vatika*" was written by Raskhan about Lord Krishna and his time in Vrindavan. Because he was a follower of Lord Krishna. The authors Nand Das, Vithal Nath, and Parmananda Das all wrote about Lord Krishna. Brajhasha was the language of devotional songs that were composed by the mystic poet Dadu Dayal (1544-1604). In honour of the Goddess Kali, Mirza Hussein Ali penned songs in Bengali. Both Emperor Jahangir and Emperor Shah Jahan were known to be patrons of arts and literature. Under Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, there was a fall in Hindi literary activity since there was no support. The eighteenth century saw the composition of several important works written in Hindi.

◆ *Development of Telugu Literature*

### Telugu Literature

*Harivamsamu* was written by Nachana Somanatha in honour of Lord Krishna. The music of Tallapaka Annamacharya, a saint and musician, which is considered to be devotional, holds a special and distinctive position. Srinatha is credited with writing *Kasikhandamu* and *Vidhmatakam* and translating Sri Harsha's *Naisadhiya Charita*. Jakkanna and Pinna Veerabhadra are two of the most celebrated poets who worked in the court of Devaraya. Sarada, a talented poetess, penned a total of 18 plays. The marriage of Ranganatha and Goda Devi serves as the central motif of Krishnadeva Raya's celebrated work *Amuktamalyada*. Allasani Peddanna, Pingali Suranna, and Tenali Ramakrishna were three of the most famous poets from *Ashta Diggajas*, which consists of eight outstanding poets. *Vasucharitram* and *Harishchandra* were both written by *Ramaraja Bhushana*.

### Kannada Literature

Even though Persian was the official language of the Mughal court, some of the most beautiful works of the period were written in regional languages. Lyrical poetry and devotional hymns about Lord Rama were written in

◆ *Literature in Kannada*

Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani, and Gujarati. Both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have been translated into a number of other regional languages. Under the patronage of the Vijayanagara monarchs, the Kannada literary tradition thrived in the south of the country. Kannada was also used as a literary language by Jain academics.

◆ *Promotion of Kannada Education*

Bhima Kavi was responsible for translating the *Basava Purana* into Kannada. Harihara II promoted Kannada education. The book, known as *Ekkottara Satsthala*, was written by Mahalingadeva. *Bharata* was written by Kumara Vyasa and Chamarasa. The latter is also credited with the authorship of *Prabhulinga Bilas*, according to tradition. While Bommarasa was responsible for writing the *Sundara Purana*, Tontade Siddhesvara was the one who assembled the *Satsithalajna-masaramrta*. Timmana Kavi is credited with writing the final chapters of the *Bharata*. *Harishchandra*, which is the Kannada translation of the *Ramayana*, was written by Kumara Valmiki. A treatise on the medicine known as *Vaidyamrita* was finished by Sridharadeva. The *Channa Basava Purana* was written by Virupaksa Pandita. *Karnatakasabdanusasana*, which was written by Bhattakalam Kedeva, is regarded as one of the most important works on grammar ever written.

◆ *Marathi Literature*

### Marathi Literature

The contributions that Ekanth and Tukaram made to Marathi literature are largely responsible for the development of the Marathi language. In 1563, Eknath finished composing of his monumental commentary on the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In addition to that, he was the author of the *Rukmini Swayamvara* and the *Bhavartha Ramayana*. The work of translating the *Mahabharata* was finished by Mukteshwar. A commentary on *Bhagavad Gita* was written by Vaman Pandit. The general populace now regularly listens to religious lyrics written by Tukaram. The saint who lived during Shivaji's time, Ramdas Swami, was also a prolific writer.

### Punjabi Literature

It was with Guru Nanak that Punjabi literature reached its current high grade and gained a boost in terms of momentum. The *Adi Granth* is a collection of his works, including his compositions. They have a high level of both quality and substance. In addition to that, he was a poet who wrote *Shabd*s, which are lyrical poetry. In 1604, Guru Arjun



◆ *Development of Punjabi*

Dev was responsible for composing the *Adi Granth*. It is a collection of the works of 287 India's most revered religious figures from the medieval period, including Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Surdas, Mirabai, and Ravidas. There are a number of poems that illustrate the conflict that occurred between the Mughals and the Sikhs. In Punjabi, these military ballads are referred to as *vars*. The *Dasam Granth* contains many of the texts that were penned by Guru Gobind Singh.

### Urdu Literature

◆ *Urdu Literature*

Urdu was a language that was highly favoured by the kings of the Deccan kingdoms. In the north, Urdu continued to be used as a spoken language, but in the south, it began to take on a literary form. In 1599, Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur wrote the book known as *Nauras*. This work is considered as one of the important works on Indian music. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah is credited with writing a large number of couplets. Urdu continued to thrive even after the Mughals had established their control over the Deccan region.

### Tamil Literature

◆ *Tamil Intellectuals*

Following Kampana's conquest of the Tamil region, there was a period of relative calm and prosperity in that region. The Tamil intellectuals benefited from Krishnadeva Raya's patronage. Both Tirumalainatha and Paranjotiyar, Tirumalainatha's son, were well-known intellectuals throughout their period. The *Bhagavata Purana* was given a Tamil translation during this period. *Irusamaya Vilakkam*, a work on Vaishnavism, was written by Vadamalavi Annagalayyam. *Manjarippa* and *Kachchi Kelambakkam* were both written by Jnanaprakasa Desikar, who was known as an author. Other poets such as Virakavirasar, Vadamalayan, and Perumal Kaviraya also existed during this time. Tirunjananasambanadar was a renowned Tamil scholar who authored a variety of works in the language. A dictionary known as *Akarathi Nikandu* was compiled by Revanasiddhar, who lived during the latter part of the 16th century. The famous Tamil poet Tayumanavar, who wrote several Tamil hymns.

## Summarised Overview

The Mughals' histories were written almost entirely in Persian, with very few exceptions. These works provide crucial means of accessing a significant portion of history; nonetheless, they are skillfully produced political narratives that reflect the Mughal imperium and courtly activities in a highly selective manner. The Mughal histories, which follow the footsteps of Indo-Persian antecedents, only sporadically acknowledge the existence of languages and civilisations from outside the Indo-Persian domain at the imperial court. They also convey an idealistic picture of strong, unshakable imperial authority, which is purposefully obfuscated by the fact that the Mughal power was ever-shifting and was constantly under danger. In a nutshell, court chronicles need to be studied with the understanding that they are limited and politically charged materials. These kinds of works help to dissect the Mughal imperial image, and for this purpose, we depend primarily on histories written in Persian languages. However, in order to build a picture that is more historically realistic of the diverse structure of the Mughal court culture and political power, they are best combined with elements from other traditions.

## Assignments

1. Explain how Mughals promoted Sanskrit language.
2. Explain the development of regional languages during medieval India.
3. Briefly explain the contributions of Dara Shukoh.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chandra S, *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs & the Deccan*, Vikas Pub, 1993.
2. Marshall, DN, *Mughals in India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985.
3. Mukherjee, S, *A Dictionary of Indian Literature: Beginnings-1850*, Orient Blackswan, 1998.



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1. Agrawal, A, *Studies in Mughal History*, Motilal Banarsidass Pub, 1983.
2. Mukhia, H , *The Mughals of India*, John Wiley & Sons, 2008.
3. Singh Upinder, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India, from the Stone Age to the 12th Century*, Pearson, Noida, India, 2019.
4. Truschke, A, *Culture of Encounters Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*, Columbia University Press, 2016.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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# SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN INDIAN HISTORY (1200 CE-1800 CE)

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