

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

MASTER OF ARTS-HISTORY

SEMESTER -I

**STATE IN INDIA (ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL)
CORE-102**

BLOCK-2

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

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FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavors.



STATE IN INDIA (ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL)

BLOCK-1

Unit 1 Historiography: Broad Outline

Unit 2 Later Vedic Chiefdoms And Territorial States In The Age Of Buddha

Unit - 3 Maurayan Polity: Nature And Functions

Unit 4 Maurayan Polity: Theory And Practice

Unit 5 Mauryan Dynasty: Socio-Economic Basis

Unit 6 Gupta Polity

Unit 7 Administration, Society And Economy:Guptas

BLOCK-2

unit 8 Medieval Historiography: Nature And Function—Delhi

Sultanate And Mughals 7

Unit 9 Medieval Historiography: Nature And Function—Vijaynagar

Empire..... 50

Unit 10 Medieval Historiography: Transitions, Geopolitical

Contexts, Continuities And Changes..... 73

Unit 11 Administrative Apparatus: Delhi Sultanate 100

Unit 12 Administrative Apparatus: The Mughal Empire..... 128

Unit 13 Medieval India: Socio Economic Basis--Sultanate And

Mughals..... 156

Unit 14 Formation Of Regional Polities..... 191

BLOCK-2 STATE IN INDIA (ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL)

INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK

Unit-8 Medieval Historiography: Nature And Function-Delhi Sultanat:- (Delhi Sultanate: Understanding State--Functional Aspects; Sources; Nature; Nature Of The State-Views Of Historians; Kingship—Nature; Aristocracy And Sultans; Delhi Sultanate And Caliphate. Mughal State: Theory Of Sovereignty; Akbar—Imperial Ideology; Various Interpretations Regarding ‘Nature Of State’; Downfall)

Unit -9 Medieval Historiography: Nature And Function—Vijaynagar Empire: (Vijayanagara—Historiography; Establishment Of Vijayanagara Empire; Vijaynagar Empire--Nature Of The State; Revenue Generation; The State Of Flux; An Overview--Bahmani Kingdom; A Precursor)

Unit -10 Medieval Historiography: Transitions, Geopolitical Contexts, Continuities And Changes: (State Of Flux; Sultanate Historiography--Important Historiographical Writers, Fourteenth Century Historiography, Fourteenth Century Historiography—Second Half, Fifteenth Century Historiography; Mughal Historiography--Initial Writings, Official Historiography—Akbar, Non Official Historiography—Akbar, Historiography –Jahangir, Historiography—Shahjahan, Historiography—Aurangzeb):

Unit-11 Administrative Apparatus: Delhi Sultanate: (The Sultan; Aristocracy; The Ulema; Development Of Administrative Apparatus--Amalgamation Of West Asian And Central Asian Practices, State Of Flux; Administration—Central; Administration—Provincial And Local; Structuring Of Army; Administering Revenue)

Unit-12 Administrative Apparatus: The Mughal Empire: (Historical Background; Forming Stable Structures; Refurbishing Revenue System; Mansabdari System; The Jagirdari System; Aristocracy; Revamping Administration-Administration—Central, Administration—Provincial And Local)

Unit-13 Medieval India: Socio Economic Basis--Sultanate And Mughals: (Social Life--Sultanate Of Delhi (Metropolitan Life, Countryside, Recreation Activities); State Of Mughals(Metropolitan Life, Countryside); Financial System--Sultanate Of Delhi (Extraction Of Land Revenue, Alauddinkhalji--Agrarian Measures, Market Control of Alauddinkhilji, Trading, Inland Commerce, Commerce—Foreign, Imports And Exports Of Commodities, Means Of Transport); State Of Mughals(System Of Land Revenue Evaluation, Extent Of Land Revenue , Accumulation Of Land Revenue, Inland Commerce, Domestic Trade, Trade Between Regions, Littoral Trade. External Trade, Various Trade Routes And Methods Of Transport)

Unit-14 Formation Of Regional Polities: (Background For The Emergence Of Regional Polities; Successors (State Of Awadh, State Of Bengal, State Of Hyderabad);The New Ones (Marathas State, State Of Punjab, State Of Jats); The Independent States (State Of Mysore, Rajput State , State Of Kerala)

UNIT 8 MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: NATURE AND FUNCTION—DELHI SULTANATE AND MUGHALS

STRUCTURE

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Delhi Sultanate

8.2.1 Understanding State--Functional Aspects

8.2.2 Sources

8.2.3 Nature

8.2.4 Nature of the State-Views of Historians

8.2.5 Kingship--Nature

8.2.6 Aristocracy and Sultans

8.2.7 Delhi Sultanate and Caliphate

8.3 Mughal State

8.3.1 Theory of Sovereignty

8.3.2 Akbar—Imperial Ideology

8.3.4 Various Interpretations Regarding 'Nature of State'

8.3.5 Downfall

8.4 Let Us Sum Up

8.5 Keywords

8.6 Questions for review

8.7 Suggested Readings and references

8.8 Answers To Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will discuss the nature and functional aspects of Delhi Sultanate. Further, nature of kingship, conflict between nobility and Sultan and the relationship between Caliphate and Delhi Sultanate is also discussed in detail.

In this Unit we will also explain the basis of imperial ideology tracing it from the central Asian tradition and the innovations made by the Mughal rulers. After this you will be introduced to the various interpretations on the nature of the Mughal state and the debates regarding the decline of the Mughal empire. This should help in making your assessment of the Mughal polity.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

It was only during Iltutmish's reign that the Sultanate of Delhi in real terms became free from the control of the rulers of Ghazni. Influence of Islamic thinking and tradition definitely had a bearing on the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, but it was the need of balancing different dominant groups within the ruling elite and the local challenges which primarily governed the decision making process. Satish Chandra writes, 'the state was not a theocracy because *shara* as defined by the clergy was hardly the core concern of the sultans. It was formally Islamic in character, but was based not on social equality, but on hierarchy. In practice, there was little distinction between the lives of the ordinary people, Hindu or Muslim'. (Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Delhi, 1999).

In the absence of any written law or constitution the state in the Delhi Sultanate functioned according to wisdom and political pragmatism of the rulers. It is important to understand that the concerns of the state at the beginning of the 13th century when it was at its formative stage were different from the concerns of the state in the 14th century when it got consolidated. So it is suggested that the state under the sultanate needs to be understood as a process rather than a monolithic structure imposed from above. In this Unit we will explain the nature of the state and analyse the views of modern historians on the nature of the state. All these should help you to understand the characteristics of the state under the Delhi Sultanate.

In the analysis of state in medieval times the major landmark is the establishment of the Mughal state by Babur in the early half of the 16th century. The task initiated by Babur was further carried forward by

his successors, particularly Akbar. The Mughal Empire lasted for over two centuries and in the process of its expansion and consolidation it left a lasting impact on the polity of the Indian subcontinent. The extraordinary longevity of the Mughal imperial structure and the control that the emperors developed to rule such a vast empire make it more important to understand the dynamics of the Mughal state. We have a large number of historical works for understanding the Mughal state. Starting from the writings by early British writers till recently we come across a scholarly debate among historians around whether the Mughal was a conquest state or a highly centralized bureaucratic empire or a patrimonial state or a state to be understood in terms of its fiscal management, etc.

8.2 DELHI SULTANATE

8.2.1 Understanding State – Functional Aspects

To study the state under the Delhi Sultanate we need to bear in mind the means of acquiring and maintaining power at that time. While it is true that power could be wrested by a group of people, usually with superior military skills, it is not as if this was enough for the rulers to rule. Rulers felt the need to legitimise their authority through various other means. Legitimation included not just patronage of important groups of people like the nobles or religious classes [in the Delhi Sultanate, the *ulema*, i.e., theologians], architectural constructions, etc. but also by instituting various other systems of administration and control which would allow the ruling classes to demand and extract levies [in the forms of various taxes, for instance] which in turn would allow them to maintain their position of dominance. These administrative structures allowed the rulers to make their presence felt in areas that were far away from the central/political capital of the kingdom. To put it simply, these acts of legitimisation give the state a dominant position in society.

Thus, the state constituted, in real terms, of the central political authority as represented by the king/sultan, his court and courtiers and all his officials who were posted in various parts of the kingdom as a visible

appearance of the central ruling power; his architectural constructions; his currency system, and the entire administrative apparatus which created a basic framework of control through which order and discipline was maintained upon the subjects of the kingdom. It was not a unitary object which may be identified with a single person or institution; rather, it was a category of interlinked and variegated political institutions through which political rule was sought to be stabilised.

In the Delhi Sultanate, the nobility who were an important part of the state comprised largely of slaves who had very a complex relationship of loyalty with individual rulers. Once their master-ruler died, they had no attachment with the new ruler and often revolted against him. Struggle between the sultans and the nobles for power was a common phenomenon of the Sultanate. In the beginning the Turkish nobles monopolized all powerful positions, but with the coming of the Khaljis the character of the nobility changed. In the subsequent period different sections of the Muslims, including Indian Muslims, got a berth in the nobility. The ruling class in spite of its narrow social base was sensitive to the composite character of the local society.

Growth of Sufism and Bhakti movements during the rule of the Delhi Sultanate indicates the spirit of toleration prevailing within the state. There are certain very clear components of every state; for instance, every state must have a territory to govern over, people to rule over, an army to wage wars and to protect their own territories, a basic structure of laws and administration and officers to carry out their respective duties, etc. Also, we must not confuse the 'state' with 'government'; *state* is the organisation of various segments into an organic whole aimed at controlling its territory, whereas *government* is the actions that the state takes to achieve this end. In other words, it is through *governance* that the state is able to maintain its dominant and hegemonic position over its peoples.

8.2.2 Sources

While studying previous Units you must have noticed that our main source for the Mauryan state was the *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft

in ancient India, written by Kautilya or Chanakya, the famous minister of the Mauryan king Chandragupta. In the case of the Delhi Sultanate there are few sources which deal directly with the state in the early times. This was so because the Sultanate at this time was at a nascent political stage and was grappling to become stable and strong, a process which could take many years, if not decades. Also, texts and chronicles were usually written as products of patronage for the court; in other words, a scholar would need to seek approval from the Sultan to write about the kingdom, and would in return be given remuneration in various ways. Before we proceed further, it needs to be mentioned that these textual sources are only the views of individuals and may or may not represent the prevailing realities of the times. However, since this is all that we have as evidence, it is useful to know what they say with regard to the state. Two names stand out in the Delhi Sultanate in this matter.

Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adab ul harb wa'sh Shujat* ['Customs of Kings and Maintenance of the Subjects'] is the first of these texts. It is generally believed that it was written in honour of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish [r. 1210-1236]. This text is organised in 40 chapters of which the first 12 deal with the virtues, qualities and duties of the sultan and of details of the qualities that he should look for in his officials. The other 28 chapters concern various aspects of war and how it should be waged. Mudabbir's text needs to be situated in the context of the Delhi Sultanate which was at this time, in its infancy. He is therefore eager that power remains in the hands of the ruling classes and the text reflects this concern. Also, there was the threat of the Mongols from Central Asia at this time, and all this together created a sense of insecurity amongst the court intelligentsia. Information provided by him for our study of the state is aplenty, and the two following points are illustrative of the immediate concerns which determine the contents of his text.

□□ He is clear in his suggestion that before attacking or invading an enemy territory, the sultan must formally invite the opponents to either accept Islam [and thus his superiority] or agree to pay jizya, a tax paid by non-Muslims to the Muslim rulers (Quoted in Aziz Ahmad, 'Trends

Notes

in the Political Thought of Medieval India', *Studia Islamica*, 17, p.122, 1962).

□□At another point he mentions that if a Muslim city is besieged by non-Muslims then Muslim women can march to its defence without the permission of their men, and slaves [who were employed in large numbers both by the sultan and the nobility at that time] without the permission of their masters (Quoted in Ahmad, *Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India*, pp 112).

Both these examples show that the 'state' and its ideologues were concerned about how to rule over a vast non-Muslim population in the subcontinent, and were trying to articulate various ways of doing so. While the first example is one which suggests peaceful negotiation, the second one is more militaristic and aggressive. A few chapters of the book are also devoted to the theme as to how the state should govern its domains. As mentioned earlier, while the initial chapters advise the ruler on the virtues and qualities of rulers and administrative governance, the majority of the text is engaged with the idea of warfare. Considering that the text was presented to a sultan its dominant concern with warfare surely hints at the need for such advice at the time.

In explaining the duties and responsibilities of the king and his officers, Mudabbir classifies the state as either 'oppressive' [dominated by exploitation and force] or 'just' [which leads to general welfare and prosperity]. Justice has been one of the most important duties of the Islamic ruler from the earliest times which finds mention in almost all texts relating to government. Towards this end there are strong moral exhortations for the officers in performing their duties. Therefore, it is obvious that the writer was keen that the state be seen in positive light by the subjects and state officers must behave responsibly and fairly to ensure the stability and longevity of the state.

What is important to remember is that at this point there seems to be no definite, given structure called the 'state'; what we have is a process at work to attain administrative and political coherence through proper, effective functioning. Towards that end, Mudabbir's concerns are with

ways in which this may be achieved and power be retained in the hands of the ruling classes.

Also, we should remind ourselves that it was perhaps for the first time in the political history of Islamic States that an Islamic ruling class found itself in a situation wherein the largest part of the subjects belonged to other religious traditions. This reality of the Indian subcontinent was a peculiar situation for which particular solutions and advice was needed. Actions based on traditional religious advice would hardly help the political state to function sensibly; what was required was an intelligently argued understanding both of political aims and of the ground realities. This is something which would manifest itself in the writings of our next author, Ziyauddin Barani.

Barani was a counsellor in the court of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq [1324- 1352 A.D]. He has written a number of texts, but what concerns us here is his *Fatawai-Jahandari* ['Precepts on Governance'] which he wrote sometime between 1352-57 A.D. This text is arranged in the form of 24 'advices' thus underlining the didactic nature of the text. It speaks of the proper ways of governance, and the text has been considered by many modern scholars as the first systematic enumeration of the art of governance in the Delhi Sultanate, and the only known text to do so. The central point of Barani's ideas on state and governance is also justice, the proper administration of which he considers to be the main duty of the ruler. He too is concerned with the maintenance of power for the ruling classes; in fact, he is far more emphatic than Mudabbir in his ideas about the virtues and vices of the high and low-born people respectively. Contradictions are evident in his writings as well, although he was writing at a time when the Sultanate was much better grounded in its role as the state in the subcontinent. Thus, on the one hand he speaks at length about the virtues of the Muslims and the importance of giving high-born Muslims important state offices and speaks vociferously against the employment of Hindus, and the low-born people by the state; on the other hand, his idea of justice transmutes to clemency and mercy such as in the suspension of jizya when crops fail, or the distribution of state charity to the needy among the non-Muslims. His idea of a good 'state'

Notes

therefore is one which would take the interests of both the ruling elites and the subjects into consideration.

Unlike Mudabbir, Barani does not repose much confidence in the inherent moral qualities of people. He does acknowledge them, but urges the sultan to use force where necessary to make the presence of the state effective. However, Barani's crowning contribution is his idea of 'state laws' [*zawabit*], which is unique to him. This was articulated by Barani bearing in mind the realities of the Delhi Sultanate in which the state had to survive. Thus while the ideal Muslim ruler would be one who would uphold the faith of Islam, and punish all 'infidels', in reality this was not possible in a land where the majority of the subjects were 'non-believers'. According to Barani, through the pursuit of justice the sultan could continue to be the 'shadow of God on Earth', realising temporal rule through divine mandate; at the same time, the realities of the situation meant that the Sultan could not always follow the prescriptions suggested by religion and its code of conduct. And since the maintenance of the kingdom and political rule — in short, the 'state' — was the primary objective of the sultan, it was often required that he ruled by pragmatism rather than according to what religion demanded of him in its strictest sense. Towards that end, Barani is the first person to articulate a set of 'state laws' which would help the sultan govern more effectively, such that his authority and privilege would be maintained. These 'state laws' allowed the sultan to override the precepts of religion if and when the need arose to maintain his hold over his territory; Barani was clear in his idea that if there was ever a conflict between political pragmatism [*siyasat*] and religious demands [*sharia*], then political pragmatism would always prevail.

In discussing Barani's ideas on state and governance, Irfan Habib says that his vision of the state included a display of pomp and splendour to create an impact of the state and its might on the minds of the people; he also advocated restraint in the use of excessive violence, aware as he was that it led to a cyclical displacement of the ruling classes which in turn undermined the stability of the state.

Thus, between Mudabbir and Barani, it is clear that 'state' was not seen as a monolithic institution which could be simply superimposed by the ruling elite on the subjects of their conquered areas. On the contrary, 'state' was almost always a processual formation, articulated through multiple actions and a complex network of advice and practice, where the sultans had to take into account the ground realities of every area before deciding upon any action or policy. What was effective in one area may or may not be good for another area. Of course, there were some features which were more or less universal, such as taxation, as mentioned earlier. But the role of officials who would serve in the distant parts of the kingdom, the nature of local interests [e.g., some areas could be more connected to trading activities while others were more dependent on agriculture], the vagaries of everyday life [floods and famines], all went into determining how the 'state' would manifest and project itself. The gist of all this was the maintenance of power and effective rule, and almost any policy or method was acceptable towards that end. In this too, the 'state' in the Delhi Sultanate was very different from modern states which function on the basis of written laws and practices as enshrined in the constitutions.

8.2.3 Nature

The early Muslim Turkish State established itself in north India by virtue of conquests since the Turks were far fewer in number than the indigenous population over whom they sought to govern and since they also lacked resources, they, of necessity, had to control the resources of the country. This had an important bearing on the nature of the Turkish State. In a theoretical and formal sense, the Delhi Sultans recognized the supremacy of the Islamic law (*shariah*) and tried to prevent its open violation. But they had to supplement it by framing secular regulations (*zawabit*), too. A point of view is that the Turkish State was a theocracy; in practice, however, it was the product of expediency and necessity wherein the needs of the young state assumed paramount importance. The contemporary historian Ziauddin Barani distinguished between *jahandari* (*secular*) and *dindari* (*religious*) and accepted the

inevitability of some secular features because of the contingent situations coming up. Thus, the needs of the emergent State shaped many policies and practices not always consistent with Islamic fundamentalism. For example, during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish (1211-1236), a sectarian group (*shafai*) of Muslim divines approached the Sultan and asked him to enforce the Islamic law strictly, that is, giving the Hindus the option of Islam or death. On behalf of the Sultan, the *wazir* Junaidi, replied that this could not be done for the moment as the Muslims were like salt in a dish of food. Barani records a conversation that Sultan Alauddin Khalji had with one of his leading theologians, Qazi Mughisuddin over the question of appropriation of booty. While the Qazi pointed out the legalistic position which prevented the Sultan from taking the major share of the booty, the Sultan is said to have emphasized that he acted according to the needs of the State which were paramount. These instances show that, in practice, the Turkish State was not theocratic but evolved according to its special needs and circumstances despite the fact that the main ruling class professed Islam.

8.2.4 Nature Of The state—Views Of Historians

Modern scholars have used these texts and various other sources of evidence to opine about the nature of the 'state' under the Delhi Sultanate. It has been the focus of a lot of debate especially because it is generally believed that the Delhi Sultanate laid the groundwork upon which the Mughal Empire was later able to build its might and splendour. In his *Economy and Society*, Max Weber remarked in passing that the Delhi Sultanate was a 'patrimonial state'. In explaining this concept, Jakob Röselsays that such a state is one in which the rulers are dependent upon a small number of trained and loyal state officers to exert control over the kingdom, and are involved in specialised administrative functions such as collection of taxes, control over trade and commercial activities, law and order, etc. In most other matters, it vests power in the hands of local power-groups and intermediaries at various provincial and regional levels. This idea, however, requires much investigation for

which sufficient evidence may not be available at present and has therefore not been very popular in later characterisations of the Delhi Sultanate although it has been applied more successfully to the Mughal Empire.

Historians like Stanley Lane-Poole, Ishwari Prasad, A.B.M. Habibullah, Muhammad Habib K.A. Nizami, etc. and, more recently, Peter Jackson have characterised the Delhi Sultanate as a 'centralised state'. This needs to be explained. The Delhi Sultanate was established after the second battle at Tarain in 1192 A.D. One of the important reasons why the Turks were able to establish a base in the subcontinent — first in Lahore, and after 1206 A.D. in Delhi which served as the capital of their kingdom thereafter with a brief interregnum between 1324-27 A.D. — was, according to Simon Digby (*War-horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Problem of Military Supplies*) because of their superior military strength and organisational capabilities.

On the other side, as Romila Thapar has argued (*Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*) that disunity and in-fighting among the local [especially Rajput] power blocs, along with inferior military tactics led to the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192 A.D. The kingdom that emerged thereafter was one which showed relative stability and was able to expand and consolidate its political base in course of time. This was in large measure because they were able to harness various resources available to them — a plan that would not have been possible without a centralised, authoritarian state which controlled the various organs of the state to control its resources for its benefit. To paraphrase Hermann Kulke, these models place the state under the Delhi Sultanate at the end of a continuum of pre-modern state formations. They depict the post-1200 medieval ('Muslim') state as a polity headed by a strong ruler, equipped with an efficient and hierarchically organized central administration based on a religiously legitimated monopoly of coercion in a (more or less) clearly defined territory.

However, more recent research has shown that while it is true that political rule of the Turks survived and consolidated itself consistently, it was not a smooth process which was unchallenged. The degree to which

Notes

the state was 'centralised', i.e., how far the central, political power-group of rulers and court nobles could exert actual power and control in the wider kingdom has been much debated and there is as yet no consensus about it. Such studies suggest that the state at this time was only slightly bureaucratized, and there is no agreement about the degree of political fragmentation or segmentation on the one hand, and temporally and spatially fluctuating unitary tendencies within these states on the other. Central political power was constantly being challenged by various local power groups, and the sultan at the centre spent precious time and resources trying to subjugate such forces. Opposition also came from other nobles who were posted in different parts of the empire [as iqtadars officers assigned territories in lieu of salary, the revenue returns of which were enjoyed by the officer with surplus going to the state] and wanted to carve out their own independent principalities.

It may however be said with some surety that there was a certain degree of centralised authority at work in the empire, and even where local powers were dominant they were expected to acknowledge the court and the sultan as their superiors. This is obvious from the fact that often the sultan would need to wage wars against 'rebellious' groups, be they state officials who had turned against the centre, or other local powers. Also, the centre was present in various parts of the kingdom through activities viz. tax collection, building roads, architecture, mosques, giving charity to religious foundations and individuals, and so on. An important feature of the presence of the state was the constant movement of the army from one part of the sultanate to another as it expanded its domains or tried to suppress uprisings. Often, local areas had to extend hospitality — in the form of providing food and shelter — to the central armies as they passed by. It should be mentioned here that in many cases [in the Delhi Sultanate] the local areas were governed by local chiefs, and even everyday administration continued according to local custom. The central presence in local areas did not necessarily upturn all existing structures at work, and they often worked in unison. A uniform administration across the empire would occur only with the maturation of political and

administrative rule under the Mughals, which would be more than 200 years later.

There have been some other writings which have tried to characterise the state from other perspectives: Stephan Conermann, for instance, has suggested a more economic [‘prebendal’] nature of the Delhi Sultanate on the basis of his study of the *Rihla* of the 14th century traveller Ibn Battuta, while also emphasising the features of ‘patrimonialism’. Other scholars have focussed on other power groups, such as the sufis, to argue that the effectiveness of the state was often hindered because of the power of the sufi spiritual masters [*pir*] who had a strong influence over the people of the surrounding areas. Importantly, in this case the religion of the local population did not come in the way of the influence of the sufis. Usually the sufis settled in areas that were a little away from the urban areas, but perhaps the most dramatic situation arose in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji [r. 1295-1316], when the sufi *pir* Shaikh Nizam ud-din Auliya set up his hospice in the capital city itself, thereby posing a very important challenge to the effectiveness of the sultan’s political rule.

It is on such occasions that it becomes clear that for the effective execution of the policies of the ‘state’, it was necessary for rulers to keep politics separate from religion and religious activities and individuals. Such examples, as also the nature of language in the various textual sources available to us [which uses a religiously coloured vocabulary] may sometimes suggest that the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate were engaged primarily in the glorification of Islam and the subjugation of other religious groups in their territories. Such an impression is abetted by the superior and authoritative position that the theologians were said to occupy in the court and other important offices that they may have held; but a careful examination will show that offices of the greatest consequence, especially of military command, went to able and loyal warriors who never practiced religious dogmatism. The theologians were in reality one [of many] group who remained in the official bureaucracy and served the purpose of legitimising kingly rule [through their knowledge, which was always couched in religion], of dispensing justice and education in *madrasas*.

8.2.5 Kingship--Nature

No clear and well-defined law of succession developed in the Sultanate. Hereditary principle was accepted but not adhered to invariably. There was no rule that only the eldest son would succeed (primogeniture). In one case, even a daughter was nominated (for example, Raziya Sultan). At any rate, a slave, unless he was manumitted, that is, freed, could not claim sovereignty. In fact, as it operated in the Sultanate, 'the longest the sword, the greater the claim'.

Thus, in the absence of any succession rule in the very beginning intrigues surfaced to usurp power. After Aibak's death, it was not his son Aram Shah but his slave and son-in-law Iltutmish who captured the throne. Iltutmish's death (1236 A.D.) was followed by a long period of struggle and strife when finally Balban, Iltutmish's slave of the "Forty" fame assumed power in 1266 A.D. We already know how Balban attempted to give a new shape to the concept of kingship to salvage the prestige of the office of the Sultan, but the struggle for power that started soon after Balban's death confirms again that the 'sword' remained the main deciding factor. Kaiqubad was installed at the throne against the claims of Balban's nominee, Kaikhusrau. Later, even he was slain by the Khalji Malik (1290 A.D.) who laid the foundation of the Khalji rule.

In 1296 A.D. Alauddin Khalji, killed his uncle, Jalaluddin Khalji and occupied the throne. Alauddin Khalji's death signalled civil war and scramble for power. Muhammad Tughluq's reign weakened due to the rebellions of amirs. Rivalries that followed after Feroz Tughluq ultimately led to the rise of the Saiyyids (1414-51 A.D.). With the accession of the Lodis (1451-1526 A.D.) a new element—the Afghans was added. The Afghans had a certain peculiar concept of sovereignty. They were prepared to accept the position of a Sultan over them, but they sought to partition the empire among their clans (Farmulis, Sarwanis, Niyazh, etc.). After the death of Sultan Sikandar Lodi (1517 A.D.) the empire was divided between Ibrahim and Jalal. Even the royal privileges and prerogatives were equally shared by the clan members. For example, keeping of elephants was the royal privilege but Azam Humayun Sarwani

is reported to have possessed seven hundred elephants. Besides, the Afghans entertained the concept of maintaining tribal militia which in the long run greatly hampered the military efficiency of the Central Government. It is true that Sikandar Lodi tried to keep the ambitious Afghan nobles in check, but it seems that the concept of Afghan polity was more tilted towards decentralization that created fissures in the end.

8.2.6 Aristocracy And Sultans

The political history of the Sultanate period testifies that consolidation and decline of the Sultanate were largely the result of constructive and destructive activities of the nobles (umara). The nobles always tried to maximise their demands in terms of the economic and political gains.

Under the Ilbarite rule (1206-90 A.D.) the conflicts usually revolved around three issues: succession, organization of the nobility and division of economic and political power between them and the Sultans. When Qutbuddin Aibak became the Sultan, his authority was not accepted by the influential nobles such as Qubacha (governor of Multan and Uchh), Yilduz (governor of Ghazni), and Ali Mardan (governor of Bengal). This particular problem was inherited by Iltutmish who finally overcame it through diplomacy as well as by force. Later, Iltutmish organised the nobles in a corporate body, known as turkan-i chihilgani (The Forty) which was personally loyal to him. Naturally, other groups of nobles envied the status and privileges of the members of the "Forty" but this does not mean that the latter were free from their internal bickerings. At the most they united in one principle: to plug the entry of non-Turkish persons in the charmed circle as far as possible. On the other hand, the "Forty" tried to retain its political influence over the Sultan who would not like to alienate this group, but at the same time would not surrender his royal privilege of appointing persons of other groups as officers.

Thus, a delicate balance was achieved by Iltutmish, which broke down after his death. For example, Iltutmish had declared his daughter, Raziya, as his successor during his life, but some nobles did not approve her succession after his death because she tried to organize non-Turkish groups (Abyssinians and Indians) as counterweight to the "Forty". That

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was one main reason why a number of nobles of this group supported her brother, Ruknuddin whom they thought to be incompetent and weak, thereby giving them an opportunity to maintain their position. This spectacle continued during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66 A.D.) also, as exemplified by the rise and fall of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian convert. This episode coincided with the banishment of Balban who was the naib (deputy) of Sultan Mahmud (also belonged to the Forty) and his subsequent recall.

During Balban's reign (1266-87 A.D.) the influence of the turkan-i chihilgani was minimised. Since he himself was a member of the "Forty" before his accession, he was fully aware of the noble's rebellious activities. Therefore, he eased out the "tallest poppies" amongst them through assassin's dagger or poisoning, even including his cousin. On the other hand, he formed a group of loyal and trusted nobles called "Balbani". The removal of many members of the "Forty" deprived the state of the services of veterans and the void could not be fulfilled by the new and not so experienced 'Balbani' nobles. This situation inevitably led to the fall of the Ilbarite rule, paving the way for the Khaljis.

The reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316 A.D.) saw a broadening in the composition of nobles. He did not admit of monopolisation of the state by any one single group of nobles. State offices were open to talent and loyalty, to the exclusion of race and creed. Besides, he controlled them through various measures. Moreover, the enhancement of land revenue up to 50 per cent of the surplus produce must have pacified the nobles because an increase in the revenue of their respective iqta would have raised their salaries too. Territorial expansion also provided enough resources towards recruiting persons with talent. The case of Malik Kafur, an Abyssinian slave, is well-known. But this situation was short lived; the death of Alauddin Khalji brought out once again the dissensions and conspiracies of the nobles, leading to the elimination of the Khaljis as rulers.

As for the Tughluqs, you know how Muhammad Tughluq made attempts to organize nobles again and again, with turns and twists. But all his efforts failed to put them under check. Even the Khurasanis, whom he

used to call "Aizzah" (the dear ones) betrayed him. The problems created by the nobles can be gauged from the fact that twenty two rebellions took place during his reign with the loss of at least one territory, later known as Bahmani kingdom. The crisis set in motion after Muhammad Tughluq's death seems to have gone out of hands. Under these circumstances, Feroz Tughluq could not be expected to be stern with the nobles. They were given many concessions. They succeeded in making their iqta hereditary. The appeasement policy of sultan pleased the nobles, but in the long run, it proved disastrous. The army became inefficient because the practice of branding (dagh) of the horses introduced by Alauddin Khalji was almost given up. It was not possible, henceforth, for his descendants or later rulers to roll back the tide of decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

Under the Sayyids (1414-51 A.D.) and the Lodis (1451-1526 A.D.), the situation did not appear to be comfortable. The former were not at all fit for the role of saviours. Sikandar Lodi made the last attempt to prevent the looming catastrophe. But dissensions among the Afghans and their unlimited individual ambitions hastened the final demise, actually its murder, with Babur as the executioner.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Critically examine the role of nobility in the disintegration of the Sultanate.

2) How far did the absence of law of primogeniture contribute to the decline of the Sultanate?

3) Discuss the chief characteristic features of the Afghan theory of kingship.

8.2.7 Delhi Sultanate And Caliphate

The institution of the Caliphate came into existence after the death of Prophet Muhammad when Abu Bakr became the new head (*Khalifa*) of the Muslim community (*Umma* or *Ummat*). Originally, there existed some elements of elective principle in the matter of succession, a practice not much different from the previous tribal traditions.

In the Islamic world, the Caliph was regarded as the guardian of religion and the upholder of political order. He was the leader of entire community. After the period of the first four "pious Caliphs" (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali) dynastic rule became the norm when the Umayyads took over the Caliphate in 661 A.D. from their base at Damascus in Syria. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate the Abbasids came to power in the mid-eighth century as Caliphs at Baghdad. However, with the decline of central authority, the centralised institution of Caliphate (*Khilafat*) broke into three centres of power based in Spain (under the rule of a branch of the Umayyad Caliphs), Egypt (under the Fatimids) and the oldest one at Baghdad - each claiming the exclusive loyalty of the Muslims. Nearer home, towards the north-west, many minor dynasties carved out small states, one of which was based at Ghazna (Ghazni). The significant point to remember is that, theoretically, no Muslim could have set up an "independent" state, big or small, without procuring the permission from the Caliph, else its legitimacy could become suspect amongst the Muslims. And, yet, all this was nothing more than a formality which could be dispensed with impunity.

The recognition of a Caliph by the Delhi Sultans seen in the granting of robes of honour, letter of investiture, bestowing of titles, having the name of the Caliph inscribed on coins and reading of *khutba* in Friday prayer in his name symbolized an acceptance and a link with the Islamic world, though in reality it only meant an acceptance of a situation whereby a ruler had already placed himself in power. The Sultans of Delhi maintained the fiction of the acceptance of the position of the Caliph. Under the Saiyyids (1414-1451) and the Lodis (1451-1526 A.D) the legend on the coins continued in the sense of a tradition being maintained but it was purely a nominal allegiance. In actual effect, the Caliphate, weakened and far removed as it was, had little direct role to play in the Delhi Sultanate.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What was the position of the Caliph?

2) What were the symbols of allegiance maintained by the Delhi Sultans with respect to the Caliphate?

8.3 MUGHAL STATE

8.3.1 Theory Of Sovereignty

After the decline of the Mongol empire in the 14th century Timur, a Chaghtai Turk, established a large empire covering central Asia, west Asia and parts of south Asia. The Mughals were the direct descendants of Amir Timur. The Timurids, the Ottomans in eastern Europe (Turks), the

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Safavids (in Persia) and later the Mughals in India, though Islamised did not consider it essential to obtain the formal sanction from the *khalifa* whose power was waning. It is interesting to note that although these powers had gradually been Islamised but their political ideals were not based on purely Islamic principles. The Timurid polity combined the attributes of the Yassa of Chingez (Mongol Traditions), Turkish traditions and the principles of *shara*. Therefore the Mughal state can be understood by a close examination of the Timurid polity and can be categorized as an admixture of Islamic, Persian and Turko-Mongol practices. Timur's empire or the Chaghatai Khanate was transformed from a loose structure to a close knit system which was a blend of divine precepts and Chingez Khanid decrees. The divine proclamation aspect was given priority over the mundane Chingez Khanid regulations (partitioning of tribes). The divinity related aspects imparted legitimacy to the state more than any other type of law or decree. It is argued by some scholars that the Timurids did adopt the bureaucratic system (largely based on Persian traditions) however, their principle of shared sovereignty could lead to partition and decentralization of empire.

The Mughal state cannot be analysed without an understanding of the Turko-Mongol theory of sovereignty. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India was related to the Mongol leader Chingez Khan and Timur the Chaghatai Islamised Turk. Therefore Babur's perception portrayed a combination of Turkish, Mongol and Islamic ideals. The Turks, Persians and Mongols regarded the ruler as holding a status which was higher than a chief. Myths relating to Chingez Khan's ancestry point to supernatural aspects of his life by referring to him as son of light. The divine aspects attributed to Chingez Khan's lineage and the tremendous respect and veneration his family enjoyed had enabled the house of Chingez to retain kingship till the 16th Century. Thus, sovereignty acquired a hereditary character and was confined to the house of Chingez not on the basis of mythical traditions but real exploits and achievements which imparted an exalted status to their house. Even Timur was unable to aspire to the status of the house of Chingez and therefore he had to remain satisfied with the modest title of '*Amir*' or

'*Beg*'. Khan of the Mongols can be contrasted with the *khalifa* of Islamic state. The *khalifa* was basically a religious and political head of the Islamic community or states. However, the great Khan was a political and warrior leader and thereby his status as a sovereign was not bound by religious or divine factors. According to Dr. R.P. Tripathi 'He was a political sovereign pure and simple'. Though the Great Khan was an elected leader but this election was devoid of religious overtones. A characteristic aspect of Mongol polity was that the empire was split among the princes not on a territorial but a tribal premise. The areas over which the princes had power and authority were practically their autonomous domain. However, they owed symbolic allegiance to the Great Khan who ruled in their homeland in Central Asia.

The *Malfizat-I-Timuri* (Institutes, Political and Military written originally in Mongol language by the Great Timur) is an important source material for understanding the ideals of sovereignty which existed during the period of Timur. This reflects an amalgamation of Mongol and Islamic ideals. The main focus of Timur's theory of sovereignty was the understanding that the positions held in the temporal empire were in fact a representation of the empire of God. This belief had been revealed to him by his spiritual teacher. Timur was of the opinion that since there was only one God therefore the representative of God on earth could be only one. King should not be influenced by anyone. Power should not be exercised arbitrarily by the king. The nobles and the officials were to be taken into confidence and respected. But the King's resolve was the ultimate solution. The advice of the officials was not binding upon him.

Abu Said Mirza, the grandfather of Babur, brought about a drastic shift in Timur's position. It has already been stated that though the Timurids enjoyed absolute power in their territorial spheres but they theoretically accepted the suzerainty (though nominal) of the Great Mongol Khan. Babur's grandfather pointed out that '... the mandates will be issued in the name of the dynasty (of Timur) because I am Padshah in my own right'. This challenge to the authority of the Great Mongol Khan was a novel step resorted to by the Timurids. Abu Said Mirza adopted the humble titles of Sultan and Mirza though he did try to break the

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hegemony of the Great Mongol Khan. It seems that women were not allowed to become sovereign themselves but could influence state functioning during the minority of princes as their regents. Minority did not debar a prince from attaining the status of sovereign. Babur and Akbar were both minors when sovereign status was bestowed upon them. The nobility and the religious groups were the other categories which enjoyed tremendous respect and authority in central Asia.

Around 1507 A.D Babur adopted the designation *padshah* (emperor). He was firmly established in Kabul. The emergence of Ottomans in Eastern Europe, Safavids in Persia and Shaibanids Uzbeks (Mongol tribe) in central Asia was a major threat to the authority of the Timurids. The Ottoman Sultan adopted the title of Qaisar, Safavid of Shah and the Shaibanids called themselves Sultan. In these circumstances taking cue from his grandfather Babur adopted the title of *padshah*.

Babur's religious beliefs did not shape his political outlook which was pragmatic. Dr.R.P. Tripathi suggests 'although he had unbounded faith in the will of God and had versified the Islamic law for the guidance of his second son, his memoirs do not show any superstitious and morbid regard either for schoolmen or the details of the law'. Patrimony, ancestry, heredity were regarded by Babur as the foundation of sovereignty. His views regarding kingship and sovereignty were spelt out in a letter he wrote to Humayun in 1529. He suggested that sovereignty was like bondage and a sovereign could not combine his work with pleasure and rest. He also indicated that advice should be sought from close associates. With regard to conflict between Humayun and Kamran although division was advocated but he was of the opinion that *padshahi* (sovereign power) should not be split. Babur mentioned that 'partnership in rule is a thing unheard of'. It was felt that partitioning of authority was not in accordance with the ideal of preservation of sovereign power and brought about problems in the functioning of the state.

The pious caliphs had carved out a special niche for themselves as heads of Islamic religious and political system. However, the Timurids had never accepted the *khalifa* as their suzerain. When Babur invaded India even the semblance of authority of the *khalifa* of Egypt had been erased.

The authority of the Ottomans (who conquered Egypt, Syria, Arabia in the 16th century and got the title of Sultan of Rum (Asia Minor) from the caliph at Cairo and adopted the title of Padshah-i-Islam) could never be acceptable to the Timurids as higher. The accession of Babur and Humayun as the eldest sons established a positive tradition for the Mughal state. The legitimacy and sanctity which the Mughal Emperors Babur and Humayun provided to the principles of heredity and especially the faith reposed in the eldest progeny provided the foundation to the principles of sovereignty as operational in the Mughal state.

The death of Babur was followed by the accession of Humayun without any conflict but the problem of dividing the empire among his brothers could not be resolved easily. The Mughals in India had not acquired a secure foothold and the principle of partition of empire was applied in these adverse circumstances. The empire had to counter resistance from several quarters and amidst the problems the issue of division of empire loomed large over the empire. After Humayun was defeated by Sher Shah, he decided to go to Badakhshan through Kabul but Kamran (Humayun's brother) did not allow him passage on the pretext that it was given to Kamran's mother by Babur. Humayun's brother removed Babur's name from the *khutba* at Qandahar. In this situation Babur was made to realize that the principle of division of empire as an administrative procedure was fraught with many lacunae.

Humayun's personal beliefs played an important role in the formulation of an ideology which found articulation in various ways. He was interested in transcendentalism, astrology and like a devout Muslim he regarded the king as the 'shadow of god on earth'. He maintained that the sun was the pivot of the physical world and the king being comparable to the sun was the focus of the mortal (human) world. He organized the servants of the state into 12 parts and placed himself at the centre. This philosophy was derived from the Timurid legacy. Humayun also laid down novel court procedures and ceremonies which enhanced the status of the monarch. The belief that king was the shadow of god on earth was manifested in the official history of the period written by Khwand Mir. The historian refers to Humayun, his majesty the king, the shadow of god

(Hazrat Padshah Zill-i-ilahi). Humayun's perception of the sovereignty implied that kingship was the 'personal property' of the king which he could confer on whomsoever he desired. Humayun's ideas of kingship also incorporated the ideal of abject submission of the nobles to the will of the *padshah*. However, in reality Humayun was not able to command total loyalty and subservience from his nobles.

8.3.2 Akbar—Imperial Ideology

Under Akbar a framework of power and hierarchy was developed and buttressed by symbolic and ritual elements. The rallying together of the nobility including the military cum civil personnel i.e. the mansabdar-jagirdar category, zamindars especially the chieftains and the ulema in the state machinery was brought about due to the sharp acumen of Akbar. He had to combine the task of expansion of territory with the creation of an administrative structure based on a delicate equilibrium between the different ethnic, religious and social groups which were accommodated in the imperial service as mansabdars. This category (military cum civil administrative elite) became the crux of the administrative system and gave adequate opportunity to the various ambitious rajas (chiefs), Muslim migrants etc. to rise in social and economic status. The elite nobility relied upon the Emperor for obtaining a position in the Mughal administrative system. Remuneration was accorded to those employed in Mughal administrative system for services rendered by them. The composition of the nobility was based on a variegated category comprising of various groups viz. Indo-Muslim, Persian, Brahman, Khatri, Kayastha etc. The *khanzads* (Muslim sons of the house) who were related to the Mughals by descent, family and heredity and the Rajputs proved to be the most trustworthy and reliable props of the Mughal state. The principle of authority and subordination in a hierarchical pattern was stressed which helped in sustaining the state in the midst of all kinds of challenges. This was achieved by the formulation of an imperial ideology under Akbar.

Akbar's authority was reinforced by a systematic unfolding of a dynastic ideology by Abul Fazl. This ideology combined the Timurid traditions of

hereditary monarchy and ascribed spiritual status to the emperor through symbols and metaphors. The emperor could now command unflinching loyalty from his subordinates. In this respect Akbar's period represented a major shift from the earlier pattern of division of empire and of power, which hindered the process of centralization and cohesion.

As mentioned earlier the Mongol appanage tradition was based on the fragmentation of tribes, which resulted in division of sovereignty and therefore decentralisation. Abul Fazl's elucidation of the principle of sovereignty is contained in the copious Akbarnama which has preserved events for 47 regnal years. It has a huge appendix in the form of three volumes of Ain-i-Akbari which is regarded as the official manual and gazetteer. The chapter on *rawaiyi rozi* in the Ain discusses the theory of kingship and this allowed Akbar to weaken the hold of the religious elite over political matters. Abul Fazl's view regarding kingship is quite clearly demonstrated in this passage from Ain which forms a part of Akbarnama.

'Kingship is the gift of god, and it is not bestowed till many thousand grand requisites have been gathered together in an individual. Race and wealth and the assembling of a mob are not enough for this great position. It is clear to the wise that a few among the holy qualities (*sifat-i-qudsi*) are magnanimity, lofty benevolence, wide capacity, abundant exuberance, exalted understanding, innate graciousness, natural lineage, justice, rectitude, strenuous labour, proper conduct, profound thoughtfulness, laudable overlooking and acceptance of excuses.... Thanks be to god! The holy personality of Shahinshah (Akbar) is a fount of perfect qualities and a mine of holy principles.'

This document was submitted to the Emperor in 1595. It represents a masterpiece containing not only useful information but decorated with miniature paintings and calligraphy which enhance its significance. *Akbarnama* may be placed in the category of Indo-Islamic court panegyric however more elaborate than many others. This official chronicle was based on contemporary records, no longer available, and discussions with contemporary observers and those associated with the contemporary events. The details mentioned in the work contain an

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underlying ideology of power and validity. The eulogy is intended to illustrate covertly or overtly with hyperbolic tools the personality of Akbar as superior to ordinary men. Abul Fazl tries to demonstrate that Akbar's authority over the populace did not emanate merely from the principles of coercive power, suppression, conquest and force but it was based on veneration which Akbar's personality commanded.

The nature of kingship under the previous Indo-Muslim rulers was centred on religious validation. The reading of the *khutba* in the name of the king and the sanction of the *khalifa* were important for the rulers to get acceptance and legitimacy to rule. But none of the kings before Akbar could lay claim to infallibility. The faultless and the impeccable qualities of the king put him above ordinary people and as a consequence close to God and the truth or the ultimate reality. Akbar was perceived as possessing indescribable brightness and glow, which could be noticed only by men who had mystical and spiritual leanings. Abul Fazl's brother, the poet Faizi in his eulogistic quatrains (*rubaiyat*) says 'He (Akbar) is a king on account of his wisdom; we call him *zuf'unun* (possessor of the sciences) and our guide on the path of religion. Although kings are the shadow of God on earth, he is the emanation of God's light. How then can we call him a shadow?'

It was considered that Akbar's mystical and spiritual accomplishments surpassed the authority and wisdom of interpreters of sharia (*Mujtahid* of the age), the Sufi saint (*pir*) or the charismatic saviours (*mahdi*). According to J.F. Richards 'Akbar's assertion of the right of final judgment between the various interpretations of the sacred law resulted from his long struggle with the conservative *ulema* holding state positions in the 1560s. The final resolution of this appeared in the much discussed testimony (*mahzar*) of 1578. This document signed under duress by the chief Qazi and the *sadr* of the empire stated that the rank of the sultan is higher in the eyes of God than of a *mujtahid*.' Akbar imbibed in his person lustrous power which had been bestowed upon him by the creator of the world. Thus Akbar incorporated in his personality the supernatural and complex traits which shaped his foresight and idealism, the source of his dominance and authority.

Abul Fazl mentions nine Mughal (or Mongol) kings and Mughal Khan, the son of a Turk, is considered by him as the founder of the dynasty. Abul Fazl attributes divine origin to Akbar. He gives a fascinating story of the birth of Akbar and his forefathers. A supernatural light or illumination (divine) was responsible for the birth of Akbar and his forefathers. The important Turko-Mongol rulers mentioned by Abul Fazl are Chingiz Khan and Amir Timur of Samarkand. He does not speak highly of Chingiz Khan. However, Amir Timur is regarded as the lord of conjunctions of the planets (Sahib Qiran) and the propounder of Timurid concept of sovereignty which was adopted by his descendants for legitimizing their power. His conquest of central Asian lands in Balkh, Badakhshan and Ferghana provided the spring board to his descendants from where they could extend their rule in other directions. The divine illumination '...passed through generation after generation until the shahinshah of mankind Akbar was born in 1542'.

The Timurid kings (especially Babur) established the tradition of beginning the dynastic pedigree with Amir Timur. The tughra (engraved iron seals with calligraphy bearing the Emperor's titles) and the symbolic gold coins of the dynasty were an expression of dynastic authority. Abul Fazl describes Babur as 'the carrier of the world illuminating light'. Humayun's failures are projected as predestined and pave the way for the impending arrival of Akbar. The exaggerations and metaphors applied by Abul Fazl were drawn from the myth of the origin of the Mongols and the illuminationist theosophy of Suhrawardi Maqtul, the Persian mystic and philosopher.

Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* is an important source which Abul Fazl used for his dynastic account of the Mongols. The *Tarikh-i-Hukama* of Shamsuddin Muhammad Shahrazuri is an Arabic biography of pre-Muslim and Muslim mystics and philosophers. This account includes the biography of Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul, the teacher-philosopher of Shahrazuri who had established the eastern or Ishraqi school of Persian philosophy. The central theme in the Ishraqi school of thought is that life and reality is light created by God. Abul Fazl uses the Sufi philosophy for eulogizing the Mughal emperor. Akbar's esoteric

Notes

and mystical knowledge combined both love and strictness and it found clear expression or manifestation in the doctrine of sulh-i-kul or peace for all. This belief is contained in the Akbarnama and was not merely meant as a device to bridge the chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims but it was conceived as a broad ideology of governance for the imperial power to ease the strained relations between the subjects and the rulers.

Akbar's spiritual urge led him to search for a liberal and broad religious order. His inclination towards sun worship fitted well with the dynastic ideology of the Timurids which laid stress on illuminating light. This religious aspect of sun adulation found acceptance among the official personnel, the landed aristocracy (zamindars) and other local chiefs. Generally Akbar's religious views have been explained in the context of their affinity to the Zoroastrian, Sufi, Nath yogic or Brahmanical faith. His divine faith has been regarded as an amalgamation of a myriad of beliefs and practices.

To understand Akbar's religious ideas it is important to explain how Akbar deviated from the conventional Islamic tradition and gave up the public prayer mode and adopted a rational and reasoning attitude towards religious practices. Sun worship before a sacrificial fire and the chanting of Sanskrit name for sun, religious discourse with the mystics and saints of various creed and sect, restraint and self-denial in social practices were to some extent based on Hindu belief of metempsychosis. Blochmann who has translated the Akbarnama describes Akbar's religious propensity as Divine faith which was able to enlist as its followers a number of nobles and courtiers. S.A.A. Rizvi disagrees with Blochmann and feels that the Divine faith served a more constructive purpose than simply creating a coterie of Emperor's favourites. It was able to mobilize the Imperial Disciples or votaries through the ideological formula of Emperor's connection with the sun and light. This methodology (ideological training) was adopted to create a loyal and sincere group of nobles who would strengthen the political foundation of the empire. Rizvi refers to four types of devotion which were meant 'to unify the new Mughal elite around the ...throne.' The four category of

devotion were: the willingness to surrender one's life (jan), property (mal), religion (dar), and honour (namus) for the sake of the Emperor.

Babur's nobility was bound by ethnic, hereditary, family bonds but Akbar was faced with the problem of unifying the motley group of nobles of varied ethnic background and religious persuasion. The diverse groups in the nobility had to be appeased and balanced which could be attained by tying them to the imperial ideology. Emperor was portrayed as possessing divine attributes. According to Richards 'Popular understanding of the Emperor's assertions of divinely sanctioned ancestry, illumined wisdom and spirituality clearly permeated among the populace of the court/camp and other major urban centres of the empire. Ultimately this understanding became so pervasive that a continuing memory of Akbar's powers was even absorbed into the folk culture of rural society within the various regions of the empire.'

8.3.3 Various Interpretations Regarding 'Nature Of State'

Historians have given different interpretations for explaining the nature of the Mughal state. The theory of sovereignty or kingship has been discussed which is indispensable for an understanding of the Mughal state. A voluminous collection of historical works is available on the Mughal state. W.H. Moreland's study of the agrarian system of the Mughals represents a major contribution towards the study of the Mughal Empire. The most important school of historical analysis in so far as the Mughal state is concerned is the Aligarh school. Historians belonging to this school have tried to evaluate the state mainly in the context of its economic organization.

According to the scholars belonging to the Aligarh school the main features which characterized the Mughal state were its monetary (silver rupiya, gold muhr, copper dam and paisa) and fiscal system, the Mughal ranking system (mansabdari) and system of revenue assignments (jagirs). The flourishing overseas trade is also considered as a hallmark of the Mughal period especially the development of ports such as Surat, Thatta, Goa, Hughli, Balasore and Masulipatnam by historians like J.F. Richards.

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According to T. Ray Chaudhury 'the uncomplicated desire of a small ruling class for more and more material resources explains most of the Mughal state's actions; in the case of the Mughals, he asserts 'their' economism was simple, straight forward and almost palpable...there was no containing it until it collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions'. A logical inference which can be drawn from the above mentioned interpretations is that the state obtained the surplus from the agrarian economy as land revenue which constituted a definite part of the produce and the revenue demand varied from 1/3 to 1/2 or more of the produce.

The essence of the perspective of the historians like Habib, Raychaudhuri and Richards is that during the period of Akbar (1556-1605) a cohesive and uniform or standardized agrarian system came into existence and this view was largely drawn from the earlier work of the British administrator historian W.H. Moreland. However, Habib's postulates are at variance with Moreland's because of following: 1) The first is apparently the use of Marxist tools of analysis. 2) The second is greater use of Persian sources, Moreland's application of theory of Oriental Despotism was replaced by class antagonism, struggle and exploitation postulate.

Irfan Habib regards the "Zabtisystem" (method of revenue assessment based on measurement) which got its final shape in 1580 as the epitome of the unified administrative system under the Mughals. On the basis of the sources of the period it was suggested by these historians that the zabtisystem was operational through the agency of a military cum bureaucratic system in the entire region from the Indus to Ghagra and state demand fluctuated between one third and half of the yield. A re-examination of the important contemporary sources on which the argument is based brings forth certain lacunae in the interpretation of the sources used by the historians.

Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazl contains revenue related information in a concise form. A detailed survey of field is not given. Therefore, on close scrutiny it appears that the system was not applied to all the territories uniformly. Scholars like Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam

point out that towards the close of Akbar's reign many subahs have no data on arazi (measured) land, therefore in about 1600 about one third of land revenue collection under the Mughals was done by methods other than zabti. The subahs where zabti was implemented were Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Multan. In 1600 in Malwa and Gujarat zabti was not adopted in totality or even on a large scale and was seldom practiced. In Ajmer too, a large portion of land was with the chieftains who must have adopted methods other than measurement for revenue fixation. It appears from the above discussion that the analysis of the Mughal state as one based on uniform and unified administrative apparatus on the basis of the compendium of revenue data of Ain is now being questioned by scholars.

The Central Asian Legacy of the Mughals is not given sufficient emphasis in Mughal historiography. The majority of writings on the Mughal state mainly lay stress on two reigns: Akbar (1556-1605) and Aurangzeb (1658-1707). The period of Babur and Humayun is not paid due attention in historical literature. However, some historians like S. Nurul Hasan, Simon Digby, Ahsan Raza Khan, Mohibbul Hasan and I. H. Siddiqi have tried to deal with the institutional structures of Afghan rulers (Lodis and Surs) and early Mughals (Babur and Humayun). The phase (of Mughal rule) preceding Akbar's reign represents a not so well researched period of history just as the period after 1707 had earlier been regarded in history as a dark period. Historians regard the mansab and jagir system as the "steel frame" of the Mughal state and therefore the importance given to Akbar as one who initiated the system and to Aurangzeb who impaired it is quite logical.

Studies on Mughal institutions have failed to focus on the continuities which existed between the structures laid down by the Afghans and the Mughals. If such a comparison is drawn it would be possible to delineate the similarities and contrast between the Afghan and the Mughal system. It is interesting to note that the Lodi Afghans believed in the concept of distribution of power and sharing of sovereignty. Bahlul Lodi in pursuance of the tribal ideas of egalitarianism treated his nobles or aristocracy as equals. However under Sikandar Lodi the loosely knit

conglomeration of tribal chiefs was made subordinate to the authority of the king without antagonizing the nobles.

This practice was pursued with greater rigor by Ibrahim Lodi who crushed the power of the nobles and tried to establish indivisible sovereignty, which would not disturb the unity of the empire. The social and tribal traditions based on fragmentation of authority and egalitarian clan and kin ties also initially influenced Afghan polity. However, these had to be set aside for establishing a strong state. The analysis of Afghan fiscal system by Moreland, Nurul Hasan and I.A. Khan suggests that the pioneering efforts in the sphere of fiscal and land revenue administration were the contribution of Afghan rulers particularly Sher Shah. Reference to rupiya as a coin is initially found in Sher Shah's period (1538-45) and the rai (schedule of crop rates) prepared by Sher Shah was the harbinger of the Mughal revenue reforms.

Analysing the ideology of the Mughal Empire J.F. Richards has pointed out two basic features:

1) Illuminationist theory (Farr-i-izadi) and the Tauhid-i-ilahi (kind of royal cult). These formed the crux of the Mughal theory of kingship and sovereignty.

2) This notion of sovereignty made it possible to deviate from the orthodox shariat principles and also to counter the orthodox ulema.

Kingship continued to be divinely ordained under Jahangir and Shahjahan. Sir Thomas Roe the emissary from the king of England to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir says that the latter *'Falling upon his father's conceipt, hath dared to enter farther in, and to professe himselve for the Mayne of his religion to be a greater Prophett than Mahomett; and hath formed to himself a new law, mingled of all...'*. Mirza Nathan, a khanzada (Persian noble) served as an imperial mansabdar in Jahangir's time and made use of terminology like pir-o-murshid (sufi saint of virtue) and qibla (The western part of the mosque in front of which prayer is offered). The western part of mosque in front of which prayer is offered for Jahangir shows that the king's image was placed equal to that of a sufi saint.

In Shah Jahan and Jahangir's period there was a shift in ideology and the 'divine faith' received a setback. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a Naqshbandi sufi saint, tried to promote Islamic revivalism in Jahangir's period. He believed that Shariat principles should be strictly followed. The Naqshbandi, Shattari, Chisti and other sufi sects were resorting to Islamic revivalism and orthodoxy in the period of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Sufi ideology was permeated with orthodoxy and it tried to influence politics by enlisting nobles as disciples and encouraging Islamic revivalism.

Growth of fiscal system and expansion of trade was an important characteristic of the 17th century. An important development which took place in this period was the growth of the agency of bankers to remit revenue from the provinces to the centre and the integration into the economic system of the trade related and monetary aspects. The 17th century was also marked by the involvement of the nobility and the rulers in commerce and trade. Scholars like Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam are of the opinion that 'Shahjahan's trade was part of an implicit bullionist orientation in Mughal state policy in the period'. In the period of Jahangir and Shahjahan fiscal dispatches were conducted through the medium of bankers and hundis (bills of exchange). These were used for financial transfers although cash transfer (coin and bullion) by the imperial agents and armed bearers also continued to be practiced. Many dastur-ul-amals or the revenue documents which were used by historians as source material and evidence of the centralized character of the Mughal state are dated to the middle of the 17th century. It needs to be emphasized that Shahjahan's and Aurangzeb's reigns are also noted for the efforts on the part of the imperial authority to bring more and more land under khalisa.

Several changes were introduced in the time of Shahjahan in the sphere of mansabdari. We have already referred to the systemic postulate propounded by the Aligarh scholars who feel that the administrative system (agrarian structure, mansab, jagirdari) was initiated and made impeccable by Akbar but this has been questioned by other scholars. It seems that these administrative arrangements developed and grew in the late 16th century and reflected to some extent a continuation of the

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earlier institutional arrangements and ceaselessly evolved into the 17th century. Therefore it is important to stress the evolutionary aspect with regard to the development of administrative structures. No single ruler can be credited for perfecting these institutions.

Expansion of agriculture by cutting the forests is an important development of Shah Jahan's period as given in the *Haqiqat-i-suba-Bihar*, 'from the time of Shah Jahan it was customary that wood cutter and ploughmen used to accompany the troops so that forests might be cleared and land cultivated. Ploughs used to be donated by the government at the rate of one anna per bigha in the first year. Chaudharis were appointed to keep the riaya happy with their considerate behaviour and to populate the country.....There was a general order that whosoever cleared a forest and brought land under cultivation such land would be his zamindari'. Thus the period between middle of the 17th and the beginning of 18th century was notable for the growth of trade, fiscal system and agricultural expansion.

Stephen Blake analyses the Mughal state as a patrimonial bureaucratic empire. This concept is borrowed from Weber and applied to the Mughal state. This postulate is based on the premise that in small states, the ruler governed as if it was his patrimony or household realm. With the expansion of territory and emergence of large states a bureaucracy has to be recruited for effective governance. This was the basis of patrimonial bureaucratic empire.

Contemporary Europeans like Dutch merchant Francisco Pelsaert (1595-1630) and French physician Francois Bernier (1620-1688) refer to the Mughal state in the 17th century as having its own limitations. Bernier refers to the 'agrarian crisis' due to the problems in the jagirdari system. This view was adopted by W. H. Moreland and later M. Athar Ali and Irfan Habib. The non-existence of private property in land in this period is mentioned by Bernier. He divided the Mughal state vertically into two parts: the overarching super structures headed by the Mughal tyrant and the other part dominated by the native princes placed below the absolute Mughal sovereign.

Recently scholars like Chetan Singh have tried to assess the Mughal state in the context of the various regions embodied in it. The study of regions enables us to understand their dynamics separately and helps us to understand the Mughal state not as a monolithic entity but as a variegated whole comprising of several regions which had their own peculiarities. It would be reasonable to assume that the centralized perspective of the historians needs to be reassessed in the light of researches which have brought forth new ideas and perspectives on the basis of fresh evidence.

8.3.4 Downfall

The decline of the Mughal Empire meant the crumbling of the edifice of the state. Therefore, an analysis of the decline or weakening of the empire would inevitably mean scrutinizing the degeneration which had crept into the main pillars of the state system i.e. the agrarian and mansab-jagir system. This would help us to understand better how the state system functioned and what were its strengths and weaknesses. A number of eminent historians have tried to understand the process of Mughal decline through their works. These works - Satish Chandra's Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, Irfan Habib's Agrarian System of the Mughal Empire, M. Athar Ali's The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb and N. A. Siddiqi's Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals offer a single explanation of this crisis which has been summed up by P. Hardy as follows:

'From these works it is possible to draw a diagram of tensions between monarch (padshah), military or service noble (mansabdar), landholder (zamindar) and peasant (raiyat) which when maintained in equilibrium were creative of order and stability but which if allowed to pull free were creative of disorder and impotence. Such a free pull occurred when the Marathas as zamindars forcibly jerked against the bit of Mughal control and resisted domestication with the Mughal system. The efforts of the Mughals to muster the resources in revenue and men to overcome the Marathas led to strains within the nobility and insupportable pressures upon both zamindar and peasant who if they did not revolt actively at least resisted the Mughal revenue collector passively. A combination of

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over lavish appointments by the emperor and the military success of the Marathas created a shortage of assignments (jagirs) of areas of land productive of income for the nobles. Thus resources to support the military contingents which were the condition of receiving appointments were rendered inadequate. Consequently the number and effectiveness of the Mughal forces fell off and the Mughal military machine (which was essentially an instrument for the internal military occupation of India) became progressively incapable of controlling the autochthonous military and rural aristocracy (the zamindars of various degrees) of the subcontinent’.

M.N. Pearson points out that the link between the Emperor and the imperial mansabdar (whom he regards as constituting the empire) was based on the victories attained in wars. The bond of fidelity was not related to ethnicity or religion. He characterizes the empire as a war state which rested on the basic principles of conquest and annexation. The attachment between the Emperor and the imperial officers was personal which led the latter to believe, in Pearson’s words, ‘it was not their empire that was failing it was Aurangzeb’s’.

J.F. Richards is of the opinion that due to the extension of khalisa the land to be assigned in jagir decreased. However he feels that this problem could have been overcome by consolidating the southern frontier of the empire. He also argues that Aurangzeb did not provide backing to or promote the Hindu warrior aristocracy in the Deccan (Maratha, Gond, Bedar or Telegu chiefs). Earlier traditional interpretations of decline gave a central place to Aurangzeb’s policies (bigotry) which were regarded as a reversal of Akbar’s endeavours.

Peter Hardy summarises the arguments of Richards and Pearson as follows: ‘the progressive inability of the dynasty to assure its agents a competence if not wealth to control the terms of service by those agents and to control the manner in which the elite extracted the resources of the empire from the producer so that in the end the dynasty was unable to withstand the Marathas, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali’. Hardy suggests that this problem could have been countered and solved by adopting the model of “Weberian bureaucracy” which entailed the

principles of direct administration and cash payments. The other factors responsible for weakening the military cum administrative edifice was the difference between estimated revenue (jama) and revenue actually collected (hasil) and therefore the inability of the mansabdars to sustain and support the requisite armed contingents. (The mansabdars were supposed to maintain the specified troops on the basis of the estimates of revenue (jama). However in actual practice the hasil or actual realisation was much less.) The economic and administrative crisis posited by the Aligarh school is acceptable to Pearson and Richards also. This postulate is based on inferences arrived at after a detailed study of the writings of contemporary writers viz. Abul Fazl, Mamuri, Bhim Sen and Khafi Khan.

Bernier's *Travels in the Mughal Empire* throws light on Shivaji and the Maratha problem. Manucci in his *Storia do Mogor*, (translated by William Irvine, Vol II,) portrays the picture of political chaos in Mughal times caused by zamindar rebellions and the connivance of the Mughal officials in the acts of defiance by local magnates; Mamuri and Khafi Khan refer to decrease in paibaqi lands (lands to be assigned in jagir); Bhim Sen narrates the Deccani campaigns and refers to the 'failure to keep up the sanctioned strength of their contingents.'

The issue of disintegration of Mughal state as an effect of decreased hasil and the consequent reduced contingents has to be reassessed in the light of fresh look at the history of military techniques. It is felt that the Mughals lagged behind the Persians with regard to innovations in military technology and the lightly equipped armed and dressed Maratha cavalry proved formidable for the heavy Mughal cavalry. Certain other insights into the local price situation and an analysis of Aurangzeb's personality would help in deducing a more acceptable and convincing approach for characterizing the decay of the Mughal state.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What are Babar's view on Sovereignty?

2) Throw a light on Imperial Ideology of Akbar.

3) Elaborate the views of Chetan Singh on Nature of State.

8.4 LET US SUM UP

In a way of summing up it may be said that the state under the Delhi Sultanate was not a unified entity which existed from the beginning to the end as a singular category. Rather, it was the coming together of various actions of the ruling classes as part of their act of effective governance. Some of its components were universal, such as taxation; others were variable, and there were still others which grew with the passage of time and according to need. Obviously, the immediate concerns of a newly emerging 'state' at the beginning of the 13th century were different from those of a more mature and confident political 'state' at the end of the 14th century. So, while the category of 'state' may still be employed as part of studying political governance under the Delhi Sultanate, it needs to be understood as a process rather than as a composite bloc that was superimposed upon the people. The 'state' was an organic entity whose primary exercise was to ensure political dominance and effective rule, and this was possible only by addressing the ambitions of the ruling classes and the needs and demands of the ruled; towards that end, through its many actions and offices it aimed to integrate the diverse components of the kingdom into one unified, governed whole. Any action was good as long as it achieved this desired end. It must therefore be seen as a

continuing process of governance which, at particular points of time, could be identified as 'state', but when seen over a larger period, would emerge as a process at work. This governmental scaffolding was, of course, organised around the central person of the ruler whose own authority was enhanced by a skilful combination of effective rule, charismatic authority complemented by religious sanction from the *ulema*, and the bureaucracy as its main structural expression.

Thus, in as much as the 'state' was an expression of the vested interests of the ruling classes, it was a public political institution whose primary function was to bind together its subject population into a, universally disciplined mass — a community of people acculturated to structures of power — upon which political authority and power could be imposed. 'Justice', howsoever understood and articulated by the different groups, was the central axis of the state, and the degree of its success depended upon the skill with which the rulers were able to mobilize the [mainly economic] resources at their disposal, as also various other internal and external factors which determined their effectiveness.

From the above analysis we can summarize that the Tuko-Mongol origin of the Timurid dynasty had influenced the Mughal idea of empire and concept of kingship. Babur's ideas of sovereignty and kingship had direct linkage with the principles of the tribal Mongol tradition and the Islamic tradition in which he was brought up. Akbar made innovation in the Mughal theory of sovereignty by introducing a rational element. Athar Ali explains that this rational concept demanded obedience in fulfilment of a mutual, contractual duty and helped 'to justify the sovereign's absolute claims over the individual subject. The strength of this theory lies in its secular character on alleged social needs'. The Mughal emperor was the supreme authority within the empire commanding absolute loyalty of all his subjects. To counterbalance the threat from the heterogeneous nobility to the imperial authority the Mughals developed a novel mechanism of checks and balances. In the conflict among the nobles over sharing of power and agrarian surplus the Mughal emperor ensured his position as a superior arbiter.

In analysing the nature of the Mughal state some historians have classified it as a highly centralized bureaucratic empire. The Aligarh historians have stressed on the systemic perspective and the fiscal/resource management of the Mughal empire in order to explain the nature and crisis of the empire. Irfan Habib has used the term 'medieval Indian system', a system characterised by the growing tendency of a highly centralized bureaucratic state apparatus to appropriate the surplus and exploit the peasantry. While scholars like Blake and Pearson have described the Mughal authority as essentially personal and patriarchal than despotic. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam focus on the persistence of differences from region to region rather than the centrally imposed uniformity as suggested by some historians. Chetan Singh is also of the opinion of a regionalization of the administrative functionaries of the Mughal state. Decline of the Mughal Empire was not a sudden collapse of the imperial administrative apparatus, nor an individual ruler could be held responsible for the crisis, but the crisis in imperial structure because of economic and political reasons resulted in a shift of political and military power from the centre to regions. Emergence of successor and other states in the 18th century was the indication of this declining trend of the imperial polity.

8.5 KEYWORDS

Abwab : Cesses

Amir : Officer

Bahi Ledger/ accounts books

Balahar : Village menials/ ordinary peasants

Biswa: 1/20th part of a bigha

Charai: Grazing-tax

Chaudhuri: Head of Hundred villages or pargana

Dagh: Branding (of Horses)

Diwan-i Wizarat: Finance Department

Fawazil: Surplus amount

Ghari: House-tax

Hashm-i qalb: Central/ royal cavalry

Hasil: Actual revenue

Idrar: Revenue-free land grant

Idaq: Draft, assignment order

Jama: Estimated Revenue

Zawabit: Regulations

Sovereignty: Supreme Power or authority of a state.

Padshahi : sovereign power.

Khalifa: Temporal head of Muslim world.

Khanzads: Muslim sons of the house.

Khutba: A pulpit address of prescribed form that is read in mosques on Fridays at noon prayer and contains an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the reigning prince.

Zabti: A system of taxation. Under the system he took a careful survey of crop yields and prices cultivated for a period of 10 years.

8.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEWS

- 1) Write a note on the features of the state under the Delhi Sultanate giving reference to Fakhri-Mudabir's and Ziya Barani's texts.
- 2) Analyse the views of modern scholars on the nature of state under the Delhi Sultanate.
- 3) Analyse the important features of the Mughal theory of sovereignty.
- 4) Explain the nature of the Mughal state giving references to the views of different historians.

8.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

A.B.M. Habibullah, The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India.

W.H. Moreland, The Agrarian System of Moslem India. (Chapters II&III; Appendices A, B and C).

R.P. Tripathi, Some Aspects of Muslim Administration.

K.S. Lal, History of the Khaljis (Chapter XI).

Mohammed Habib & K.A. Nizami, A Comprehensive History of India, Vol V.

Tapan Ray Chaudhuri & Irfan Habib, The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol, I.

Rushbrooke Williams: An Empire Builder of the 16th Century

Mohibbul Hasan: Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India

R.P. Tripathi: Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire

S.K. Banerjee: Humayun Padshah

Beni Prasad: History of Jahangir

B.P. Saksena: History of Shahjahan of Delhi

J.N. Sarkar: History of Aurangzeb's reign 4 Vols

R.C. Verma: Foreign Policy of the Mughals

A.R. Khan: Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar

K.R. Qanungo: Sher Shah and His Times

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) In this you have mention about the role of “Forty” during the days of Iltutmish. How Balban tried to curb their powers? What role the nobles played in the downfall of Khalji and Tughlaq Empire? (See Section 8.7)

2) In the absence of any succession rule intrigues surfaced to usurp power. After Aibak's death, it was not his son Aram Shah but his slave and son-in-law Iltutmish who captured the throne. Iltutmish's death (1236 A.D.) was followed by a long period of struggle and strife when finally Balban, Iltutmish's slave of the "Forty" fame assumed power in 1266 A.D. In this way, as there was no primogeniture rule, the nobles used to usurp power as soon as King becomes weak. (See Section 8.6)

3) The Afghans had a certain peculiar concept of sovereignty. They were prepared to accept the position of a Sultan over them, but they sought to partition the empire among their clans (Farmulis, Sarwanis, Niyazh, etc.). Even the royal privileges and prerogatives were equally shared by the clan members. For example, keeping of elephants was the royal privilege but Azam Humayun Sarwani is reported to have possessed seven hundred elephants.

Check Your Progress 2

1) In the Islamic world, the Caliph was regarded as the guardian of religion and the upholder of political order. He was the leader of entire community. After the period of the first four "pious Caliphs" (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali) dynastic rule became the norm when the Umayyads took over the Caliphate in 661 A.D. from their base at Damascus in Syria.

2) The recognition of a Caliph by the Delhi Sultans seen in the granting of robes of honour, letter of investiture, bestowing of titles, having the name of the Caliph inscribed on coins and reading of *khutba* in Friday prayer in his name symbolized an acceptance and a link with the Islamic world, though in reality it only meant an acceptance of a situation whereby a ruler had already placed himself in power.

Check your Progress 3

1) He suggested that sovereignty was like bondage and a sovereign could not combine his work with pleasure and rest. He also indicated that advice should be sought from close associates. With regard to conflict between Humayun and Kamran although division was advocated but he was of the opinion that *padshahi* (sovereign power) should not be split. Babur felt that partitioning of authority was not in accordance with the ideal of preservation of sovereign power and brought about problems in the functioning of the state.

2) Under Akbar a framework of power and hierarchy was developed and buttressed by symbolic and ritual elements. The rallying together of the nobility including the military cum civil personnel i.e. the mansabdar-jagirdar category, zamindars especially the chieftains and the ulema in the state machinery was brought about due to the sharp acumen of Akbar.

3) Recently scholars like Chetan Singh have tried to assess the Mughal state in the context of the various regions embodied in it. The study of regions enables us to understand their dynamics separately and helps us to understand the Mughal state not as a monolithic entity but as a variegated whole comprising of several regions which had their own peculiarities.

UNIT 9 MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: NATURE AND FUNCTION—VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE

STRUCTURE

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Vijayanagara--Historiography
- 9.3 Establishment of Vijayanagara Empire
- 9.4 Vijaynagar Empire--Nature of the State
- 9.5 Revenue Generation
- 9.6 The State of Flux
- 9.7 An Overview--Bahmani Kingdom
- 9.8 A Precursor
- 9.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.10 Keywords
- 9.11 Questions for review
- 9.12 Suggested Readings and references
- 9.13 Answers To Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

Thrust of this Unit is to familiarise you with this major trend of medieval polity during 14th and 15th centuries giving examples from the Vijayanagara and Bahmani kingdoms. Comparatively more historical researches have been conducted on Vijayanagara, so you will find more details about it as compared to other kingdoms. Further, a comparison is made between Vijayanagar Empire and later Deccani states. Let us first start with the Vijayanagara kingdom.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Decision of the Delhi Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq to shift the capital back to Delhi from Daulatabad in the early half of the 14th century was followed by the rise of a number of independent territorial states in different regions. Most prominent among them were the kingdom of Vijayanagara in the region to the south of the river Krishna, the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan and the kingdoms of Bengal, Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur, etc. The creation of new kingdoms shows the weakening control of central political authority over the provinces and the tendency among provincial chiefs to proclaim their independent political authority in their respective areas of influence. Regarding the nature of polity and the mechanism of governance of these states we find broad similarities with the state under the Delhi sultans. However new experiments were also made by these new territorial states depending on the local needs and traditions. The major challenge before the rulers of these states was to maintain balance among various groups of nobles who were always a threat to the throne. The rulers used religious ideology to legitimise their rule. Till the emergence of the Mughal state these powers were successful in enjoying independent political authority in their respective regions.

9.2 VIJAYANAGARA-- HISTORIOGRAPHY

In view of large number of researches about the history of the Vijayanagara state it is not possible to analyse every work and comment on it in this Unit. What is attempted here is to identify major trends in the historiography of the Vijayanagara state and we hope this will help you to understand diverse views on this state. Sporadic writings of Mark Wilks and Colin Mackenzie inaugurated in the early years of the 19th century an exercise which was to attract several scholars in the next century. A volume on the history of Vijayanagara appeared in the year 1900 and its author was Robert Sewell, a British official of the Madras Civil Service. The work was entitled *A Forgotten Empire*. It has been rightly observed by Burton Stein, another historian on Vijayanagara that

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Sewell's work was not for the sake of pure knowledge but for the purpose of controlling a subject people whose past was to be constructed as to make the British rule a necessity and a virtue.

S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar's works on the Vijayanagara history and allied topics brought in a new element of nationalist ideas and the ideal of patriotism. His interest in the literary sources helped him to change the course of historical writing and returned to the study of local magnates in distant places in the Empire. It was with the extensive works of Krishnaswami Aiyangar that the Vijayanagara history was established in academic circles.

Aiyangar's works were followed by the studies of B.A. Salatore and N. Venkatramanayya. Aiyangar and B.A. Salatore viewed the Vijayanagara history from a regional perspective focusing on Karnataka as the home of the founders of Vijayanagara kingdom whereas N. Venkatramanayya and N. K. Sasthri presented it from an Andhra perspective. Salatore presented Vijayanagara as an expression of Karnataka nationalism while N. Venkatramanayya challenged this view emphasizing the point that the Vijayanagara rulers had adopted the Kakatiya method of administration. He referred to the 'Nayankara' system as an example of Kakatiya influence. Working under K.A. Nilakanta Sasthri, T.V. Mahalingam studied the administrative and social aspects of the Vijayanagara history. As stated by Nilakanta Sasthri, the work of Mahalingam was meant to focus on the Tamil region especially the social and administrative studies dealing with the third dynasty. According to Burton Stein, Mahalingam remarkably treats the routine post classical age in south India as a vast undifferentiated period with evidence of political usages from widely disparate times and places taken as elaborations upon some single structure of power relations.

Nilakanta Sasthri's 'A History of South India' has a full chapter and a portion of another chapter on the Vijayanagara having maximum weightage on political history. However it has been suggested by scholars that his major contribution to the Vijayanagara history is the three-volume work entitled *Further sources of Vijayanagara History*, edited jointly with Venkataramanayya. For a long time K.A. Nilakanta

Sasthri and his followers dominated the scene of Vijayanagara history in particular and history of South India in general. Their models and methods were accepted uncritically until Burton Stein wrote a very strong critique of the existing model.

Burton Stein introduced the 'Segmentary state model' which he borrowed from Southall who formulated it to explain the Alur society of South Africa. First he applied it in his studies of the Chola history and polity and then he extended it to explain the Vijayanagara power structure in his book '*Peasant State and Society*'. In the *New Cambridge History of India* series Burton Stein presented the Vijayanagara history in this conceptual frame work. Segmentary state model and its applicability in Indian situations have been questioned by several scholars, especially Herman Kulke who showed its limitations by highlighting the actual sovereignty of kings of Orissa against the ritual sovereignty propounded by the Segmentary state model.

Recently Karashima – Subbarayalu- Shanmughan team has attempted to analyse the Vijayanagara history and their method of study is based on details of Vijayanagara inscriptions in Tamilnadu. This team of scholars rejects Stein's Segmentary state model and tries to explain the Vijayanagara polity by applying the feudal model with significant variations. Introducing the results of the new study Karashima suggests that 'the strength of the state control over *nayakas* seems to have made Vijayanagara feudalism rather similar to the Tokugawa feudalism of Japan'. Burton Stein's work has however stimulated a new interest in the study of South Indian history in general and the Vijayanagara history in particular. A number of studies are done in various centres in India and abroad and these studies are expected to open up new vistas in the study of transitional stages in the society and polity of pre-modern South India.

9.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

The foundation of the Vijayanagara state towards the middle of the 14th century is generally attributed to a group of five brothers, namely, Bukka,

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Harihara, Kampana, Mudappa and Marappa. The founding figures of the kingdom are also known as the Sangamas, after their father's name. The kingdom takes its name from its capital Vijayanagara, 'the city of victory', which was built on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra. The emergence of the Vijayanagara state is explained as a "Hindu" resistance against the "Muhammadan" invasion. This theme of the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy was introduced by Robert Sewell who is the author of the first standard work on the history of the Vijayanagara Empire. The literary sources and the epigraphical records of the early Vijayanagara period identify the invaders as the *Turushkas* or *Turkiks*, an ethnic or political identity which was replaced by the idea of Hindu-Muslim rivalry and this semantic perspective is significant in the context of imperialist historiography of the 19th and 20th centuries. It has to be noted in this connection that as observed by some early historians, 'Muslims had been part of South Indian society for a long time before Vijayanagara was founded. Moreover, they were employed in the native military forces by the Hindu Kings such as the Hoysala king Jagadekamalla'. (Stein)

To begin with the Sangamas had control over only a small area comprising Gutty and its surroundings. According to the traditions, they could succeed in building up a vast empire with the blessings of the saint Vidyananya. However, it has been observed by recent historians that Vidyananya emerged as an important personage on the Vijayanagara scene only several decades after the empire had been founded. This does not minimize the importance of the role played by cultural leaders in mobilising popular support for the rulers.

In the initial years of the kingdom, the Sangamas were involved in incessant fights against not only 'Muhammadans' but also 'Hindu' rulers. They defeated Rajanarayana Sambuvaraya in 1357, won the war against the Sultan of Madurai in 1370 and thus, by about 1377, at the time of the death of Bukka I, Vijayanagara was the largest regional kingdom in the whole of south India ever to have existed. Bukka's successors continued to extend the empire to the north east by fighting the Kondavidu Reddies of the coastal Andhra and the Velamas of Warangal and even the

Gajapati kings of Orissa. Their fight with the Gajapati's continued for about a century. These military operations were possible because Vijayanagara could mobilize resources which were essential for the maintenance of the army and for the project of expansion.

The Vijayanagara kingdom was ruled by four distinct lineages or dynasties. We have mentioned that the kingdom was founded by the Sangamas, sometimes called the Yadavas. Around 1485 the Sangama king Virupaksha II was murdered by his son and after this incident there was a short period of setback which came to an end when Saluva Narasimha founded the line of the Saluvas. After Saluva Narasimha's reign there was again a confusion which ended when the rulers of Tuluva line assumed power in 1505. The Tuluva period is considered to be the heyday of the Vijayanagara kingdom. The last dynasty of the Aravidu line came to power in 1542. By this time this empire had started declining. Under the Aravidus the central power had been weakened and by the late 17th century the kingdom was fragmented due to constant conflict with the neighbouring powers and crisis within the state due to the rising aspirations of the military commanders or nayaks.

9.4 VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE--NATURE OF THE STATE

Historians are divided in characterising the Vijayanagara state. T. V. Mahalingam described it as feudal and compared it with the European feudalism. He also highlighted the differences between the western and the Vijayanagara models of feudalism. Mahalingam's opinion was mainly based on his study of the *Nayankara* system. In the Vijayanagara polity, the land was conceived as belonging to the king. Hence he could distribute it to his dependants. Those who held land from the king were called *Nayakas*. These *Nayakas* ruled over the territory thus granted by the king with great autonomy. In return the *Nayakas* had twofold duties:

- 1) remitting an annual financial contribution to the imperial exchequer, and
- 2) maintaining for the king a sufficient number of troops and serving him in his wars.

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The *Nayakas* often leased out their lands to tenants on terms similar to those on which they held their lands from the king. This can be described as subinfeudation which was a feature of European feudalism.

There were differences also between the two systems. In Europe the process of fealty was visible according to which the individual small land holder paid homage to the lord and received land from him as a fief in return for services rendered to him on the promises of protection by the lord. This feature is not found in the Vijayanagara Nayak system. *Nayankara* system was an administrative policy of the kings to assign territories to the *Nayakas* in return for military service and a fixed financial contribution. The element of subservience to the politically superior lord predominant in the European feudalism was lacking in the *Nayankara* system according to Mahalingam. *Nayakas* held land in the form of military fief known as *amaram* tenure. Vijayanagara kings assigned heavy responsibilities and duties to nayaks and did not protect them if they failed to perform their duties. Nuniz has stated that they were liable to be ruined and their properties taken away if they did not meet their obligations properly. In European feudalism the society as a whole was chained together by the link of land tenure whereas the *Nayankara* system linked together only a section of the population. Subinfeudation was not practiced on such a large scale in the Vijayanagar Empire as in Europe.

Nilakanta Sastri described the Vijayanagara state as 'the nearest approach to a war state ever made by a Hindu Kingdom'. He was following the characterization of Mahalingam. Recently some European scholars have also described the Vijayanagar polity as military feudalism (Kulke and Rothermund). However Burton Stein has vehemently denied that this system could be called a feudal one due to the reason that some of the salient features of feudalism such as homage and vassalage are not found in the Vijayanagara system. Further he sees no tributary relationship either. Stein opines that the Portuguese writings on feudalism should be studied with caution in this respect because their use of the term feudalism must be understood in the context of their own experience and their desire to explain Indian affairs to their European readers in

words which were familiar to them. Stein described the system as segmentary in which the king enjoyed a ritual sovereignty which is in contradiction with actual sovereignty. The segmentary model introduced by Stein was challenged by Herman Kulke and others showing that in many parts of India kings enjoyed actual sovereignty over their territory, giving examples of the Suryavanshi kings of Orissa.

More recently Karashima, after studying the Tamil epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara empire in Tamilnadu, has argued that “the strength of the State control over *nayakas* seems to have made ‘Vijayanagara feudalism’ rather similar to the Tokugawa feudalism of Japan. He adds that if we do not accept the feudal interpretation, we have to find some other logical explanation for the difference between the Chola and the Vijayanagara regimes.

The Ayagar System

It has already been pointed out that during the Vijaynagar period, autonomous local institutions, especially in the Tamil country, suffered a set-back. In pre-Vijaynagar days in Karnataka and Andhra local institutions possessed lesser autonomy as compared to Tamil country. During Vijaynagar period in Karnataka too local territorial divisions underwent a change but the ayagar system continued and became widely prevalent throughout the macro-region. It spread in the Tamil country during 15-16th century as a result of the declining power of nadu and nattar. The ayagars were village servants or functionaries and constituted of groups of families. These were headmen (reddi or gauda, maniyam), accountant (karnam senabhova) and watchmen (talaiyari). They were given a portion of or plot in a village. Sometimes they had to pay a fixed rent, but generally these plots were manya or 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. Other village servants who performed essential services and skills for the village community were also paid by assigning plots of land (like washerman and priest). The village servants who provided ordinary goods and services were leatherworkers whose products included leather bag used in lift-irrigation devices (kiapila

ormohte), potter, blacksmith, carpenter, waterman (niranikkar: who looked after the maintenance of irrigation channels and supervised bankers and money-lenders). The distinguishing feature of the ayagar system is that special allocation of income from land and specific cash payments were for the first time provided to village servants holding a particular office.

9.5 REVENUE GENERATION

Agriculture and commerce were the two sources of income for the Vijayanagara rulers. The dry cropping zones which constantly expanded were the agricultural and political frontiers of the Vijayanagara times as stated by Burton Stein. The new settlers from the coastal plains migrated to the interior uplands. Another section that opened up new agrarian tracts was those who subsisted on herding and dry cropping. In the forest clad uplands slash-and-burn cultivation was practiced. The nature of the terrain had much influence in determining the character of the peasantry. It is important to note that these developments in the Vijayanagara agrarian sector resulted in the transformation of the dry uplands of the peninsula from a marginal agricultural and pastoral zone into a zone capable of supporting an increasing number of people and more elaborate social and political institutions.

Trade and commerce had developed even prior to the Vijayanagara period at three levels- local exchange networks, long distance inland trade and overseas trade. Documents from Tamil country bear testimony to the increase in markets (*pettai*), fairs (*santai*) thereby implying an increase in the local exchange networks. Karashima's study has maintained that compulsion was used to increase production of cash crops such as sugar, pepper etc. indicating linkage between local production and long distance trade, both inland and overseas. The role of coin-money was a notable feature of the trade and commerce under the Vijayanagara rulers. Travel accounts of Chau Ju-Kua, Marco Polo and Iban Battuta all document India's participation in the world trade. These travellers' accounts refer to the situation in the territories of Vijayanagara Kingdom

too. They took notice of the development of interior urban centres whose consumption demands buoyed up the coastal emporia.

Another stimulus for the trade and urbanization in the empire came from the Brahmanical temple complexes which functioned as pilgrim centres, military centres, political capitals and commercial centres. Contemporary epigraphical records and literary sources document that cash revenue was collected from trade and from the production of textiles, metal goods etc. "Customs collections at major trade centres were let on rent agreements or gutta from powerful state level magnates" (Stein).

According to Nuniz, the Portuguese chronicler, the annual collection of customs from one of the gateways of Vijayanagara was rented for twelve thousand gold coins. It has been observed by historians that customs or tribute paid by merchants in port towns in the time of Devaraya II could have provided the means for him to pay for horses imported from Ormuz and elsewhere as well as providing a surplus to pay for the skilled horsemen to use them. Nilakanta Sastri observes that the proportion of produce claimed as revenue varied from the traditional one sixth to as much as half the gross yield. In addition to the income from agriculture and trade, the Vijayanagar state collected taxes from professionals and houses. Fee for various kinds of licenses, transit and market dues and judicial fines were other sources of income of the state. Tax farming was very common, as we have seen in the case of income from one of the gateways of the capital city. A big share of this income was spent for the upkeep of the army. Another share went for the charitable endowments. Regarding the state expenditure, the ideal was that half of the income should be set apart for military.

From the remaining portion half could be spent for the palace maintenance. The rest was to be deposited in the reserve treasury. However, this ideal apart, the practice depended on current exigencies. The number and variety of tax-terms found in the epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara rulers clearly show that every possible source was tapped to enhance the income from revenue. There are instances of popular revolts against the high rate of taxation though they are rare. Such a resistance was staged in the year 1429 in the Vellar river valley in South

Arcot. The unrest was caused by the introduction of a land measure which was very inconvenient to the cultivators. The royal authorities must have made more demands because the artisans and petty merchants also joined hands with the cultivators in revolting against the authorities. Karashima informs us that the Vijayanagara rulers tried to adopt effective measures for better administration and that they were successful since we have epigraphical records of the sixteenth century which shed much light on the measures adopted by rulers that gave tax concessions to the common people.

9.6 THE STATE OF FLUX

Elements of continuity and change were an important feature of the administrative structure of this period. The scholarly debate over the elements of continuity and change in the Vijayanagara polity was actually started by Robert Sewell when he wrote that 'it is the epoch of transition from the old to the New'. Among the Indian scholars, those whose researches focused on Karnataka and Andhra (like Venkatramanayya and Saletore) have emphasised continuity and the preservation of ancient usage while those who worked on Tamil country like Nilakanta Sastri and Mahalingam have drawn attention to basic changes.

We have noted earlier the changes that were occurring in the land-use and agricultural production during the Vijayanagara rule. In the agrarian sector there was a general trend of expansion from the lower plains and river valleys to upland areas. This seems to indicate the pressure to bring more and more land under cultivation. The above mentioned movement from one geographical terrain to another terrain was followed by an increased emphasis on cash-crops and market – oriented agricultural production. The rough nature of the upland terrain necessitated the emergence of a group of cultivators with fighting spirit and therefore, the 'agrarian frontiers' of the Vijayanagara kingdom attracted the Reddis and Velamas of Andhra and the Vanniyar of Tamil country who were warlike peasantry. This process was started in the earlier epoch of history but it became widespread in this period.

Recent enquiries into the Tamil sources of the Vijayanagara rule have emphasised an increase in the number of *pettai* (markets) and *santais* (fairs) thereby pointing out the spread of 'urbanism' into newly developed areas. A crucial change in the exchange mechanism was the increased prevalence of monetisation. The sudden appearance of a new group of European traders is a development which was to have direct influence not only in trade but also in politics gradually.

The centralised character of the Vijayanagara when compared to previous states in south India has already been noted by historians. The power of authorities who were representatives of the Central government was increasing not only in the villages but in urban centres too. The urban affairs were controlled by local Governors appointed by the central administration instead of assemblies attended by members of various castes as had been the practice previously.

Martial character of the Vijayanagara state is attributed to the Islamic threat. *Nayankara* system has been shown by Burton Stein as a distinctive factor of the age 'not much in function or status but in the degree of power' enjoyed by the regional authorities or the *Nayakas* with regard to:

- 1) the magnitude of local resources commanded and redistributed.
- 2) the independence from local and social constraints,
- 3) their ability to intrude into the local society,
- 4) their persistent independence from and occasional opposition to super ordinate authorities,
- 5) superior military technique including fire arms, cavalry and fortification,
- 6) conflicts between Rajas and *Nayakas* stemming from the power of the *Nayakas*. Such conflicts were not unknown in the Chola period but they became more common in this period.
- 7) Brahmanas who had a major political role as nayaks.

Studies of the Tamil inscriptional sources have revealed that 'structural changes' which had been taking place during Vijayanagara rule in the middle part of Tamil Nadu seem to have led to a new social and political formation by the beginning of the sixteenth century as suggested by Noboru Karashima.

Social Life

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The social structure of the South Indian macro-region (Vijaynagar Empire) is a unique variant of the Indian society. The uniqueness of the social structure was three-fold. Secular functions of the South Indian Brahmins and division of lower social groups' territorial segmentation of the society.

The Brahmins live in localities where they controlled land, and their prestige and power was also derived from their control over those dependent on land. They also enjoyed prestige due to their sacral functions as a priestly class. The emergence of a large number of Vedic temples endowed with villages (devadanas) gave the Brahmins as temple functionaries the power to exercise ritual control over all other castes and religious institutions. As managers of these religious centres, the Brahmins enjoyed great secular authority.

Territorial segmentation of society implies that social groups in the Tamil country were divided on the basis of natural sub-region and occupational patterns associated with them. Social groups in South India had less interaction with groups at some distance from their locality. They gave preference to cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages.

Another characteristic of the social structure was the dual division of lower castes referred to by the right and left-hand designations (Vaishnavas corresponding to the right hand division and the Saivites corresponding to the left hand castes). In most cases, the right-hand castes were involved primarily in agricultural production and local trade in agricultural commodities whereas left-hand castes were engaged in immobile artisan production and extensive trade in non-agricultural products.

During the Vijaynagar period, the peasant was the basis of the social order, on whom all other sections of the society depended. The *satkams*, the Tamil poetic genre, regard the leading peasantry as pure *sat-sudras*. They claimed ritual purity and respectable secular rank for them. Temples played an important role in delineating or determining social space of groupings who were the participants in the worship of a particular deity. An important characteristic of lineage in the South Indian kingship is marked by the common devotion to the lineage tutelary. The non-

Brahman priests of the peasants' tutelary shrines (e.g. amman) also participated in the management of great shrines of Siva and Vishnu where the Brahman priests predominated. The matha, the seat of sectarian organisation located at great shrines consisted of persons of both the Brahman and non-Brahman orders. Thus, the social organisation of this period comprised of the Brahmans, the left and right-hand castes which included respectable agricultural castes, namely vellals and lower castes like the weavers.

9.7 AN OVERVIEW--BAHMANI KINGDOM

The basis of sovereignty was 'force'. The kingdom originated due to the revolt of the amirs of the Delhi Sultanate. The nobility played an important role in the political sphere, especially, in the process of assumption of power by the ruler and providing legitimacy to the ruler. The support of the nobility was important for the king to assume and maintain power. The Sufis and the ulema also played an important role in legitimising state power through religious and philosophical ideology. After the establishment and consolidation of Bahmani rule kingship was confined to the royal house of the Bahmanis. Sultan ascended the throne through either nomination by the entrenched king in which sometimes primogeniture was followed or through a process of selection by the ruling king, nobles and theologians. At times when a minor was declared as sultan the actual power was wielded by the nobility as regent of the king. Source material for reconstructing the history of the Bahmani Kingdom consists of contemporary writings in the forms of historical narratives, travellers' accounts and works written immediately after the period. *Futuh – us – Salatin* by Isami is the only extant contemporary work on the history of the Bahmani Kingdom. The author attached himself to the first sultan of the dynasty and started writing his work in 1349 and completed it the next year. After a description of the Delhi Sultanate upto the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq the author writes about the foundation of the Bahmani Kingdom and the political disturbances in the Deccan. He gives valuable information on various aspects of history of

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the Deccan and south India. There are some late compositions also on the Bahmani Kingdom, which were written after the decline of the dynasty. Among these *Burhan – I – Maasir* of Sayed Ali Tabatabade deserves mention. The author was a contemporary of Ferishta. He was a member of the court of Nizam Shahis of Ahamadnagar. While writing about the Nizam Shahisultans, Bahmani rule is prefixed as an introduction to it. Ferishta, whose name was Muhammad Kasim, was perhaps the best known historian of the period. He wrote *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi* in which he has discussed Bahmani rule. *Tazkirat – ul – muluk* is another work of the period written by a merchant from Shiraz and therefore he is better known as Shirazi.

Among the travellers, the most notable person is Athanasius Nikitin who visited the capital Bidar in the days of Mahmud Gawan, the famous Prime minister of the Sultan Muhammad Shah. Nikitin was in Bidar for four years from 1470-74. He has emphasised the great contrast between the huge wealth and luxury of the nobility and the miserable poverty of the common people in the countryside.

The realm of the Bahmani kingdom comprised roughly of the Deccan and part of south India upto the Krishna river which was the northern border of the strong Vijayanagara state. The region has low lying plains as well as a dry zone of uplands. The rivers of the western Deccan do not form fertile valleys (on account of rocky terrain) in the process of flowing from west to eastern coast where they form the delta. Alluvial soil is therefore not available on their banks for cultivation. At the same time the low lying plains are watered by river systems and many places in the Krishna Godavari doab regions, had a net work of canal system even in the period under discussion.

What we have noted in the case of the Vijayanagara Empire is equally applicable to the territory of the Bahmani sultans also. The general trend of an expansion of cultivation from the plains to the upland zones was also an important feature of Bahmani period. Special mention should be made about Golconda which later emerged as an important kingdom in the Deccan on the eastern Coast between the Krishna and the Godavari. Golconda was an agricultural zone where several food grains and cash

crops were cultivated due to a well developed network of canals. Weaving and craft industries flourished in the region due to the encouragement and patronage extended by rulers of the region. Golconda was famous for a particular variety of fabric and also for fine steel. Swords and arrowheads were exported from Golconda to distant places as a result of the superior steel technology of the area. Above all Golconda mines were famous for their diamonds.

Thus the realm of the sultans was to some extent rich in certain resources but it also comprised of arid zones with no yield of any kind. The economic resources of the region especially the agrarian produce were not plentiful and therefore for sustaining the kingdom wars had to be waged for resource mobilisation from rich tracts. The physiography and economy of the realm is a determinant factor in shaping the political history. The regions of Deccan and the semi arid uplands of south India were not favourable for cultivation. Therefore the dynasties were not blessed with abundant fertile arable land.

Almost all dynasties of the period under discussion suffered from acute shortage of resources due to several reasons including the luxury of the nobility and the need for maintaining an army for security and expansion of the territories of the kingdom. The incessant battles and massacres of the period should be understood against this background instead of explaining the conflicts among the states in terms of religious rivalries. The Bahmani Kingdom made its appearance on the political horizon of Deccan due to the revolts towards the end of the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The sultan became suspicious of amir-i-sada posted in the Deccan. The sultan had ordered that the 'amirs of the hundred' to be taken to Broach under the escort of the governor of Daulatabad. The amirs were aware of the fate which earlier befell the amirs in the neighbourhood of Malwa, who were butchered. So they decided to revolt against this 'prejudiced attitude' and imprisoned the weak governor of Daulatabad and assumed power, proclaiming one among themselves the king of the Deccan under the title Nasir-ud-din Shah. An imperial army led by Muhammad himself rushed to Daulatabad and defeated the rebels and shut them up in the fort.

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Somehow, a few of them including the brothers of the newly appointed king managed to escape to Gulbarga under the leadership of Hasan Gangu who was also known as Zafar Khan. After three months Zafar Khan gathered an army and reached Daulatabad. Zafar Khan could easily defeat the imperial army and the new king Nasir-ud-din readily abdicated the throne in favour of Zafar Khan who proclaimed himself sultan under the title Alauddin Bahman Shah. This was the beginning of the Bahmani line of Kings.

At the height of its power, the Bahmani sultans held sway over a vast territory from the river Tapti in the north and Krishna and Tungbhadra in the South from Arabian Sea in the west to Orissa in the east. The territory of the Bahmanis was encircled by hostile neighbours both in the north as well as in the south. In the south the Vijayanagara rulers were a constant threat to the Bahmanis who had an eye on the fertile Raichur Doab. The political history of the Bahmani Kingdom was actually marked by conflicts and rivalries with various powers of the region and within the Bahmani state system itself. An important rival was the Vijayanagara kingdom which was fast increasing its control over a vast territory to the south of Krishna river. The other problem was the internal fissiparous trend between two groups of Muslim nobility. These Muslim groups were the Deccanis who were the descendants of the Muslims who had been staying in India for a long time and the *Paradesis* who were foreigners who had recently arrived. The Deccanis were mainly the Sunnis whereas the *Paradesis* belonged to the Shia sect and this aggravated their rivalry.

According to some historians, Bahmani kingdom enjoyed its glory in the period from 1461 to 1481 when Mahmud Gawan was the prime minister. Mahmud Gawan belonged to the *Paradesi* group and was the follower of the Shia sect. Gawan conducted many successful military operations and extended the Bahmani territory. Gawan was an able administrator also and he introduced several administrative reforms including a proper survey and assessment of land. These reforms made him unpopular among the Deccani section of the nobility who held five out of eight governorships. The hostile group conspired against the prime minister.

There are stories about the connivance of the Deccani section against Gawan. Once they managed to get a blank sheet of paper with Gawan's seal affixed on it. The enemies wrote a letter, purporting to be from Mahmud Gawan, to the king of Orissa and told him that the people of the Deccan were weary of Muhammad's tyranny and urged him to invade the country. The sultan came to know about the letter and he immediately sent for Gawan. However, some friends advised Gawan to flee to Gujarat, but he presented himself before the Sultan who asked him about the punishment for treason against the Sovereign. Gawan replied that death was the punishment to be given for such treason. In spite of Gawan's explanations he was ordered to be beheaded and the order was executed immediately. The story continues that after realising his mistake the sultan drank himself to death before long. This was the beginning of the end of the Bahmani kingdom. It was during the lifetime of Mahmud Gawan that the Russian merchant Athanasius Nikitin visited Bidar. Nikitin records that the nobility in the kingdom enjoyed all sorts of luxury and led an extravagant life while the common people including cultivators, artisans and service groups lived in utter poverty.

9.8 A PRECURSOR

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

The Deccani states borrowed extensively from the system of their predecessor i.e. the Bahmanis. That is why Turko-Persian elements were dominant. This provided the crucial background for the newly established states. M.A. Nayeem characterises the Bijapur state as 'feudal'. For him, the system was based on 'contractual relations' i.e., in lieu of protection the nobles promised 'allegiance and service' to the ruler. But all the Deccani states were 'centralized' monarchies where Sultan's power was

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almost absolute. Besides, there also existed fiscal linkage between the periphery and the core. There was no notion of shared sovereignty in contrast to Vijaynagar. Whatever power the Velama, Reddi or Maratha chiefs might have enjoyed under the Deccan rulers, they were under direct central control. However, when the Deccan states started expanding towards further south they satisfied themselves with tributes only; as it was practically difficult for them to directly administer those distant regions.

J. F. Richards defines Golkonda as a 'conquest state'. No doubt, the 16th century Deccan polities as such, are marked by constant warfare. Nevertheless, we cannot describe them a 'conquest state' on the lines of Vijaynagar. The nature of expansion of Vijaynagar differs entirely from that of the Deccan kingdoms: in the former, the 'Telugu nayaks were instrumental in the expansion, whereas in the latter the monarchy or the centralised state was directly involved in the expansion process.

As for the nature of South Indian states, some historians have termed the Vijaynagar state as feudal, some call it a 'war state' others have highlighted its 'segmentary' character. In the 'feudal' model, the chiefs were required to render military service to their overlords, but they were free to administer their territories. In the 'segmentary' state, the peripheral chiefs recognized the ritual sovereignty of the Centre, but the agrarian surplus did not flow from the segment to the core. However, Sanjay Subrahmanyam does emphasize that (even as late as 17th century) revenue flow from Madurai, Senji and Tanjavur regions was substantial. In any case, during the 16th century, the 'segmentary' character gradually changed towards centralization.

For Burton Stein, who is the major propounder of the 'segmentary' state theory, the process began as early as Krishnadevaraya's reign. The change occurred mainly because of the widespread unrest among the Karnataka (Ummattur) and Tamil chiefs that led Krishnadevaraya to think of more comprehensive strategies. These included: monopoly of force under royal control; posting trusted Brahman commanders at the forts and recruitment of local force from the forest people (poligars), etc. We have also seen how Venkata I, especially after his shift of capital from Penukonda

to Chandragiri, attempted to gain firm control over the growing might of the nayaks. But that resulted in the nayak's revolts during the early 17th century. Yet we see that the process that began during the 16th century was completed during the 18th century in the formation of the strong centralized state of Mysore under Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan.

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

Similarly, the Lapakshi nayaks attempted to create 'patrimony' around Lapakshi. Virapannaya Nayaka controlled Penukonda rajyam, while his other two brothers held offices in fortress of Chitradurga (under Achyutadevaraya). These nayaks continued to follow the same rituals and practices that were due to the Vijaynagar kings. Madurai Nayaks followed same coronation rituals which were followed by Krishnadevaraya. Vishvanatha Nayaka of Madurai also initiated royal practice of communal dining with his kinsmen and close supporters. Madurai nayak even revived the old Kakatiya practice of associating chieftains with fortress and hence for the kingdom as a whole. Vishvanatha Nayaka started the system of 'military encampment' under palaiyakkaraar--each was the protector of a fort and, thus, they became

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

Check Your Progress

1) Write a note on Nayaka System under Vijaynagar Empire

2) Who are Ayagars?

3) Describe the views of Burton Stein on Vijaynagar Empire.

9.9 LET US SUM UP

The above narrative of four important kingdoms that ruled over a period of two centuries preceding the establishment of the Mughal state throws some light on the broad features of the polity of this period. It is characterised as a polity headed by a strong ruler, supported by hierarchically organised administrative machinery and legitimised by the authority of religion. The new territorial states for all practical purposes declared their independent authority but the relationship with the Sultanate was not necessarily completely cut off. Although one cannot

completely ignore the religious dimension particularly in the case of conflict between the Vijayanagara and the Bahmani kingdoms but it was mainly for considerations like control over the Tungbhadra doab for economic resources which had a major contribution in precipitating conflicts between these states. Despite constant wars and dissensions amongst the ruling elites the period in no way can be portrayed as a period of political decadence, rather this period showed the remarkable strength and stability of regional polity.

9.10 KEYWORDS

Amaram: villages assigned to the local military chiefs

Bhandaravada: crown village

Devadanas: villages assigned to the temples

Dasavanda and Kattu-Kodage: income from irrigational investments

Manya: ex-free land given to the village functionaries, Brahmans, temples and mathas. **Condominiums:** joint sovereignty

Deccani: the old Deccani nobility

Gutta: Rent Agreement

9.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEWS

- 1) Describe the major trends in Vijaynagar Historiography.
- 2) Write a note on nature of state under Vijaynagar
- 3) How Vijaynagar is a precursor for Deccani states?

9.12 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

R.P. Tripathi, Rise and fall of the Mughal Empire

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

Satish Chandra, Medieval India.

Radhey Shyam, The Kingdom of Ahmednagar

J.F. Richards, Mughal Administration in Golconda.

T.V. Mahalingam: Administration and Society under Vijaynagar.

Nilakanta Sastri :A History of South India.

9.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1) Vijayanagar rulers gave due importance to provincial administration. The administration which existed in the provinces was called as Nayankara system. Based on the system most of the lands were distributed among the Nayaks (land lords) See Section 10.6

2) The ayagars were village servants or functionaries and constituted of groups of families. These were headmen (reddi or gauda, maniyam), accountant (karnam senabhova) and watchmen (talaiyari). They were given a portion of or plot in a village. Sometimes they had to pay a fixed rent, but generally these plots were manya or tax-free as no regular customary tax was imposed on their agricultural income.

3) Go through Section 10.4, 10.5 & 10.6.

UNIT 10 MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY: TRANSITIONS, GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXTS, CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES

STRUCTURE

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 State of Flux

10.3 Sultanate Historiography

10.3.1 Important Historiographical Writers

10.3.2 Fourteenth Century Historiography

10.3.3 Fourteenth Century Historiography—Second Half

10.3.4 Fifteenth Century Historiography

10.4 Mughal Historiography

10.4.1 Initial Writings

10.4.2 Official Historiography--Akbar

10.4.3 Non Official Historiography--Akbar

10.4.4 Historiography --Jahangir

10.4.5 Historiography--Shahjahan

10.4.6 Historiography—Aurangzeb

10.5 Let Us Sum Up

10.6 Keywords

10.7 Questions for Review

10.8 Suggested Readings and Reference

10.9 Answer To Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit an explanation is given on why the transitions, continuities and changes are relevant to understand a historical process which appears to be in a state of flux. Further, the historiography of Delhi Sultanat and Mughal period is discussed in detail.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ghurian conquest of north India towards the close of the twelfth century A.D. is an important event in Indian history. This is because an independent sultanate, founded in its wake, opened India to foreign influences on the one hand and led to the unification of the country under a strong centre on the other. It also attracted emigrants from the neighbouring countries who represented different cultural traditions. One of the traditions introduced by them was that of history writing. The historical literature produced by them in Persian language is of vast magnitude. As a matter of fact, the study of history was considered by the Muslim elite as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and the jurisprudence. With the coming of the Mughals in the 16th century the tradition of history writing achieved new heights. During the Mughal period, the state patronised writing of history and we have a large body of historical literature in Persian spread over two centuries. In this Unit, we will analyse the tradition of history writing during the Sultanate and Mughal periods.

10.2 STATE OF FLUX

Central to the different historiographical debates on the nature of state, economy and society had been discussions on historical dynamism, change and the causality of change. While discussing the concepts of evolution, development, consolidation and decline, these debates have significantly provided the theoretical constructs for periodization of Indian history into ‘ancient’, ‘early historical’, ‘early medieval’, ‘medieval’, ‘late medieval’, ‘early modern’, ‘modern’, ‘post-colonial’ and so on.

Moving beyond the mere chronological labels and seamless narratives of events over a period of time, the historical researches and the historiographical trends that inform these researches have focused on various historical processes and the notion of transition intrinsic to them. The notion of transition in history is freighted with specialist meaning. It is not to be confused with the general notion of historical change. Not all

historical change can be defined or understood as transition. Transition connotes transformative, systemic change, a move from one state of historical being to another. The discussions on transition and historical change probably date to the nineteenth and twentieth century in the works of Karl Marx and Max Weber on the social and economic organization. There were differences between their views as reflected in Marx's modes of production and the base-superstructure relationship and in Weber's ideas of economic rationality or the spirit of capitalism. These ideas influenced the course of historical scholarship in the West. Transitions and causation in history have been usually associated with far-reaching and epoch-making changes in social formations and cultural patterns. It is in this sense that historians use the term to signify changes from slave societies to feudal ones; and then from feudalism to capitalism.

Historians like R.S Sharma, B.D Chattopadhyaya, and H.Kulke outlined the transition from ancient to early medieval society on the basis of historical processes and not on the basis of events. Some historians have argued that the concept of transition implying a change in a particular direction, for example, the succession of modes of production implies an evolutionary process in which there is a predictable direction towards which events move and hence is teleological. Post-colonial historians like Dipesh Chakravorty and Partha Chatterjee, among many others, have contested the inevitability of a transition to a modernity defined by Marxist templates. They argue for understanding the transition on the basis of indigenous categories as represented in the primary sources.

Similar ideas are echoed in the recent revisionist writings on the Mughal period and the early colonial rule have focused on the transition of the Indian society from Medieval to 'Early Modern' in the sixteenth century and on the colonial transition in the late eighteenth century. For instance, Medieval Indian History has been seen by historians as consisting of three broad chronological stages: the early medieval period up to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the Delhi Sultanate and Vijayanagar and the Mughal-Maratha periods up to the eighteenth century. However, the concept of 'transition' has been rarely used by any

medievalists to highlight the changes from one stage to another, within the medieval period. Continuity and change from one stage to another is stressed but no major transition is seen in social formation before the imposition of the British Colonial rule in the second half of the 18th century.

10.3 SULTANATE HISTORIOGRAPHY

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events. It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the style is also generally eulogising or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written.

In most cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works. Apart from historical texts a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdur Razzaq's *Matla'us Sa'dain* (travelogue), Tutsi's *Siyasatnama* (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Adabu'l-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at* (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (*Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar*) have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will study the historiography for the whole Sultanate period in separate subsections.

10.3.1 Important Historiographical Writers

The pioneer in history-writing was Muhammad bin Mansur, also known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. He migrated from Ghazna to Lahore during the later Ghaznavid period. In Lahore he compiled *Shajra-i-Ansab*, the book

of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam, his companions and the Muslim rulers, including the ancestors of Sultan Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam (commonly known as Sultan Shihabuddin Muhammad Ghuri). The compiler wanted to present it to the sultan but the latter's assassination on his way from the Punjab to Ghazna in 1206, led him to append a separate portion as *Muqidimma* (Introduction) to it. This introduction narrates the life and military exploits of Qutbuddin Aibak since his appointment in India as *Sipahsalar* of Kuhram and Sunam in 1192 upto his accession to the throne in Lahore in 1206. This is the first history of the Ghurian conquest and the foundation of an independent Sultanate in India. It opens with the description of the noble qualities of Sultan Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam. But the credit of the conquest made in India is given to Qutbuddin Aibak. The Sultan is not mentioned as victor even in the details of the expeditions led by him. However, the details furnished by Fakhr-i Mudabbir about the conciliatory policy followed by Qutbuddin Aibak towards the Hindu chiefs even before his accession to the throne are interesting. Aibak set an example that inspired his successors. All the chiefs who submitted to Aibak's authority were treated as friends.

No doubt, Fakhr-i Mudabbir composed the work in the hope of getting reward by eulogising the reigning Sultan, nonetheless, the selection of historical material by him demonstrates the historical sense he possessed. Along with administrative reforms introduced by Aibak after his accession to the throne in Lahore, he also provides details of rituals that had symbolic significance. For instance, he is the first historian who informs us about the ceremony of public allegiance paid to the new Sultan on his accession to the throne in Lahore. He states that on Qutbuddin Aibak's arrival from Delhi to Lahore in 1206, the entire population of Lahore came out to pay allegiance to him as their new Sultan. This ceremony, indeed, implied operational legitimacy for Sultan's claim to authority.

Equally important is the evidence about the administrative reforms introduced by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak. He renewed land-grants made to the deserving persons and fixed maintenance-allowance to others. The

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collection by the officers of illegal wealth accrued through peasants or forced labour were abolished. The compiler also informs us that the state extracted one-fifth of the agricultural produce as land revenue. In short, it is the first history of the Ghurian Conquest and Qutbuddin Aibak's reign compiled in India. It was in view of its importance that in 1927, the English scholar, E. Denison Ross separated it from the manuscript of *Shajra-i Ansab* and published its critically edited text with his introduction (in English) under the title *Tarikh-i Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah*.

Another important work compiled by Mudbbir is the *Adabul-Harb wa'as-Shuja'at*, dedicated to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish. It is written in the episodic form of historiography. It contains chapters on the duties of king, the functioning of state departments, war tactics, mode of warfare, war-horses, their treatment, etc. The compiler, in order to illustrate his point, has incorporated important events that occurred during the period. Most of them are related to historical events of the Ghaznavid period.

The second important history of the Ghurian conquest and the Sultanate is *Tajul Ma'asir*. Its author, Hasan Nizami migrated from Nishapur to India in search of fortune. He took abode in Delhi, sometime before Aibak's accession to the throne. In Delhi, he set to compile the history of Qutbuddin Aibak's achievements after his accession to the throne in 1206. The motive behind writing was to gain royal patronage. Being a literary genius and a master of the conceits of Arabic and Persian poetry, Hasan Nizami makes abundant use of metaphors, similes and rhetoric for the sake of literary ornamentation. The work abounds in unnecessary verbiage. Sans verbiage and unnecessary details, the historical material could be reduced to almost half of the book's size without any loss of the content. As for his approach, he begins his narrative describing the vicissitude of time he went through in his hometown of Nishapur, his journey to Ghazna where he fell ill and then his migration to India. The preface is followed by the description of the second battle of Tarain (1192). No mention has been made of the first battle of Tarain in which Prithvi Raj Chauhan had defeated Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad bin

Sam. However, from the year 1192 upto 1196 all the historical events are described in detail. Thereafter Hasan Nizami takes a long jump leaving off all the battles fought and conquests made by Qutbuddin Aibak till 1202 A.D. Probably the disturbances that broke out as a result of Aibak's accidental death in 1210 disappointed the author who seems to have stopped writing. Later on, when Iltutmish succeeded in consolidating his rule, he again decided to resume his work. This time he commenced his narrative from the year 1203 because Iltutmish, whom the work was to be presented, had become an important general and was taking part in all the campaigns led by Qutbuddin Aibak. No mentions have been made by the compiler of Aibak's conquest of Badaun in 1197 and the occupation of Kanauj and Chandwar in 1198. It is, however, to be admitted that, in spite of all hyperbolic used in praise of Iltutmish, it is to the credit of the compiler that he was able to collect authentic information about every event that he describes in his work. Besides the gap, Hasan Nizami also fails to describe the friendly treatment meted out by Aibak to the local chiefs who submitted to his authority. His description is often very brief and at times merely symbolic. For example, when he refers to the Hindu Chiefs attending the Sultan's court, he simply states, "the carpet of the auspicious court became the Kissing place of *Rais* of India". It contains no biographical details of the nobles, though many of them were the architects of the Sultanate. All the manuscript copies of *Tajul Ma'asir* available in India and abroad come to a close with the capture to Lahore by Iltutmish in 1217.

The compilation by Minhaj Siraj Juzjani of his *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* was epoch making in the history of history-writing. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani (hereafter mentioned as Minhaj) was also an emigrant scholar from Khorasan. His approach to the history of Islam and Muslim rulers from the early Islamic period upto his own time, the year 1259 A.D., seems to have been influenced by his professional training as a jurist and association with the rulers of central Asia and India. He belonged to a family of scholars who were associated with the courts of the Ghurid Sultans of Firozkuh and Ghazna. He himself served under different Ghurid Princes and nobles before his migration to India. In 1227, he

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came to India and joined the court of Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was appointed the head of the *Firuzi Madrassa* (government college) in Uch, the Capital of Sultan Nasiruddin Qubacha. In 1228, he joined the service of Sultan Iltutmish after Qubacha's power had been destroyed and his territories of Sind and Multan were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. He served as *Qazi* (Judicial officer) of Gwalior under Iltutmish. Sultan Razia (1236-40) summoned him to Delhi and appointed him the head of *Madrassa-i Nasiri* in Delhi. Later on, he rose to the position of the Chief *Qazi* of the Sultanate during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud.

It was during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud that he decided to write the history of Islam upto his own time. In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history. In these we find valuable information about the rise and fall of the ruling dynasties of central Asia, Persia, India and the Mongol irruption under Chingis Khan. Undoubtedly, Minhaj is our earliest and best authority on the ruling house of Ghur. His account of the rulers of Ghur is characterised by objectivity in approach. Likewise, the section devoted to the history of the Khwarizm shahi dynasty and rise of Mongol power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors supply information, not available in the works of Ata Malik Juvaini and Rahiduddin Fazlullah who wrote under the patronage of the Mongol princes. Minhaj's purpose was to supply the curious readers of the Delhi Sultanate with authentic information about the victory of the Mongols over the Muslim rulers and the destruction of Muslim cities and towns. He drew on a number of sources, including the immigrants and merchants who had trade relations with the Mongol rulers. Moreover, before his migration to India, he had first hand experience of fighting against the Mongols in Khurasan. Therefore, the last *tabaqa* of the work is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise

of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Qaan.

The sections (*tabaqat*) twentieth and twenty-first devoted to India, describe the history of the Sultans from Aibak to Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and careers of the leading nobles of Iltutmish respectively. In both the sections he displays his ability to convey critical information on issues. Conscious of his duty as a historian, he invented the method of ‘conveying intimation’ on camouflaging the critics of the reigning Sultan or his father either by giving hints in a subtle way or writing between the lines. As Sultan Iltutmish could not be criticised directly because his son, Nasiruddin Mahmud happened to be the reigning Sultan, Minhaj builds Iltutmish’s criticism through highlighting the noble qualities of Iltutmish’s rivals Sultan Ghayasuddin Iwaz Khalji of Bihar and Bengal or Sultan Nasirudin Qubacha of Sind and Multan. Likewise, he also hints at policy of getting rid of certain nobles. Praising Malik Saifuddin Aibak, he says that being a God-fearing Musalman, the noble detested the work of seizing the assets from the children of the nobles killed or assassinated by the order of the Sultan. It is really Minhaj’s sense of history that led Ziauddin Barani to pay him homage. Barani thought it presumptions to writing on the period covered in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*. He rather preferred to begin his account from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban.

10.3.2 Fourteenth Century Historiography

Many scholars seem to have written the 14th century histories of the Khalji and the Tughlaq Sultans. Ziauddin Barani mentions the official history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji’s reign by Kabiruddin, son of Tajuddin Iraqi but it is now extant. Amir Khusrau also compiled the *Khazainul Futuh*, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji. Khusrau also composed five historical *masnavis* (poems) in each of which historical events are described (in verse). It may, however, be recalled that neither Ziauddin Barani nor modern scholar, Peter Hardy regards Khusrau as a historian. They consider Khusrau’s works as literary pieces rather than a historical work. Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami’s *Futuhus Salatin*(1350), Ziauddin Barani’s *Tarikh-*

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i Firuzshahi(1357), anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi* (1370-71) and Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (c.1400) are important historical works. A few of these 14th century historical works need to be analysed separately.

Isami's Narrative

The *Futuh-us Salatin* of Isami is a versified history of the Muslim rulers of India. It begins with the account of Sultan Mahmud of Ghaznavi's reign (999-1030 A.D.) and comes to a close with that of the foundation of the Bahmani Sultanate in the Deccan by Alauddin Bahaman Shah, a rebel against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, in 1350. Though much is not known about the author, yet it may be added that his ancestors served the Delhi court since the time of Sultan Iltutmish. Ziauddin Barani includes one of the Isami family in the list of the leading nobles of Sultan Balban. Isami, himself was brought up by his grandfather, Izuddin Isami, a retired noble. he was still in his teens when his family was forcibly shifted to Daulatabad in 1327. His grandfather died on the way and the young Isami was filled with hatred against Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The hostility towards Sultan Mohammad Tughluq is quite evident in his account and needs to be treated with caution.

The early part of Isami's narrative is based on popular legends and oral traditions which had reached to him through the time. His account of the early Sultans of India is also based on popular tales with historical facts available to him through earlier works. But the details of historical events from the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji are much more authentic and can be of corroborative and supplementary importance. In this part Isami supplements the information contained in Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* about the siege operations conducted by the military commanders of the Delhi Sultanate in different regions during the Khalji and the Tughluq period. Isami's description of the foundation of Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughluq as the second most important city and his account of socio-economic growth of Delhi under Alauddin Khalji and other cities is graphic and insightful. Barani has precedence on Isami only in his analysis of cause and effect, connected with historical events.

Barani is, no doubt, the doyen of the Indo-Persian historians of medieval India. Born in an aristocratic family and associated with the royal court of Delhi for generations, he was obviously concerned with the fate of the Delhi Sultanate. He seems to have believed that it was his duty to present through his *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* an intellectual composition for the enlightenment of the ruling elite of his times.

Barani's *Tarikh* begins with the accession of Sultan Balban to the throne of Delhi in 1266 and comes to a close with the account of first six years of Sultan Firuzshah Tughluq's reign, i.e. the year 1356. Barani's *Tarikh* is unique to the Persian history writing tradition prevalent till his times. It is for the first time that he tries to analyse the cause and effect of the events and developments taking place in polity and economy. In his account of the economic policies and measures of Alauddin Khalji he provides an analysis with causes and formulation of the policies and their impacts. Barani also declares that the job of the historian is not only to eulogise the deeds and good works of the rulers but also to present to readers a critical account of the shortcomings and drawbacks of policies. Moreover, the scope of history is considerably widened by Barani with the inclusion of details about the cultural role performed by intellectuals, scholars, poets, and saints. Barani's style of history writing inspired the historians of the subsequent period, many of whom tried to follow his ideas.

10.3.3 Fourteenth Century Historiography— Second Half

Other major works of history from the second half of the 14th century are the anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, *Futuh-i Firuzshahi*, composed by the Sultan Firuz Tughluq himself and Shams Siraf Aifif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*. The rare manuscript copy of the *Sirat-i Firuzshahi*, available in the Khuda Bakhsh library, Patna, does not contain the name of its author. It reads as an official history of Firuz Shah's reign up to the years 1370-71. It contains, besides the details of military and hunting expeditions led by Sultan Firuzshah, interesting information about religious sects, sufis, ulema, socio-ethical matters, science and

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technology such as astronomy, medicines, pharmacology, etc. It is really a compendium of many-sided activities, accomplishments and contribution made by the Sultan to the works of public utility. The construction of canals and water reservoirs, the foundation of the new cities with forts and repair of old monuments are described in detail. The *Futuhāt-i Firuzshahi* was originally an inscription fixed on the wall of the Jama Mosque of Firuzshah's capital. Later on, it was copied and preserved in the form of a book. Through this, the Sultan wanted to disseminate to general public about reforms and projects he undertook for public welfare. Shams Siraj Afif, another historian of the period seems to have served the Sultan during the last years of Firuzshah's reign. He tells us that his great grand father, Malik Shihab Afif worked as revenue officer in the province of Dipalpur under Ghazi Malik during the reign of Ala-Uddin Khalji. His father and uncle supervised the management of Firuzshah's *karkhanas*. As Chaos and anarchy began to prevail after the death of Firuzshah (1388), he seems to have retired and devoted himself to writing the history of the Sultanate from the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq Shah (1320-1324). He refers to many volumes of his works, each devoted to the reigns of the individual Sultans. Of these only one, devoted to the reign of Firuzshah has survived the ravages of time. It seems to have been completed after the sack of Delhi by Timur in 1398. This work of his is full of nostalgia and portrays Firuzshah as a saintly ruler whose presence on the throne saved Delhi from every calamity. Because of this reason, he has written this volume in the form of *manaqib* (collection of virtues) like that of the spiritual biography of a saint. The name *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* has been given to it by the editors of the Text. The book is divided into five *qism* (parts) each containing eighteen *muqaddimas* (chapters) of unequal length. The last (fifth) *qism* of the printed text comes to an end with the fifteenth chapter. The last three chapters seem to have been destroyed by the Mughal Emperors probably because they contained vivid details of the sack of Delhi by Timur, the ancestor of Babur. This volume of Afif is important for the information about socioeconomic life and prosperity that resulted from the state-policies followed by Firuzshah. The details

about the foundation of new urban centres, construction of canals, water reservoirs and the administrative reforms are invaluable. Similarly, mention made by him of the agrarian reforms introduced by Firuzshah casts light on his interest in revenue matters. It may also be pointed out that Afif does not fail to mention the abuses and corruption that had crept in the administration; and says that officials in every ministry became corrupt. In the *diwan-i arz* (military department) the officials took one *tanka* per horse as bribe from the horseman at the time of annual muster. He also provides us with hints about the degeneration of the central army that was considered the best fighting force which could successfully defend the frontier against the Mongol invaders. On the whole it is an important source of information about the life and culture in the Sultanate of Delhi during the later half of the fourteenth century.

After the dissolution of the Delhi Sultanate, a number of regional Sultanates and principalities arose. The capitals of these regional Sultanates replaced Delhi as the main centre of learning and culture. Delhi, which was reduced to the size of a town, was seized by Khizr Khan (Saiyid) the founder of a new dynasty. Khizr Khan (ruled from 1414 to 1421) and his son and successor, Sultan Mubarkshah (1421-1434) tried to rebuild the power of the Delhi Sultan but could not succeed. The latter was assassinated by his own nobles in the prime of his life. One of his officials Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, composed the history of the Sultanate and named it after the Sultan as *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi* in 1434. It begins with an account of Sultan Muizuddin Mohammed bin Sam, who led the Ghurian conquest of India and the account closes with the accession of Mohammad Shah in 1434. The compiler seems to have drawn information from a number of histories written in India at different times. Some of the sources utilised by Yahya are now extant but bits of information on them survived through information collected and incorporated in the *Tarikh-i Mubarakshahi*. It enhances its importance. The historian of Akbar's reign utilised the *Tarikh* in the preparation of their volumes devoted to the history of the Delhi Sultanate.

10.3.4 Fifteenth Century Historiography

In the fifteenth century a number of historical accounts were compiled about individual kingdoms and were dedicated to the regional rulers. Shihab Hakim compiled the history of Malwa and named it after Sultan Mohammed Khalji as *Maasir-i Mahmudshah*. Abdul Husain Tuni, emigrant scholar from Iran who had settled in Ahmadabad (Gujarat) wrote *Maasir-i Mahmudshahi* during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Shah Begara. Both the works are extant. Another worth-mentioning history is the *Tarikh-i Muhammadi*, compiled by Muhammad Bihamad Khani, resident of Kalpi. It is written in the *Tabaqat* form beginning with the rise of Islam in Arabia. It is a summary of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* and similar other works to cover history of Firuzshah and his successors. But his account of the rise of Kalpi as a centre of culture and learning under the fostering care of its Sultans is original. He narrates the circumstances in which Mahmud Khan Turk founded the principality of Kalpi and assumed the title of Sultan after the return of Timur in 1398. The information about the nature of relationship between the Sultans of Kalpi, Jaunpur and Malwa is also of historical interest.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Give a brief account of Minhaj's style of history-writing.

2) Discuss the important works of history written during the 14th century.

3) Why is Ziauddin Barani considered as the most important historian of the Sultanate period?

10.4 MUGHAL HISTORIOGRAPY

The most dominant feature of the historiography of the Mughal period is the tradition of history writing by official chroniclers appointed by almost all Mughal emperors till the reign of Aurangzeb. These chroniclers were appointed by the emperors and all official records were provided to them for the purpose. Another salient feature of the period is the autobiographical accounts written by emperors themselves. *Tuzuk-i Baburi* (in Turkish and not Persian) by Babur and *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (in Persian) by Jahangir are important works in this genre. Apart from the official works, which had obvious constraints, a number of independent works were written by independent scholars who provide a critical appraisal of the policies and events of the period. In this section we have discussed the historiography of the period during the reigns of individual emperors.

10.4.1 Initial Writings

Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur who invaded India and supplanted the Lodi rule by his own in 1526, was a prolific writer. He wrote both in his mother tongue Turkish and in Persian. His autobiography *Tuzuk-i Baburi*, written in Turkish is a literary masterpiece, containing the history of the decline and fall of the Timurid power in central Asia, his own biography, the description of life and culture in India and the diary of events that took place in the course of campaigns he led against his rivals in eastern India. Babur's account of central Asia and Khurasan is marked by objectivity. However, his account on his dealings with the ruling elite in India lacks objectivity. This is obvious because of the hostility towards those against whom he was waging war. Babur wrote in

anger against the Indian ruling elite. He calls the Indian nobles untrustworthy, although he himself had deceived them. The Afghans had invited him to help them in their struggle against their own Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi thinking that he would go back after taking treasure. Babur is full of praise of India's resources and the availability of skilled craftsmen and artisans in the towns and cities. 'For any work or any employment', says he, 'there is always a set ready, to whom the same employment and trade have descended from father to son for ages'.

Babur also mentions the list of *sarkars* (territorial units) with the annual revenue yields. Further, the description of towns and cities with their respective topography is interesting. The geographical details in his biography further enrich its importance. Moreover, the *Tuzuk-i Baburi* is not merely a political narration but is also considered as a naturalist's journal. His description of fauna and flora of the region he visited is graphic and insightful. Babur's son and successor, Humayun (1530-1555) was also interested in history. He commissioned a renowned scholar, Khawandmir, to compose the history of his reign. In compliance with the royal order, Khwandmir prepared a brief account of Humayun's reign from his accession upto the year 1535 and named it *Qanun-i Humayuni*. It sheds interesting light on Humayun's state policy, particularly towards the Indian nobles and landed aristocracy. He refers to Humayun's efforts to win over Indian chiefs to his side.

10.4.2 Official Historiography--Akbar

With the accession of Akbar (1556-1605) to the throne, important change took place in the concept of history writing and the class of history writers. Since the history of a dynasty served as a memorial to the dynasty, Akbar proposed to have a written history of the Muslim rulers from the death of the prophet upto his own time on the completion of the first millennium of Islam, i.e., a history of one thousand years, called *Tarikh-i Alfi*. For providing information about the lives and times of Babar and Humayun, all the officials, the nobles and relatives were asked to write their reminiscences in book form. At Akbar's instance, Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of Babur, Bayazid Biyat (an official of Humayun)

and Jauhar Aftabchi (a personal attendant of Humayun) put down their reminiscences in book form. Gulbadan Begum's memoirs entitled *Humayunnama* is an important source as it sheds light on the lives and culture of the royal *harem*. It is considered unique as it reflects a woman's perception of the events of the period. After Humayun's death, Bayazid Biyat served under Munim Khan Khani Khanan in Jaunpur and Bengal and was asked by Emperor Akbar to keep a watch on the governor and secretly inform the king about all developments. He has narrated the event of Humayun's life in Iran, Kabul and Later in India. Most of these he himself had witnessed. His work is entitled *Tazkirat-i Humayun wa Akbar*. Jauhar Aftabchi who had served Humayun also furnishes useful information about Humayun's life and times in his *Tazkirat-ul Waqiat*. Like collections of reminiscences of Gulbadan Begum and Bayazid Biyat, his work also does not distinguish between trivia and the historical facts. Nevertheless, all these works served as sources of information for the compilers of *Tarikh-i Alfi* and other histories of Akbar's reign including Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. Akbar constituted a board of seven scholars to compile *Taikh-i Alfi*. Each member of the board was assigned a period to write its history in chronological order. As per this scheme the events are described year by year. However, the accounts of certain Indian rulers have been compiled separately in different sections. This pattern has been followed in providing the history of Muhammad Tughluq, the Lodis, and fifteenth century regional kingdoms emerging after the decline of Sultanate, Sher Shah Sur, Islam Shah and Adil Shah Sur. Its concluding part is devoted to the reign of Akbar upto 1585. Not satisfied with the account of his reign in the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, in 1589-1590, Akbar ordered Abul Fazl to compile the history of his reign, beginning with an account of Babur and Humayun. A bureau was established in which competent people were employed to assist Abul Fazl.

The entire archival material was placed at the compiler's disposal. It may be stressed that Abul Fazl was selected for this task because he had identified himself with Akbar's views and religious inclination. He portrays Akbar's own view about his status and role in history as

Notes

conceived by emperor himself. Akbar was led by his courtiers to think of himself as the perfect representation of the spiritual profile of his age. He wanted to be remembered in history as the *Insan-i Kamil* (perfect man), gifted by God with full knowledge of Divine Unity. Therefore, in compiling the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl was able to come up to his royal patron's expectations. He presents Akbar as cosmic man, entrusted by God with sway over outward form and inner meaning, the exoteric and esoteric. His mission is said to liberate people from *taqlid* (tradition), lead them to truth and create an atmosphere of concord, so that people following different sects could live in peace and harmony. He was shown as "a light emanating from God." Despite flattery, Abul Fazl was able to produce a history of Akbar's reign that is considered an important contribution to Indo-Persian historiography. It was brought to completion after five revisions that involved strenuous labour of seven years, the completion of the work was indeed epoch making. Abul Fazl did not believe that Indian history should concern itself only with the achievements of the Muslim rulers in India, nor did he try to establish any relation with the past of Islam. In his treatment of Akbar's military expeditions against the Rajputs, he emphasises on the point that there was no justification for any chief, Hindu or Muslim not to join the imperial confederation in view of the reconciliatory policy of Akbar. He feels that Akbar's state policy was calculated to bring unity, stability and economic prosperity to the country. In fact, Abul Fazl's secular interpretation of history gained ground during the subsequent century.

The *Akbarnama* and the *Ain-i Akbari* provide exhaustive details of the events and policies introduced by Akbar till the year 1602. However, Abul Fazl fails to mention or raise any issue which cast any aspersion on Akbar. It is true that the *Ain-i Akbari* abounds in economic details, but these details do not tell us anything about the life and conditions of the mass of peasantry or working class. The *Ain-i Akbari* contains statistical details which are valuable source for the study of economic history with no parallel with any historical accounts prior to it or till the 18th century. But artisans or peasants are completely absent. The *Ain-i Akbari*, the third part of the *Akbarnama* is a unique compilation of the system of

administration and control through the departments of government. It also contains an account of the religious and philosophical systems of the Hindus. However, Abul Fazal's identification with Akbar's views and religious beliefs prevented him from presenting a picture in different hues, reflecting the currents and cross currents in society. Abul Fazl does not mention Shah Mansur or his successor Todarmal's contribution while dealing with revenue reforms and portrays Akbar as the genius who evolved key reforms including Ain-i Dahsala (ten years settlement) and revenue *dasturs*. The reader does not find the spirit of Akbar's age in *Akbarnama* that was successfully depicted by Abdul Qadir Badauni or even Nizamuddin Ahmad.

10.4.3 Non-Official Historiography--Akbar

Nizamuddin Ahmad and Abdul Qadir Badauni are two important historians of the period. Motivated by the popularity of the discipline of history, both the scholars have written history of the Muslim rule in India and have also recorded achievements of men of learning in different fields. Their works run into several volumes. Let us deal with each one separately. Nizamuddin was the son of Khwaja Muqim Harawi, a noble of Babur and Humayun. A well-educated man, he was interested in the study of history and literature. When he took up the project of writing history of India in three volumes, he employed men like Masum Bhakkari to assist him and provide information about different regions of the empire. A man who had gained experience in the government after having served on important positions in the provinces and at court as well, he was able to make substantial contribution through his scholarly work. His first-volume deals with the history of the Muslim rulers of India upto the fall of the Lodi dynasty in 1526. The second volume contains the account of the Mughal rulers of India upto 1593. The third volume deals with the rise and fall of the regional kingdoms in India. It is to the credit of Nizamuddin Ahmad that he mentions all the important events that took place during Akbar's reign including the controversial *Mahzar* which is omitted by Abul Fazl. However, being the *mirbakshi* (the incharge of the department of army) of the empire, he does not

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provide any critical evaluation. Still, it helps us in filling the gap left by Abul Fazl not only on this issue but in several other areas. His work *Tabaqat-i Akbari* was regarded by all the later writers as an authentic work and they borrowed from it.

Abdul Qadir Badauni was also a keen student of history and literature. He tells us that from his student life, he spent hours in reading or writing history. He also learnt Sanskrit and classical Indian music along with Islamic theology. Akbar employed him to translate *Muhabharat* from *Sanskrit* into Persian. The first volume of his history entitled *Muntakhabut Tawarikh* is related to the history of the Sultanate of Delhi. The second covers Akbar's reign while in the third volume we find the biographical notes on the scholars, poets and Sufi saints of Akbar's reign. His account is very readable bringing out the important facts of the period. Brevity is the beauty of Badauni's style. The first volume contains information culled from miscellaneous sources, many of which are not extant today. Moreover, Badauni possessed an analytical independent mind with different views than the official line. In fact Badauni's objective was to present a frank account of his times. It is Badauni's second volume that needs to be studied along with Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* to have a proper understanding of Akbar's reign. Badauni does not gloss over any uncomfortable question on Akbar's ability as an administrator. For example, Badauni records the failure of the *karori* experience and the disaster it caused. Badauni is corroborated in essentials by Nizamuddin Ahmad also. Unlike Abul Fazl and even Nizamuddin Ahmad, Badauni's account of the religious discussions held in Akbar's *IbadatKhana*, the origin of Akbar's differences with the Muslim orthodoxy that led to religious controversies is vivid depicting the currents and cross currents of thought. It certainly has precedence on *Akbarnama*, in a number of areas especially the controversial issues. It gives an impression to the readers that it is free from the official constraints, catches the realities of the time and reflect the magnitude and intensity of conflicts of the period.

10.4.4 Historiography--Jahangir

Akbar's son and successor Jahangir decided to write autobiographical history of his own reign in the traditions set by Babur. Besides, he persuaded other scholars also to write the history of his reign. He requested Shaikh Abdul Haque to add in his *Tarikh* the account of his reign also. But the Shaikh was too old to take up the work, yet his son Qazi Nurul Haque compiled the history, *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* and closed it with the account of Jahangir's reign. Like the *Tarikh* compiled by his father, Shaikh Abdul Haque, the *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* also narrates the history of the Muslim rulers of India. Another writer, who compiled the voluminous History of the Afghan tribes and the Afghan rulers, the Lodis and the Surs also incorporated a chapter on early ten years of Jahangir's reign.

This *Tarikh-i Khan-i Jahani* was compiled by Nemat Allah Harawi under the patronage of Khan-i Jahan Lodi, the noble of Jahangir. As regards Jahangir's own memoirs *Tuzuki Jahangiri*, it is a major source for his reign. The emperor wrote the Tuzuk himself upto the 17th regnal year till his health permitted him. Later, he dictated it to his trusted officer, Mutamad Khan. It presents to a great extent the picture of Jahangir's reign. The principal events connected with rebellions, the role of the imperial officers, their promotions and punishments as well as diplomatic relations between India and the foreign powers are described in a lucid style. It contains a year-by-year narrative. Further, we find insights into the culture of the Mughal Empire as well as Jahangir's aesthetic taste, learning and his interest in nature.

10.4.5 Historiography—Shahjahan

Mutamad Khan set to write the history *Iqbalnama-i Jahangiri* after Shahjahan's accession to the throne. His aim was to justify Shahjahan's rebellion against his father because Nur Jahan Begum wanted to harm him and clear the way for Shaharyar's accession to the throne. It is divided into three parts: the first part covers the history of Babur and Humayun, the second part contains the account of Akbar's reign while the third is devoted to Jahangir's reign. In the last part the first nineteen

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years are merely an abridgement of the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. The account of the last years of Jahangir's reign is almost an eye witness account. Like Mutamad Khan, Khwaja Kamgar Husaini also came from a family associated with the Mughal court. He served under Jahangir and Shahjahan both. In the preparation of his *Maasir-i Jahangiri*, he also drew on *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*. His account from the 19th year of Jahangir's reign is his original work and is an important source for the events that took place during the last years of the reign. He started compiling his work in 1630. It may be pointed out that the compiler also supplemented information about certain events that took place before Jahangir's accession to the throne. For example, he furnishes details about the role played by prince Khusrau's supporters to secure the throne for him leaving Jahangir aside. No other historian supplies this information.

He also portrays Jahangir as a naturalist, describing Jahangir's interest in fauna and flora, animal breeding, etc. In short, *Maasir-i Jahangiri* is one of the major histories on Jahangir's reign. Impressed with Abul Fazl's style of prose writing and the richness of details in the *Akbarnama*, Shahjahan desired to have the history of his reign compiled by a master of Persian prose. First he tried Mohammed Amin Qazvini and suggested him to write *Badshahnama*, i.e. the history of his reign on the lines of Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. Like Abul Fazl, Amin Qazvini was provided with assistants and given permission to have access to the royal library and the state archives for the collection of material. In nine years Qazvini was able to complete the first volume covering the first ten years of Shah Jahan's reign. It seems that he had planned to compile a separate volume on every decade but he was stopped from working on the project. Although the volume was rich in details, his style was not liked by the emperor. According to Mohammed Saleh Kamboh, the author of the *Amal-i Saleh* (or *Shahjahannama*), Qazvini was transferred to the intelligence bureau. Abdul Hamid Lahori, another Scholar was appointed as the official historian in his place. Abdul Hamid was found competent enough to emulate Abdul Fazl's Persian prose-style. Saleh Kamboh says that Abdul Hamid was celebrated for the beauty of his style. Like

Akbarnama, the *Badshahnama* is also full of outbursts of laboured rhetoric.

Abdul Hamid's *Badshahnama* contains an account of twenty years of history of Shahjahan's reign. It is divided into two parts, each covering ten years of the reign. The events have been arranged chronologically year-wise. It also contains separate sections on the Princes, Princesses and the nobles of the empire. The latter have been listed in accordance with the descending order of their *mansabs* from 9000 to 500 horses. Lastly the author devotes a section on the leading *Sufi* saints, scholars, physicians and poets of the reign of Shahjahan. Owing to old age, Abdul Hamid Lahori was retired and his pupil Mohammad Waris was ordered by the emperor to continue the work. Waris's volume contains ten years account from the beginning of the twentieth year to the thirtieth year when Shahjahan had to abdicate the throne. Waris's *Badshahnama* bears resemblance to his teacher's *Badshahnama* both in style and details. Two other writers who produced histories of Shahjahan during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign were Sadiq Khan and Muhammad Saleh Kamboh. The former's work is known as *Badshahnama*, while the latter history is popularly called *Amal-i Saleh* (or *Shahjahanama*). Both these works furnish important details about the war of succession between Shahjahan's sons and the last years of Shahjahan's life.

10.4.6 Historiography--Aurangzeb

The emperor Aurangzeb also followed the tradition of Akbar and Shahjahan. He appointed Muhammad Kazim the son of Muhammad Amin Qazvini to write the history of his reign. An order was also issued to the officer incharge of the royal records to make over to the official historian all such state papers as were received from the news writers and other high functionaries pertaining to important events. On the completion of the account of first ten years of the reign, its writing was stopped. The volume produced was called *Alamgir Nama* (1658). This volume reads as a panegyric in prose, portraying the emperor as a special recipient of divine grace and endowed with super-natural powers. Disgusted with flattery and exaggeration, Aurangzeb banned history

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writing, saying that ‘the cultivation of inward piety was preferable to the ostentatious display of his achievements’. The curtailment of state expenditure seems another reason for stopping the writing of chronicle. Later on, Inayatullah Khan Kashmiri, a trusted noble of Aurangzeb’s son and successor, Bahadur Shah persuaded Saqi Mustaid Khan to compile the history of Aurangzeb’s reign. Hence the compilation of the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* was brought to completion in 1711. This fills a wide gap in the official history of Aurangzeb’s reign. Like *Akbarnama* of Abul Fazl and *Badshahnama* of Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Maasir-i Alamgiri* has been composed in the form of annals, each year has been marked off. Its style is free from literary conceits, but the work reads like a dry list of official postings, promotions, armies deputed for the conquest of forts, etc. However, the interesting bits of information are found at places where the compiler makes observation and reflection on events and particularly biographical sketches. It may be pointed out that the account of first ten years of Aurangzeb’s reign in the *Maasir-i Alamgiri* is a concise summary of Kazim’s *Alamgirnama* but the account from the eleventh year onwards is based on his personal knowledge and the state archives. It is, however, almost devoid of details about the social life and the deteriorating economic conditions in the Empire. This was the last official history of the Mughal empire. Thereafter, Khafi Khan and other historians of the 18th century composed histories but their approach was partisan, each historian wrote according to his allegiance to certain group of nobles at court.

Apart from these historical works a number of other works like *Maasir-ul Umara*, by Shahnawaz Khana collection of biographies of nobles, treatise on Administration like *Diwan-i Pasand* of Rai Chhatar Mal; Amamullah Hussain’s work *Ganj-I Badawurd* (on Agriculture) *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* of Mirzanathan are a few other important works of history for the Mughal period.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Official Historians during Akbar Period

2) Write a brief note on the historical works during Jahangir's reign.

10.5 LET US SUM UP

Among the Muslim elite, history was considered as the third important source of knowledge after the religious scripture and jurisprudence. Therefore, the study and writing of history were accorded great importance after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the closing years of 12th century. The pioneers of history-writing in the Indo-Persian tradition were Muhammad bin Mansur, popularly known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir. His writings included a book of genealogies of the Prophet of Islam and the Muslim rulers, including Qutbuddin Aibak. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani was another important historian of the 13th century. However, the most important figure in the Indo-Persian historiography was Ziauddin Barani in the 14th century. His *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* is a milestone in the tradition of history-writing in medieval India. It was written for the enlightenment of the rulers of his times. Under the Mughals this tradition of history-writing continued and reached new heights. Abul Fazl, Nizamuddin Ahmad, Abdul Qadir Badauni, Khwaja Kamgar Husaini and Abdul Hamid Lahori were some important historians of the Mughal period.

10.6 KEYWORDS

Periodization: the process or study of categorizing the past into discrete, quantified named blocks of time.

Masnavi: Poem.

Tabqat: Sections in a book

Taqlid: Traditions

Dastur: Each province in Akbar's time was divided into revenue circles or dastur with their own rates of revenue and a schedule of individual crops or dastur ul- amal.

10.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEWS

- 1) Write a note on Transitions, Continuities and Changes in historiography.
- 2) Elaborate Sultanate Historiography.
- 3) Elaborate Mughal Historiography.

10.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCE

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10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your Progress 1

- 1) In an attempt to distinguish his work from those of Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Hasan Nizami, Minhaj adopted the *Tabaqat* System of history-writing. The first two writers had produced their works in unitary form, in which each reign was treated as a unit. In the *Tabaqat* form, each

dynasty of rulers is presented in a separate *tabaqa* (i.e. section) and was brought to completion in 1259. The last five sections are very important from the point of view of history.

2) Amir Khusrau also compiled the *Khazainul Futuh*, devoted to the achievements of Alauddin Khalji. Khusrau also composed five historical *masnavis* (poems) in each of which historical events are described (in verse). Of the surviving 14th century works, Isami's *Futuhus Salatin* (1350), Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (1357), anonymous *Sirat-i Firuzshahi* (1370-71) and Shams Siraj Afif's *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi* (c.1400) are important historical works.

3) It is for the first time in Medieval History that he tries to analyse the cause and effect of the events and developments taking place in polity and economy. Barani also declares that the job of the historian is not only to eulogise the deeds and good works of the rulers but also to present to readers a critical account of the shortcomings and drawbacks of policies. Moreover, the scope of history is considerably widened by Barani with the inclusion of details about the cultural role performed by intellectuals, scholars, poets, and saints. Barani's style of history writing inspired the historians of the subsequent period, many of whom tried to follow his ideas.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Gulbadan Begum's memoirs entitled *Humayunnama*, Bayazid Biyat work is entitled *Tazkirat-i Humayun wa Akbar*. Jauhar Aftabchi's *Tazkirat-ul Waqiat*; Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* and *Ain-i Akbari*.

2) Qazi Nurul Haque compiled the history, *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* and closed it with the account of Jahangir's reign. Like the *Tarikh* compiled by his father, Shaikh Abdul Haque, the *Zubdatu't Tawarikh* also narrates the history of the Muslim rulers of India. This *Tarikh-i Khan-i Jahani* was compiled by Nemat Allah Harawi under the patronage of Khan-i Jahan Lodi, the noble of Jahangir. As regards Jahangir's own memoirs *Tuzuki Jahangiri*, it is a major source for his reign.

UNIT 11 ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS: DELHI SULTANATE

STRUCUTRE

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The Sultan
- 11.3 Aristocracy
- 11.4 The Ulema
- 11.5 Development of Administrative Apparatus
 - 11.5.1 Amalgamation of West Asian and Central Asian Practices
 - 11.5.2 State of Flux
- 11.6 Administration--Central
 - 11.6.1 Diwani Wizarat
 - 11.6.2 Ariz-i-Mumalik
 - 11.6.3 Naib-
 - 11.6.4 Dabir-i-Khas
 - 11.6.5 Diwan-i-Riyasat
 - 11.6.6 Diwan-i-Risalat and Diwan-i-Qada
 - 11.6.7 Amir-i-Dad
 - 11.6.8 Other Important Department
- 11.7 Administration—Provincial and Local
 - 11.7.1 Governor's Position
 - 11.7.2 Contribution of Khots, Zamindars, Rais, Ranas, etc. in Local Administration
 - 11.7.3 Shiqdar, Faujdar, Amil, etc.
- 11.8 Structuring of Army
- 11.9 Administering Revenue
- 11.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.11 Keywords
- 11.12 Questions for review
- 11.13 Suggested Redings and refernces
- 11.14 Answers To Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will discuss the administrative apparatus of Delhi Sultanate including the institutions incorporated from west (Mongol influence) as well as some unique features introduced in the Indian sub-continent.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Administrative and institutional structures are the extensions of the 'state' in all political formations. It is through these structures that political control is extended from a core area — such as the political capital of a kingdom — to the outer reaches of the kingdom or empire. Political control of the kingdom, especially in the early phases of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, was often tenuous, and uprisings and challenges to royal authority were a frequent occurrence. The political foundation of the sultanate stabilised after more than 100 years and the important instrument of political control over the outlying areas of the sultanate were the various administrative structures introduced and maintained by the central government. After the armies of the rulers had annexed a particular territory, it would often be difficult to retain control over these newly conquered domains; it was here that the administrative structures of the centre, once introduced, would help in maintaining political control.

11.2 THE SULTAN

The node of the administrative apparatus was the Sultan. He was the ruler of the entire realm, and after accession to the throne — he had absolute power in his hands. He was the supreme commander of the army, and it was he, or officers appointed by him, who led armies to conquer other areas. Thus, the sultan was in many ways the head of the administrative system. This is applicable to almost all the sultans of the Delhi sultanate, with some exceptions like Sultan Ruknuddin Firuz, Sultan Muizzuddin Bahram, Sultan Alauddin Masud, and Sultan

Nasiruddin Mahmud, in whose times cliques of nobles at the court are said to have been more powerful. But even in these infrequent instances, the sultan remained the ceremonial head of the entire political establishment of the empire.

The capital city and its surrounding areas were often areas where direct central control- administrative and otherwise — was prevalent. Since it was in the close vicinity of the ruler, central control was most strongly felt in these areas. The ruler, the nobles, the court, royal architecture, trade, urbanisation all were more focussed on these regions, and hence the administrative apparatus was also elaborate and prominent. This created the core area of political control. However, a defining feature of this area was also that most of the people who lived in this area were ‘professionals’, namely, non-agriculturists. These classes and groups had to be sustained from the produce of other areas of the empire; and for that to happen, the surplus produce had to be collected from the agriculturists mostly through the various taxation measures introduced and imposed by the centre on these areas.

Thus, the very nature of politics at the time engendered the need to introduce centrally monitored apparatuses of control and regulation. First, political conquest of a new area was never enough to ensure its integration into the political empire for it could easily break away at an opportune moment if there was insufficient central control. Second, the “parasitic” nature of the governing classes, along with other groups such as artisans, traders, soldiers, etc. meant that resources had to be appropriated — sometimes by force — from other parts of the empire for the maintenance of this political structure. Bureaucratisation was often highest in the core areas, with a gradation of political/bureaucratic control as one moved farther and farther away from the core. These in total comprised the territory of the state, all areas being tied in their recognition of the supremacy of the sultan in their domains.

11.3 ARISTOCRACY

Qutbuddin Aibak ascended the throne without any conflict since the Muizzi (Muizzuddin Ghori, The Ghori ruler) nobles accepted him as their

superior and offered their loyalty to him. Iltutmish's accession to the throne of Delhi constituted an important landmark in the growth of Turkish nobility in India. This reflected the power of the nobles to select their leaders through armed strength. Now heredity and nomination the principles of sovereignty and leadership were relegated to the background. Nobles in Delhi acquired prominence in selecting the ruler and Delhi became the hub of political activity of Turkish rule.

Iltutmish is credited with the establishment of a sovereign Turkish state in India and then nobility in his time consisted of efficient administrators who though slaves were imbued with merit and ability. After Iltutmish the hereditary principle again resurfaced with the accession of Ruknuddin Firoz, Raziya and Bahram Shah. During this phase the tussle between the Turkish and Tajik (Arab and Persians) nobles became intense. After Iltutmish's death (1235) till the accession of Balban (1269), the Chihalgani slaves (group of 40 nobles of which Balban was also a part) decided the succession issue. Balban tried to restore the supremacy of the crown by crushing the power of the Turkish nobility. Balban's accession demonstrated that the hereditary principle was no longer relevant. Both Qutbuddin and Iltutmish considered the nobles at par with themselves.

Balban made a major departure. He maintained a distance from the nobility and believed in divine theory of kingship. He traced his ancestry to the mythical king Afrasiyab of Ajam (non-Arab lands). Balban tried to weaken the power of the Shamsi (Shamsuddin Iltutmish) nobles. The accession of Jalaluddin Khalji (1290) to the throne established that heredity was not always the basis of the sovereignty and kingship. Ability and force were also important factors in the succession to the throne.

During the rule of Khaljis and Tughlaqs the doors of nobility were opened to people of diverse backgrounds and it was no more the preserve of the Turks only. According to M. Habib, (*Medieval India Quarterly*, pg. 230) "during the period of slave kingship membership of the higher bureaucracy was dangerous for an Indian Musalman and impossible for a Hindu". But the Khalji revolution seems to have brought about a change. Amir Khusrau in his *Khazainul Futuh* tells us that Sultan

Alauddin sent an army of thirty thousand horsemen under a Hindu officer, Malik Naik, the *Akhur-bek Maisarah*, against the Mongols, Alibeg, Tartag and Targhi. The position of low-born men (whether Hindu or Muslims) in the government of Mohammad bin Tughlaq was the natural culmination of a process covering a century and a half." Barani criticises Mohammad bin Tughlaq and says "... He assigned the Diwan-i-Wizarat (Ministry of Revenue) to Pera Mali (the Gardner), the lowest of the low born and mean born men of the Hind and Sind and placed him over the heads of maliks, amirs, walis and governors (maqta's)" (Medieval India Quarterly, pg. 229). During the Lodi period except for the reigns of Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi, tribal concept of equality of the Afghans determined the official attitude towards the nobility.

11.4 THE ULEMA

But before proceeding to study the various administrative offices and institutions at work in the Delhi Sultanate, it is important to understand that bureaucratic administration was only one important way in which the centre made its authority and presence felt in the larger political realm. An institutional feature of the political discourse of the Delhi Sultanate was the presence of the *Ulema* [theologians] both at the court, and in the provinces through the offices of the *Qazi* and officials manning the educational institutions.

There has been a lot of debate amongst historians about the nature of the state in the Delhi Sultanate. It seems reasonable to assume in the light of the available evidence that politics and religion functioned in separate areas despite appearing to complement one another. The *Ulema* as a group consisted of persons who performed the role of the preachers and guardians of Islamic religion, and [at least in the initial stages of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate] most of them had come from outside the subcontinent. Traditionally, they were committed to upholding the Islamic religious order, and thus acted as socio-moral censors for the Muslim community at large. The *Ulema* rose as a powerful political faction and on account of the high judicial positions

held by them they could sway the king and the nobility in their favour. They held important positions in the administrative system particularly in the judiciary.

At the centre, the *ulema* functioned as the religious benchmark of the political empire— apart from acting as judges [mostly in civil cases], *alims* were sometimes appointed as principals of *madrasas* [educational institutions] such as Minhajuddin Siraj, the author of the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, who was appointed to head the Nasiriyya Madrasa in Delhi. Through these formal and informal channels, the primary aim of the *ulema* was to spread the religious Word, and uphold the Islamic religious-moral order as far as was possible. This was often a contentious issue since the Sultan's ultimate objective was never the glorification of Islam but the success of the political life of the Sultanate. Given the fact that the majority of the subject population was non-Muslim, the sultan was keener to act in a politically tactful way rather than solely uphold the banner of religion.

11.5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS

There is very little information regarding administration available for the period of the Delhi Sultanate, especially for the first 100 years. The political canvas of the northern part of the Indian subcontinent before the advent of the Turks was fragmented, and the political empires immediately northwest [Ghazni and, later, Ghur] had long been interested in searching for fortunes in the subcontinent. This had led to intermittent invasions but not to the development of an elaborate administrative apparatus since the invaders did not plan to set up an empire in the subcontinent. The indigenous rulers, on the other hand, belonged to fragmented political dynasties and the administrative structure was often one that had been developing through the centuries, mutating and adapting to the changing conditions.

11.5.1 Amalgamation Of West Asian And Central Asian Practices

When Qutubuddin Aibak declared himself as an independent Sultan at Lahore — no systematic administrative apparatus existed. Consequently, what emerged was a mixture of politico-administrative institutions from Central Asia and beyond as practised in the realms of the Ghurid Empire and a formal recognition of the prevailing administrative structures in the various parts of the sultanate as it expanded within the subcontinent. As long as the local rulers (Rajas, Rais and Ranas) recognised the supremacy of the Sultan in Delhi, they were largely left to their devices to collect the taxes and send it to the central treasury as tribute. It appears that the centre often appointed a host of officers (*Amil, Karkuns* etc.) to be present in the various realms of the sultanate but only to assist the intermediaries (*Khots, Muqaddams and Chaudharies*) in their administrative tasks; it was only in later times, from the late 13th century, that central authority in the outer realms was well established.

Before we proceed to discuss the administrative structure and institutions of Delhi Sultanate we would like to give you a brief idea about the impact of central and west Asian institutions on the Delhi Sultanate. The administrative structures and institutions introduced in India by the Ilbari (tribe) Turks were Abbasid and Persian in origin which had been transformed under the Samanids, Ghaznavids, Ghorids and Seljukids (Turks who ruled in Persia).

System of Iqta

The iqta was a territorial assignment given to administrative officers and nobles in lieu of the services they performed for the state. The holder of iqta was designated as *muqti*. The *muqti* was responsible for the collection of revenue from these territories and also worked as administrative head. They were supposed to retain the revenue equivalent to their personal pay as well as the salaries of troops employed by them. The surplus if any was to be deposited in royal treasury. We will discuss iqta system in detail under the section revenue administration. It is generally accepted that the Iqta system was established at the end of the

Abbasid period and got consolidated during the Seljuk period. Its origin has been attributed to various factors:

- 1) The development of mercenary armies in place of citizen armies.
- 2) Some scholars consider it to be a bureaucratic and administrative apparatus, which got transformed into a military organization on account of the need to maintain the army through land assignments when the gold economy collapsed.
- 3) The Turkoman (Turks) tribal movements had led to the emergence of the idea of tribal concept of land as the joint property of the tribe headed by a Chief.

Although, there were several types of Iqtas in west and central Asia the system adopted in India was based on the Seljuk pattern which was called the Mustaghall type of Iqta in which no hereditary rights were permitted. In this both military and administrative features were important but slowly military became predominant. The Iqta served as the foundation of the political and military system of the Turks.

Mongolian Effect

An important point which needs to be discussed is the influence of Mongol invasions on central and west Asia and the effect of Mongol institutions on Turkish rule in India. Just as Balban's theory of sovereignty was inspired by Sassanid (Persian) traditions similarly Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and his Khurasani nobles tried to adopt the ideas of Mongol Khans and were probably influenced by the Mongol Yassa (steppe governing class and its traditions). Muhammad Bin Tughlaq's policy of enforcing strictness in the administration (army and nobility), the egalitarian attitude towards all subjects and refusal to give special status to Ulema and appointment of Hindus in the nobility had resemblance to the Mongol traditions and Yassa. Mongol ideas affected the organisation of the nobility and army under the Tughlaqs. The Amir-i-sada and Hazara were Mongol and Afghan in origin and initially joined the service of Alauddin Khalji. They became prominent in Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. His token currency experiments were also borrowed from Mongol measures in China and Firoz Tughlaq's attempt to make Iqtas hereditary was based on the Mongol ruler Ghazan

Khan's reforms which made shares and assignment of land to nobles and soldiers hereditary.

11.5.2 State Of Flux

From the outset, the sultans were aware of the unique nature of the Delhi sultanate, which meant that it was for the first time in the political history of Islam that an Islamic ruling group found itself in a position of political control over a largely non-Islamic subject population. However, Jizyah was imposed as a separate tax which even the Brahmins had to pay during the reign of Feroze Tughlak. These measures were resorted to by individual sultans but the general character of the state continued to be based on political expediency. The term Jizyah like Kharaj is mentioned in the Quran and indicates a tax or tribute. Jizyah was traditionally imposed on non-Muslims in lieu of protection of life and property and exemption from military service. It was not exacted uniformly from all non-Muslims. Children, women, illiterate etc. were exempt from it. Jizyah is considered by Sunni Jurists as a lawful tax.

Upendra Nath Day maintains that although the sultans of Delhi had to introduce particular measures to suit the conditions of the newly established sultanate, they did try to 'adjust them and keep them in conformity with the ideas and principles developed in Arabia and Persia' (U.N. Day, *The Government of the Sultanate*, (reprint) Delhi, 1993, p.2). This, however, seems to be more applicable to particular offices and institutions like that of the wazir, qazi, *iqta*, etc. rather than to the administrative system as a whole. At the local (village level) Patwaris and village head man continued to perform their traditional role. The Sultanate as already indicated was spread in large areas with a core and outlying provinces. The large extent of the sultanate necessitated the evolution of administrative apparatus separately for the centre and the provinces. Therefore, it is useful to study the administrative institutions of the Delhi Sultanate at the centre and provincial areas separately. Those at the centre were the areas of direct administration, and the administrative apparatus developed and expanded with the territorial expansion of the empire.

Check Your Progress 1

1) King is the head of the administration. Comment

2) Write a short note on Iqta System.

11.6 ADMINISTRATION--CENTRAL

Central administration in the Delhi sultanate during the period of Ilbari Turks (slavedynasty) was carried out mostly by trusted slaves [appointed to administrative positions by the sultan] who had helped the sultan to acquire the throne; or by the members of the royal household and family. Loyalty was therefore a prerequisite for holding the high office and was given the highest rewards. The Sultan was the head of the administration with all military, administrative and legal powers. A number of separate departments were created to look after different aspects of administration. We will discuss these separately under this section.

11.6.1 Diwani Wizarat

After the seat of the sultan, the most important office in the sultanate was the *Diwani-Wizarat*, headed by the *wazir*. He had under him a naib wazir. Derived from the Persian and Abbasid traditions, the *wazir* [prime minister] was the most important person in the royal court, and his role was of a general supervisor over all departments. He was the primary advisor to the sultan, and often gave advice which, in retrospect it is possible to say, may have shaped the course of history. For instance, Nizam ul-Mulk Junaidi, the wazir of Sultan Iltutmish is credited with the

Notes

famous warning to the sultan that Muslims in India were like 'salt in a dish', i.e., a minority who could easily be overturned. The wisdom reflected in such a statement reveals both the strength required to occupy the position, as also the importance given to the office by the sultan. Theoretically, the wazir was supposed to take the sultan's permission prior to every decision he made; however, in practice it may not have been so as is evident from the cases when wazirs would actually become more powerful than the sultans. The case of the wazir Khwaja Muhazzab [in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah] is one such example.

The main function of the wazir was to look after the financial organisation of the state, give advice to the sultan, and on occasions to lead military expeditions at the sultan's behest. Another important function included supervising the payment to the army, the largest "non-producing" class of royal retainers. His office also kept a check on land revenue collections from different parts of the empire. The *Wizarat* maintained a record of all the income and expenditure incurred by the state therefore the salaries of all royal servants in different parts of the empire were controlled and/or recorded by this office. Charitable donations such as *waqfs*, *inams*, etc were also handled by this department. Further, the mints, the royal buildings, intelligence departments and other sundry affiliations of the royal court like the *karkhanas*, were all supervised by the *Wizarat*. They also had a number of minor departments working under their supervision with more specific functions. These included, for instance, the *Mustaufi-i-Mumalik* [Auditor General, in charge of expenditure], *Mushrif-i-Mumalik* [Accountant General, in charge of income] and the *Majmuadar* [keeper of loans and balances from treasury]. With the passage of time, however, the complexities of the greatly enlarged geographical territory saw further streamlining and introduction of new offices which were monitored by the wazir and *wizarat*. These included the *Diwan-i-Waqoof* [introduced by Jalaluddin Khalaji to supervise expenditure only; i.e., after separating 'income' records from 'expenditure' records]; *Diwan-i-Mustakhraj* [set up by Alauddin Khalaji to enquire into and realise arrears

of revenue payments from the different parts of the empire]; and the *Diwan-i-Amir Kohi* [under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, this department was responsible for bringing uncultivated land into cultivation through state support].

The *wazir* and the *Diwan-i-Wizarat* were thus the most important and trusted offices of the empire. This was also evident from the fact that the *wazir* was one of the very few persons who had direct access to the ruler and, according to Ibn Battuta, stood closest to the sultan at court. It was on the *wazir's* wisdom, sagacity, sincerity and loyalty that the position and success of the sultan was greatly dependent.

11.6.2 Ariz-i-Mumalik

But the sultan and the *wazir* together could do little without the help of the army, the most important component of political rule in pre-modern times. It was the army which helped the sultan to conquer new areas, protect his own kingdom, and maintain order within the empire. The *Diwan-i-Arz* was instituted especially to look after the military organisation of the empire. It was headed by the *Ariz-i-Mumalik*. With the Delhi Sultanate always having a large military entourage, this ministry was very important in the empire. The *Ariz*, along with his office, maintained the royal contingents, recruited the soldiers, ensured the discipline and fitness of the army, examined the horses and branded them with the royal insignia. During times of war, the *Ariz* arranged the military provisions, transportation and administered the army at war, provided constant supplies, and was the custodian of war booty. The importance of his position, and that of the army, is evident from the fact that in later times the *Ariz* could actually reward individual soldiers by increasing their salaries. Alauddin Khilji introduced the system of *dagh* (branding) and *huliyah* (description) and cash payment to soldiers. This was meant to strengthen his control over the army. Firuz Tughlaq did away with the system of *dagh* and *huliyah* however Muhammad Tughlaq continued the system of *dagh*. Under Sikandar Lodi *huliyah* was referred to as *chehrah*.

11.6.3 Naib

Next in line, and in part attached to the earlier office, was that of the *Naib*. Theoretically, the *Naib* was the deputy of the *Ariz*, and was supposed to assist him in his many administrative chores; however, as the example of Ghiyasuddin Balban [*naib* of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud, and later to become sultan] shows, sometimes the *Naib* could become more important than the *wazir*. But these were exceptions rather than the rule, dependent more on individual personalities and circumstances. It does however indicate the possibility of ambitious individuals to use the exceptional practice to their advantage.

11.6.4 Dabir-i-Khas

Royal authority was conducted to a fair degree through declarations, announcements, *farmans*, and the like. The *Diwan-i-Insha*, headed by the *Dabir-i-Khas*, looked after the department of royal correspondence. He drafted and despatched royal orders, and received reports from officers in various parts of the empire. This reflected the diplomatic perspective which conveyed in carefully chosen language the commands of the ruler. The *Dabir* was the formal channel of communication between the centre and the other areas of the empire, and at a time when transport and communication was underdeveloped, the job was made more difficult. The *Dabir* was also the private secretary of the sultan, responsible for writing the *farmans* [except in the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq when the office lost its importance].

11.6.5 Diwan-i-Riyasat

During the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalaji, the *Diwan-i-Riyasat* became very prominent. Alauddin's market regulations required constant surveillance; this ministry registered all the supplies of commodities, and maintained standards in the markets [such as checking weights and measures, etc]. With the collapse of the market regulations after Alauddin's death, this department also faded out of prominence.

11.6.6 Diwan-i-Risalat and Diwan-i-Qada

It was headed by the *Sadr-us-Sadr* who was also the *Qadi-i-mumalik* and was responsible for administration of justice and also looked after the religious matters *assadr-us-sadr*. *Diwan-i-Qada* was placed under a *Qadi-i-mumalik*. He was in charge of religious and legal matters. Local *qadis* (judges) were chosen by him. In the time of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq the complaints of the people were registered with the *Diwani-Risalat*.

11.6.7 Amir-i-Dad

He headed a department called *Diwan-i-Mazalim* in the absence of the Sultan. His role was to supervise the *qadis*, *kotwal* (police) and *muhtasib* (Executive officer who supervised and enforced the public morals and public conveniences).

11.6.8 Other Important Departments

Apart from these, there were a number of smaller 'departments' at the centre which helped in the everyday administration of the empire. They were usually supervised directly by the sultan. Important amongst them were those dealing with intelligence [like the *Barid-i-Mumalik*], the royal household [headed by the *Wakil-i-Dar*], court ceremonies [led by the *Amir-i-Hajib*], royal bodyguards [under the *Sar-i-Jandar*]. Other important departments looked after slaves, royal workshops [*karkhanas*]; and important royal slaves also performed various functions such as bearing the royal parasol, serving wine, etc.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write a note on:-

a) Diwan-i-Arz

b) Diwan-i-insha

11.7 ADMINISTRATION--PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL

Administration in areas, which were outside the core political area, was conducted in a number of ways, depending on the degree of political control which was exercised over the area. In the initial years of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, especially after the accession of Shamsuddin Iltutmish, many other slave-governors [Bahauddin Tughrilin Bayana, Nasiruddin Qabacha in Multan] asserted their independence. The political turmoil that followed [and which continued for the better part of the next 30 years after the death of Iltutmish] meant that the sultan's attentions were concentrated on stabilising the political base of the sultanate, especially when tensions were both from within [other slave-governors; recalcitrant notables] as well as from outside [other indigenous rulers; Mongols]. As the empire expanded, newly annexed areas became loosely affiliated to the politico-administrative structure, often through nominal recognition of the political supremacy of the sultan/centre. A few officials were appointed by the centre to these areas as a symbol of imperial presence, but every day administration most often remained in local hands. The interest of the centre in these areas was mostly economic, i.e., collection of revenue to sustain the larger imperial edifice.

11.7.1 Governor's Position

Sultanate comprised of provinces placed in charge of governors called *wali* or *muqti*. In the 14th century with the consolidation of the sultanate the provinces became unmanageable and were therefore, partitioned into *shiqs* for administrative convenience. They were administered by the

shiqdars. Subsequently the *shiqs* got transformed into sarkars in the Afghan period. The sarkar as a territorial unit comprised of a number of *paraganas*.

In spite of the complicated web of authority and power, the administration of the outer areas was often nebulous. Usually, the sultan appointed a governor as his deputy, who was responsible for the overall administration of the area. This involved ensuring the collection of revenue, maintaining law and order, and keeping opposition to central authority under control. He was the chief executive officer deputed by the centre, and embodied the sultan's administrative power in the provinces of the kingdom. Since the official was a newcomer to the region, he was usually dependent on the local officials [whose offices had been in existence prior to the establishment of the Sultanate] to execute his duties, along with his own military retinue. Often, a part of the revenue collected went towards the governor's own salary [which included the maintenance of his army]; so it was in the interest of the governor to ensure the proper and timely collection of revenue. A part of it was sent to the central treasury. In such cases, land was allotted to the governor as his '*iqta*, and the governor was variously called *malik*, *amir*, *muqti* or *iqtdar*'.

A significant component of the '*iqtdar*'s duties was the maintenance of a military unit under his command. This was important because he could be called upon to muster his army at any point to help the sultan in battles. Thus, the armies of these governors acted as reserve platoons of the central army. The same was expected from the local rajas as well, since they had accepted the suzerainty of the sultan. The governor was helped in these military duties by the *Ariz* who looked after the military contingents under the supervision of the governor. The *Ariz* was placed under the *Ariz-i-Mumalik*.

Thus, the governor and the local power-blocs worked in close association with each other, which, consequently, generated other problems for the sultan at the centre. Being at a distance from the centre gave these governors the opportunity to liaise with the local power groups and rise in rebellion against the sultan at the centre. This was a frequent occurrence,

and on such occasions the sultan himself or some trusted official from the centre was sent to suppress the rebellion.

The office of the governor could therefore be used for political gain. Even if the sultan was helpless in containing the attempts by the governors to usurp power in the provinces, he would [very rarely] accept the use of the title of 'sultan' by the governor: the example of Bughra Khan in Bengal during the reign of Sultan Balban is a case in point. Conversely, if a particular noble was very powerful in a particular area [or at the court in the capital] then the sultan could appoint him as governor of a distant province to remove him from his position of popularity and power. The historian Ziya Barani informs us that when Zafar Khan became very renowned as the governor of Samana, Sultan Alauddin Khalaji began to think of transferring him to Lakhnauti [Bengal] to uproot him from his power base and thereby weaken his growing strength.

11.7.2 Contribution of Khots, Zamindars, Rais, Ranas, etc. in Local Administration

A number of villages formed a pargana (this term becomes common in the 14th century and is Indian in origin). The villages were under the administrative supervision of the following set of officials: *muquddam* (the village head man); *patwari* (village accountant); *khut* (village headman). It is important to note that the village and pargana were independent units of administration, and yet inter-related areas over which officials' commanded administrative powers. The important pargana officials were *chaudhary* (highest local rural magnate accountable to the government for land revenue collection), *mutasarrif* or *amil* (revenue collector) and *karkun* (accountant).

Khot, *Muqaddam*, *Patwari* and *Choudhary* were the local officials who worked in conjunction with the governor in the collection of revenue and maintaining law and order, etc. Before the Bengal Expedition in 1353 Firuz Tughlaq in his proclamations suggested that *zamindars* constituted the *muqaddams*, *mafrozis* and *maliks* (*Insha-imahru*, letters of the early years of Firuz Tughlaq's reign). Thus the word *zaminda* encompassed

the entire superior rural class. In certain cases the province also had a local ruler [*rai, rana, rawat, raja*] who supported the governor in his duties. In such instances, the local rulers were usually recognised by the sultan at the centre as being his subordinate, albeit the local rulers were allowed to act as sovereign powers in conducting the administrative affairs of the region. This practice was adopted in the Delhi sultanate because it allowed the sultanate to expand geographically on the basis of nominal sovereignty, coupled with an assured financial contribution to the central treasury.

11.7.3 Shiqdar, Faujdar, Amil etc.

The other important officers in the provinces — those who had direct access to the sultan — were the *barids* [intelligence officers and reporters]. They played a very significant role in the reporting of local developments to the sultan, and were usually appointed directly by the sultan. These officers were the sultan's 'eyes and ears' in the outer realms, and acted as an important check on the governors.

Ziya Barani mentions two other officers — the *shiqdar* and the *faujdar* — at the provincial level. *Shiqdar* is mentioned during Alauddin Khalji's period. Barani also refers to *shiqdar* and *faujdar* during Mohammad Tughlaq's reign. Their duties are not very clearly articulated, and often the role of the two seems to overlap. The *shiqdar* was in charge of a *shiq*, and assisted the governor in the maintenance of law and order [particularly criminal justice] and provided military assistance, especially if it was required in the collection of land revenue, or the suppression of local rebellions. His salary seems to have been derived from the revenue collections of the area [though we have no direct evidence to prove it] and it was a fairly stable office since we find mention of it even during the Lodi period and onwards. The *shiqdar's* duties also included supervising the functioning of the smaller administrative units such as the *pargana*. The duties of the *faujdar* were much similar to that of the *shiqdar*, yet they seem to have existed simultaneously. In most cases, the *shiqdar* was superior to the *faujdar* though this seems to have been reversed in the period of the

Saiyyids. In the Tughlaq period in the deccan, *shiq* was bigger than a district. Smaller *shiqs* are also mentioned under the Tughlaqs. *Shiqdar* was assisted by the *faujdar*s in maintaining law and order during the Tughlaq period. The *kotwal* was placed under the *faujdar*. Under the Lodis the *shiqdar* was the *pargana* or city officer who was responsible for both civil and military administration.

The *shiqdar* and *faujdar* were helped in carrying out their duties by a host of other local officials including the *Qazi* [dealt mostly with civil cases and acted as a jurisconsult since he was educated in the Quran], *Amil* [primarily responsible for the collection of revenue], *Amin* [carried out measurement of land in the reign of Sikandar Lodi as mentioned in the sources (Waq'at-i-Mushtaqi, late 16th century) and *Kotwal* [an office of varying importance, he was under the *shiqdar/faujdar*, and helped in the maintenance of law and order].

The financial accounts of the provincial income and expenditure were maintained by the *Sahib-i-Diwan*, who was appointed by the sultan on the recommendation of the *wazir*. He was the book-keeper of provincial revenue, and was assisted in his task by *mutassarifs* and *karkuns*. The *nazir* and *waqf* were officers who looked after the collection of the revenue and expenditure respectively.

We also find mention of the office of the *Khwaja* (probably same as *Sahib-i-Diwan*), who kept a record of the income of the *iqta*, on the basis of which the sultan was able to make his revenue demands. The *Khwaja* was also appointed by the sultan on the recommendation of the *wazir*. This office was important because the agricultural produce of the entire sultanate was never uniform, and so the taxation system and demand were different for different parts of the sultanate depending on the yield of different areas.

11.8 STRUCTURING OF ARMY

The contingent stationed at Delhi was called *Hasham-i-qalb* and included among others royal slaves and guards. Provincial contingents were called *hasham-i-atraf*. Garrisons are mentioned in the time of Qutbuddin Aibak which was placed under *Kotwals*. Cavalry was composed of *murattab*,

sawar and *do-aspah* (men with 2 horses, single horse and no horses of their own respectively) (*The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, I.H. Qureshi, p. 250-253). Elephant establishment at Delhi was supervised by the *Shahnah-i-fil*. The infantry or foot soldiers were referred to as *paiks* (generally Hindus, slaves or persons of low origin). The decimal system (multiples of 10) was the basis of army organisation under the Ghaznavids and Mongols. Sultans of Delhi followed a similar system. Barani in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* discusses the army organisation, “A *sarkhail* commands 10 chosen horsemen; a *sipah-salar* 10 *sarkhails*; an amir 10 *sipah-salars*; a *malik* 10 amirs, a khan 10 maliks, and a king should have at least 10 khans under his command”, (*Medieval India Quarterly*, M. Habib, p 228.) Barani also refers to *amirani-sada* (centurians) and *amiran-i-hajara* (commanders of one thousand). The hierarchy comprised of Sarkhail at the bottom (with 10 horse men subordinate to him), a sipah-salar (had 10 sarkhail under him), amir (10 sipah-salars below him), malik (had power over 10 amirs), Khan’s troops (were equal to troops under 10 maliks).

The *masalik-ul-absar* (An Arabic source of the 14th century) gives an estimate of the salaries of officers: Khan: 1 lakh tankhas, malik: 50 to 60 thousand tankhas, etc. Soldiers were directly paid in cash by the central government during the time of Khaljis and Tughlaqs. The nobles were given assignments of revenue in lieu of salary. The standing army comprised of regular troops called *wajhis* and irregular called *ghair wajhis*. Sometimes soldiers were also paid through *itlaq* (drafts).

11.9 ADMINISTERING REVENUE

Since the economy in the Indian subcontinent was predominantly agrarian, the primary source of income for the state was land revenue. States from ancient times had taxed the farmer on their produce, and appropriated a portion of it as tax/revenue to sustain the larger state structures. With the passage of time, the machinery of tax collection had crystallised in different parts of the subcontinent. Therefore, as the sultans expanded the frontiers of the sultanate, they were able to utilise the existing administrative machinery for their purposes.

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The primacy of agriculture in the economy meant that the village remained the basic unit of administration in the Delhi sultanate. According to Irfan Habib “To begin with, it would seem that there was little question of the peasants claiming property rights over any parcel of land. Land was abundant, and the peasant could normally put up with a denial of his right over the land he tilled. What he feared, on the contrary, was a claim of the superior classes over his crop, and more still over his person”. (*The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Irfan Habib and T.R. Choudhary (eds.), Vol.I, pp. 54) The state held large tracts of land [khalisa] which were tilled by farmers maintained by the centre and from where all the revenue came to the central treasury through the agency of officials called *amils*. But the largest part of the land was distributed as *iqta* within the sultanate. The centre’s policy of revenue collection reached its highest of one-half of the produce during the reign of Alauddin Khalji, who had adopted the policy of actual measurement of land [called *hukm-i misahat*] where land was measured and revenue demand determined on its anticipated yield.

Since the time of the Ghaznavid conquest of India *Kharaj* was an important source of revenue. *Jizya* too was exacted from non-Muslims. *Zakat* was probably also imposed. The Ghorids also adopted the Ghaznavid practice when they conquered India. Muizzuddin Ghorid appointed governors who were in charge of civil and military administration in various parts of India. Slowly and steadily an administrative apparatus began to develop on the pattern of the Ghaznavids which also bore the imprint of local traditions and customs.

The taxation principles followed by the Delhi Sultan were to some extent based on the Hanafi School of Muslim Law. The revenue was broadly categorized into two by the Muslim Jurists: *Fay* and *Zakat*. *Fay* was further subdivided into *Khams*, *Jizya* and *Kharaj*. *Zakat* comprised of tax on flocks, herds, gold, silver, commercial capital, agricultural produce, etc. *Khams* represented one fifth of the booty acquired in war or mine or treasure trove (found) to be handed over to the state. *Jizya* was imposed on non-Muslims “in return for which they received protection of life and property and exemption from military services”. (R.P. Tripathi, *Some*

Aspects of Muslim Administration, p. 339) *Kharaj* was the tax on land. Initially this tax was not levied on Muslims however due to the need of the state for revenue it was later not practical to give immunity to Muslims from the payment of this tax. Theoretically, the holders of *Kharaj* land were to pay land tax whether land was cultivated by them or not. The Muslim law and state followed a liberal policy towards the land holders and they could not be evicted easily and the state tried to encourage cultivation by giving them loans. These theoretical postulates got modified in actual practice in the Delhi Sultanate.

Agricultural Tax

As already suggested the Muslim theory of taxation was adopted in India with modifications. We get proper information about the taxation system from the period of Alauddin Khalji. Barani in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* gives a description of Alauddin Khalji's agrarian policy in North India'. "The sultan decreed that 3 taxes were to be levied on the peasants viz. the *Kharaj* (also called *Kharaj-I-jizya*) or tax on cultivation; *charai*, a tax on milch cattle; and *ghari* (a tax on houses). As for *Kharaj*, all who engaged in cultivation whether of lands of large or of small extent were to be subject to (the procedure of) measurement (*masahat*) and (the fixation of) the yield per *biswa* (*wafa-I-biswa*) and were without any exception to pay half". (Irfan Habib and T.R. Choudhary (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume I*, p. 61). It seems that generally tax was collected in cash though it was sometimes also collected in kind for specific purposes.

An important consequence of Alauddin Khalji's tax administration was that *Kharaj* or *mal* henceforth became the main source through which revenue was exacted from the peasants by the ruling class. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq introduced changes in the earlier policy and tried to win over the peasants and village headmen by providing relief measures (exemption from additional levies, tax on cattle, etc

Under Muhammad Tughlaq the whole of India including Gujarat, Malwa, Deccan, South India and Bengal were brought under a monolithic taxation system. Barani points out that *abwab* (additional cesses) were imposed on the peasants. The three taxes: *ghari*, *charai*, and *Kharaj* were

Notes

strictly levied. There was thus increase in agrarian taxation. *Kharaj* was now calculated on standard yield and not actual yield of measured land for assessment in kind. For obtaining the assessment in cash instead of actual prices officially laid down prices were applied. Thus the demand rose. These measures resulted in agrarian distress. Around this time famine hit Delhi and the Doab. Muhammad Tughlaq tried to provide relief by giving the peasants *Sondhar* (agrarian loans) for encouraging cultivation through various means. Firoz Tughlaq reversed Muhammad Tughlaq's policy and many agrarian levies (*abwab*, *ghari* and *charai*) were discontinued. However, *Jizya* was imposed as a separate tax. Careful examination tells us that *Jizya* was close to *ghari* since it was a levy on the head of the house. Firoz also imposed water tax on the villages which utilized the canals and it was one tenth of the produce. During the period of the Lodis land tax was collected in kind due to the declining price situation.

Iqta, Milk, Idrar Etc.

Iqta was grant of land made from *Kharaj* land to officers called *Muqti*. *Iqta* was not hereditary and did not entitle the *Muqti* the right of ownership. They could be transferred and revoked by the Sultans. *Jizya* revenue of *Iqta* was assigned yearly whereas non-*Jizya* revenue was granted for many years. The *Muqti* was assigned the duty of collecting the revenue and utilizing it for maintaining troops for the Sultan. The *Muqti* did sub allot smaller *Iqtas* for maintaining their troops. The surplus collected from *Iqta* was required to be sent to the central treasury.

During Balban's reign an attempt was made to enquire into the income of *Muqtis*. An important change took place in Alauddin Khalji's period. With the expansion of the Empire far off areas were assigned in *Iqta* and the areas closer to Delhi were brought under *Khalisa*. The Sultan's troops were now paid in cash. This practice continued till Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. The changes in the *Iqta* administration during Alauddin Khalji's period are reflected in the following passage from Irfan Habib (*Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol.-I, pg.70). "The tax income (*Kharaj*) from each *iqta* was estimated at a particular figure by the

finance department (*Diwan-i-wizarat*). The department remained on the constant look out for an opportunity to enhance the estimate.

Out of the estimated income of the *iqta* a certain amount was allowed for the pay (*mawajib*) of the troops (*hasham*) placed under the *muqti* or *wali*. The area expected to yield this amount was apparently set apart by the *Diwan*. The remainder was treated as the *muqti's* own personal *iqta* i.e. for his own salary and the expense of his personal establishment of officials. He had to pay into the treasury all realization above the amount allowed for the pay of the army and for his own income". During Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's time the estimated income of the *Iqta* was not raised by the finance department and the *muqtis* and other officials were allowed to appropriate for themselves small sums over and above the sanctioned income.

Under Muhammad Tughlaq the dual task of collecting revenue and maintaining soldiers was divided. The *Masalik-al-Absar* gives a detailed account of the institution of *Iqta* under Muhammad Tughlaq. It points out that "all army commanders from Khans heading 10,000 cavalry troops to *sipah salars* placed over less than 100 were assigned *iqtas* in lieu of their salaries. The estimated income of *iqta* against which the salary was adjusted was always less than the actual. The significant point is that the troops are said to have been always paid in cash by the treasury and that the *iqtas* was given only in lieu of the commanders' personal salaries". (cf. Irfan Habib and T.R. Choudhary (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I*, pg. 72). Due to his policies Muhammad Tughlaq faced problems in Deogir when the *Amiran-i-sada* (centurians) became disaffected. Firoz Tughlaq adopted the policy of remuneration of soldiers through assignment of revenue of villages known as *wajh* (a new assignment given in lieu of salaries). In cases where soldiers were not assigned *wajh*, cash salaries were paid from the treasury or through drafts on the *iqtas* of nobles which were to be drawn through the surplus payment which were due to the central treasury from the *iqtas*. These drafts could be sold at a price to speculators. The hereditary aspect was strengthened in this period as against the transfer principle. Under the Lodis the term *iqta* was still used for areas held by *wajhdars*.

Assignments of revenue of villages or lands for lifetime to the religious intelligentsia were categorized as *milk* (proprietary rights given by state), *idrar* (pension) and *inam* (gift). Grants made for the support of religious institutions like madrasas, Khanqahs, were called *waqf* (endowments). These grants were made by the Sultan both within *Iqta* and *Khalisa* through a *farman*. Economically these grants did not have much implication.

11.10 LET US SUM UP

With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate an altogether new system of administration was introduced at the top level with only minor changes at the local pargana and village level. The Sultan enjoyed enormous powers not only over his subjects but also over nobles and officials. In Delhi and its immediate environs the power and authority of the Sultan was most visible and it can therefore be considered as the core region. In the outlying, distant territories and provinces also the authority of the Sultan prevailed but it was limited depending on the officers governing the provinces. During the initial phase of the Sultanate the nobles shared authority with the Sultan but from the time of Balban and to the period of Khalji and Tughlaq rule the Sultan emerged as all powerful. The Ulema or the learned sections had only a limited role in the administrative process.

The administrative apparatus of the Sultanate was a blend of West Asian, Central Asian and local traditions. Two distinct components emerged i.e. the central administration and provincial and local administration. The central administration was organised through various departments headed by senior nobles. The important departments were *wizarat*, *Diwan-i-arz*, *Diwan-i-insha*, *Diwan-i-riyasat*, *Diwan-i-risalat* and *Diwan-i-qada*. The provincial administration was entrusted to the governors (*Wali* or *muqti*) who worked in collaboration with the local officials and superior right holders (who had traditionally enjoyed customary rights prior to the establishment of the Sultanate). The local administration along with customary officials was allowed to continue after making minor adjustments and working out new relationships.

The most significant new institution that evolved and played an important role in effective governance was the *Iqta* system. *Iqta* was a territorial assignment given to the officials in lieu of their salaries. The holders of *iqtas* were called *muqtis* and enjoyed their position as long as the Sultan wished. They had no hereditary claim and were subject to transfer at the will of the Sultan. They were entrusted with the responsibility of collecting revenue and administering the territories assigned. They were also required to maintain a certain number of soldiers which were to be placed at the service of Sultan when needed. The holders of large territories were almost akin to provincial governor and the nomenclature applied to them was *iqtadar*, *muqti* or *wali*. A separate department *diwan-i-arz* looked after the organisation and supervision of army. The department maintained exclusive contingents as the Sultan's army. It also supervised the contingents of the *muqtis*. Since land revenue was the main source of the income of the State its administration was given priority. Officials were appointed to look after assessment and collection of revenue from the lands either directly administered by the centre or assigned to *iqta* holders. The Sultanate managed to develop a complex cohesive administrative network which could sustain it, with fluctuating actual control, for over three hundred years of its existence.

11.11 KEYWORDS

Abwab: Cesses

Amir: Officer

Bahi : Ledger/ accounts books

Balahar: Village menials/ ordinary peasants

Biswa: 1/20th part of a bigha.

Ami-i akhur : Master of royal stable/ horses

Amir-i sadah : "Centurians, "Commander of hundred"

Khat-i azadi : Letter of manumission

Tajik : a race/ free-born nobles

Turk-i chihilgani : "The Forty"(corporate body of Turkish nobles of Ilutmish)

Ulema : Theologians

Wajhdar: Salaried persons / iqta-holders

Aizzah : "Dear Ones" (Khurasani nobles under Muhammad Tughluq).

Umara: Nobles (plural of amir)

Yaran-i hashm: Soldiers

11.12 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Discuss unique features introduced in administrative apparatus of the Delhi Sultanate.
- 2) Describe the provincial and local administration under the Delhi Sultans.
- 3) What was the role of Khuts, Muqaddams, Choudharies etc in Local administration?
- 4) Write a note on Revenue administration under Delhi Sultanate

11.13 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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11.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) The capital city and its surrounding areas were under his direct central control - administrative and otherwise. Since they were in the close vicinity of the ruler, central control was most strongly felt in these areas. The node of the administrative apparatus was the Sultan. He was the ruler of the entire realm, and after accession to the throne — he had absolute power in his hands. He was the supreme commander of the army, and it was he, or officers appointed by him, who led armies to conquer other areas. Thus, the sultan was in many ways the head of the administrative system.

2) The iqta was a territorial assignment given to administrative officers and nobles in lieu of the services they performed for the state. The holder of iqta was designated *asmuqti*. The *muqti* was responsible for the collection of revenue from these territories and also worked as administrative head.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The *Ariz*, along with his office, maintained the royal contingents, recruited the soldiers, ensured the discipline and fitness of the army, examined the horses and branded them with the royal insignia. During times of war, the *Ariz* arranged the military provisions, transportation and administered the army at war, provided constant supplies, and was the custodian of war booty.

2) The *Diwan-i-Insha*, headed by the *Dabir-i-Khas*, looked after the department of royal correspondence. He drafted and despatched royal orders, and received reports from officers in various parts of the empire. This reflected the diplomatic perspective which conveyed in carefully chosen language the commands of the ruler.

UNIT 12 ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS: THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

STRUCTURE

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Historical Background
- 12.3 Forming Stable Structures
- 12.4 Refurbishing Revenue System
- 12.5 Mansabdari System
- 12.6 The Jagirdari System
- 12.7 Aristocracy
- 12.8 Revamping Administration
 - 12.8.1 Administration--Central
 - 12.8.2 Administration—Provincial and Local
- 12.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.10 Keywords
- 12.11 Questions for review
- 12.12 Suggested Readings and references
- 12.13 Answers To Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we have extensively dealt with the evolution of the administrative system of the Mughal Empire; changes introduced in Revenue administration and; the administration at the Central level and Provincial level.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The political structure which developed during the sultanate period and under the Afghans(Lodis and Surs) was the forerunner of the Mughal system under Akbar and his successors. The most important constituent of the Administrative system of the Delhi Sultanate was the *Iqta*. However, since the time of Ibrahim Lodi we get reference to *Jagirs*

(Abdullah: Tarikh-I-Daudi) which developed into a system of revenue assignment during the Mughal period. The administrative machinery which evolved since the time of the Ilbaris underwent many changes and many new units of administration were introduced in the time of Tughlak and Afghans; *shiq* came into existence during the Tughlak period and *sarkar* was introduced in the Afghan period. Several new administrative offices emerged viz. *shiqdar* and *faujdar*. *Shiqdar* and *Faujdar* were officers' in charge of *shiq* and *pargana* in the Tughlak period. Initially *shiqdar* was in charge of a *shiq* but later *shiq* was subsumed into *pargana* and *shiqdar* became a *pargana* official in the period of the Afghans. *Shiqdars* were appointed in the *khalisa parganas* and cities (headquarter of *sarkar*) under the Afghans.

During the Lodi and Sur period *iqta* was no longer a territorial unit and it was replaced by *sarkar*. *Sarkar* comprised of a number of *parganas*. *Hakim* was the officer in charge of the *sarkar* in the Lodi period although this term is used interchangeably with *muqti* for those holding land assignments called *iqta* in the sources. *Iqtas* continued to be granted to assignees from *khalisa parganas* during the Afghan period and the *wajahdars* or *muqtis* or amirs exercised military and executive powers in the *iqta*. Under the Surs the *wajahdar* appointed their own *shiqdars* and amils in their *iqtas*.

During this period *iqtas* could be as big as a *sarkar*, of the size of the *pargana* or smaller than a *pargana*. They were not permanent and hereditary but were subject to transfer but not frequent transfer. *Iqtas* could also be retained by nobles as ancestral *iqtas* in accordance with the desire of the king during the Sur period. However, Islam Shah, the Sur ruler, tried to bring more and more land under *khalisa* by encouraging cash payment. The assessment of revenue on the basis of measurement of land which had been introduced since Alauddin Khalji's time was further consolidated in the Lodi and Sur period. The administrative machinery under the Lodis and Surs was quite extensive.

Although the administrative system of the earlier period continued under the Lodis but some new officials came into existence viz. *amins* (who measured land). Under Sur's too several new offices came into being at

the *pargana* level: the *munsif-I-khazana* (treasury inspector), *khazandar* (treasurer) and *qanungo* (maintained the revenue papers). Several changes were introduced under the Mughals, though certain features of the administrative system of the preceding period were retained. The *jagir* and *mansab* became important as novel features introduced under the Mughals. A new territorial unit called *suba* was introduced. The *subedar* emerged as the supreme officer of the province. The *shiqdar* was subordinated to the *faujdar* who became the officer in charge of either *sarkars* of two different subas/parganas in a *sarkar*. In the sphere of revenue administration also significant changes were introduced by Akbar although he relied on Shershah's endeavours and experiments in the field of revenue administration for introducing reforms. Thus, the administrative structure which developed under the Mughals was a furtherance of the earlier system in certain respects. However, certain important changes were introduced (*mansab, jagir, revenue reforms*) which brought about a high degree of centralisation in the imperial edifice.

12.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A simple military victory is like erecting an edifice without a foundation. Such a structure collapses with the first blow. Military forces under Babur's command did succeed in achieving significant victories, first against the most prominent political power in north India under the Lodis, followed by others. Yet he could find no time for organising administrative structures or institutions to consolidate the gains. Humayun struggled and failed to hold this structure. However, the Mughal forces regrouped themselves, and with the assistance provided by the Safavid ruler of Persia, they recaptured the Delhi throne in July 1555. Accidental death of Humayun within a few months of this success did not allow him any time for the designing and development of political institutions or administrative structures suitable for resource mobilisation and evolution of a cohesive social structure, if he at all had any such plan.

His successor, Akbar was only about fourteen years old when he was entrusted with works for which he was yet not adequately prepared and trained, that too in somewhat an alien land. But within four-five years' time he appears to have acquired remarkable maturity. Gradually he not only extracted himself from endless intrigues of his nobility but also initiated steps towards maximisation of resource potential and a standardised distribution mechanism for the officials of the state. Simultaneously, he worked towards securing territorial integrity and organising nobility that was fully under his command and represented cohesiveness amidst heterogeneous social structure. To achieve these multifarious objectives he successfully carried out measures that constituted his administrative system and institutions.

Administrative and institutional structures that are highlighted in various scholarly works on the Mughals are presented normally in their mature forms. Such presentations obscure from our view the difficulties and developments of the formative years of the Mughal rule. Any attempt to explain the formation of the Mughal empire either as the legacy of the Sultanate period or in the continuation of the appanage system of central Asia, including the theory of sovereignty traced to the Mongols, or symbols and rituals that become current with the sixteenth and seventeenth century Mughals, do not satisfactorily provide explanations for the strength and stability of the Mughal empire. Further, one also does not find any meaningful difference between the character of the nobility that could be seen during the Sultanate period and that of the Mughals. If the previous state forms had failed to perpetuate the rule of any of the dynasties of the earlier period, then how could they be considered efficacious in containing the aspirations of the Mughal nobles, categorised as powerful groups of Turanis, Iranis, Indian Muslims and the Rajputs?

Conversely, an understating of the administrative and institutional structures that evolved during the first twenty five years of Akbar's reign provides a better perspective on the formation of the Mughal Empire. The accidental death of Humayun placed Akbar on quite an insecure throne at a tender age (born in October 1542, accession in February 1556). Around

next four years were spent under an over-arching personality of Bairam Khan. This period was witness to contestations between different groups of kinsmen of Turani background for control over greater share of revenue from large contiguous areas, possibly for carving out an independent principality at some future date; along with no discernible control over the size of contingents under their control for which individual nobles had set their own salary-packets. For example, after removal of Bairam Khan while Munim Khan was appointed *wakil-us saltanate*, Shamsuddin Atka was awarded a *jagir* valued at one crore *tanka* without specifying how this amount was to be distributed among his supporters and the rate of payment for the troopers.

Till about 1560 the position of Akbar, or the base of the Mughal Empire, was unsound. Available information does not help in knowing what training or guidance prompted Akbar, in 1561, to initiate measures to assess afresh the resources of the controlled territories, and accordingly devise modes or systems of its distribution which would also not appear to be whimsical or totally arbitrary. Through different stages and arrangements these systems acquired their final shape, and with that the Mughal ruler positioned himself as the only source of patronage and supreme authority.

12.3 FORMING STABLE STRUCTURES

Removal of Bairam Khan, as *wakil-us saltanate*, and appointment of Munim Khan (September 1560–November 1561) in his place had apparently made no visible improvement in the administration or income of the state. Rather, the situation had worsened. Around November 1561 Akbar relied upon Shamsuddin Atka and entrusted him with certain responsibilities. Soon it was followed by his formal appointment as *wakil-us saltanate* (November 1561–June 1562). From this time onwards some clarity of thought and approach towards governance comes into view. Such persons who had established their reputation as professional in approach and competent in their work were appointed in the revenue department irrespective of their past association with discredited nobles or officials.

The revenue department initiated scrutiny of records to ascertain the value of nobles' land assignments (*jagirs*). Apparently some corrective steps were also initiated, leading to resentment. Added to this, the recall of Adham Khan from Malwa at this juncture precipitated the matter. Adham Khan who could no longer hold himself any longer engineered the assassination of Shamsuddin Atka (June, 1562) while the latter was in his office. Without loss of any time Adham Khan was executed at the express orders of Akbar. Munim Khan and Shihabuddin Ahmed Khan fled from Agra. Their flight, in a way, demonstrated their complicity in the murder of Shamsuddin Atka.

While timely action against Adham Khan ruled out possibility of any reprisals from the members of Atka family, it clearly demonstrated that Akbar would not hesitate to take severest action against any person, even if that person was considered to be close to the ruler and thereby above law, if he interfered in discharge of duties assigned by the ruler. Akbar took advantage of the alleged connivance of Munim Khan and others in the murder of Shamsuddin Atka and curtailed the power and authority of those who had misused it during all these years. Though he re-appointed Munim Khan as *wakil*, the latter found that he could no more exercise power and authority that a *wakil* had enjoyed till around this time. The most important change was the separation of revenue department from the control of the *wakil*. Thus around August 1563 Muzaffar Khan Turbati, who at an earlier stage was an employee of Bairam Khan and was also imprisoned after the removal of Bairam Khan, was promoted from *diwan-i buyutat* (*diwan* of royal *Karkhanas* or workshops) to *diwan-i kul* or *wazir* (central *diwan*) with extensive powers over income and expenditure of the state.

Appointment of Muzaffar Khan as *diwan-i kul* should not be seen as promotion of one faction against another, it was rather a clear demonstration of royal prerogatives. However this prerogative was not used indiscriminately. Office of *diwani* required professional expertise. Muzaffar Khan had acquired and used it to the benefit of his employer during his earlier assignment.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How Mughals modified Afghan administration?

2) Who was diwan-i-buyutat?

12.4 REFURBISHING REVENUE SYSTEM

Before discussing the innovation introduced by Akbar it is important to understand the revenue system of Sher Shah (1540-45). In Sher Shah's period standard schedule for the sown area (Ray or yield per unit area) was prepared. It was arrived at by annual measurement of land. It indicated high, medium and low yields for each crop. After arriving at the average produce, tax was fixed at 1/3rd of the average produce in kind or commuted into cash at current prices. Concessions were provided for crop failure.

The collection of data relating to revenue, which started during the *wikalat* of Shamsuddin Atka, continued unabated. It is reproduced as the *Ain-i nozdahsala* (nineteen year regulation) in the *Ain-i Akbari* starting in the 6th regnal year through 24th year (1561-79), without any break. State prescribed rates for individual crops for all the 'provinces' are recorded in the *Ain*. It is noticeable that these rates were evaluated at regular intervals and revisions were made. For instance, between 6th and 9th regnal year, covering all the 'provinces' except Malwa, single and identical rates for each crop were approved; between 10th and 14th year, rates are lower than the earlier phase, for most of the crops two rates (minimum and maximum) are given, and that these rates vary from 'province' to 'province'; last phase relating to 15th to 24th year registers rates that are

still lower (in case of inferior crops there is a marked decline) and the difference in rates is quite pronounced between different *subas*. After completion of the evaluation process final *dasturs* were announced. Listed separately, however, harvest-wise final *dasturs* (cash revenue rates for crops) for the provinces indicate an upward movement in the rates; the increase is about 11%. However this increase matches with the increase, by about 11%, in the size of the unit area (*bigha*) implemented around 1586 and, thus, reflects only an adjustment.

The movement in crop rates does not appear either to be arbitrary in the sense that the ruler was after the hard earned labour of the producers or that he wanted to project himself as philanthropist. The changes were based on careful study of available data. Writing for the 11th regnal year, Abul Fazl says that around this time *jama*' (assessed revenue) was highly inflated and had caused great distress. Further, that under the directions of Muzaffar Khan and Todar Mal local revenue officials had submitted, to the central administration, area and revenue statistics (*taqsim*) for their respective jurisdictions; these were utilized to work out the *jama*'. Based on the measures initiated a few years later it can be said that the central revenue department was not fully satisfied with the information on account of large differences between *jama* and *hasil* (collections) on a very large scale. They appear to have also identified the *zamindars* and the *jagirdars*, two functionaries of different nature, as the sources of interference.

It may not have been considered practicable to remove the *zamindars*, which enjoyed hereditary superior rights over the produce in their areas, altogether from the countryside scene, as Alauddin Khalji had attempted in earlier times. The position of the *jagirdars* was different as they could be paid in cash for their services to the state and be thus kept away from interfering in the intended measures for the rural sector. As a result, land assignments to the Mughal officials were terminated from the entire north Indian territories and this land was converted into directly administered territory or *khalisa* (1573-4).

If we look back at the revenue measures of Alauddin Khalji it is not very clear what precautionary steps he had taken to counter the prejudicial role

Notes

of influence groups (*iqtadars* and the *zamindars*) before he conducted measurement of land. Also, whether he classified the cultivated land according to the productivity of soil and whether his records gave any information relating to the extent of measured area under various jurisdictions, etc. In case of the Mughals, Abul Fazl is not very helpful in conveying the details about the survey work conducted by the *karoris*. This has led scholars to term the work carried out by the *karoris* as 'karori experiment', which would mean that the work was tentative in nature and thereby inconsequential. However, Badauni and Nizamuddin Ahmad are unanimous in providing such information that altogether alters our understanding and shows the thoroughness of the exercise that in the end produced results establishing firm control of the state over the resources of the empire, and thereby extremely useful in meeting the expenses of the state.

Accordingly, new territorial units were created. The sum total of this measure produced estimated revenue of one *kror* (10 million) *dams* for each territory. Each such unit of *khalisa* land was put into the charge of a *karori*. A *karori* was entrusted to carry out measurement of entire open lands reaching up to heavy forests, and clearly indicates land use under separate heads, like under habitation, water bodies (river, *talab* etc.), small hillocks, uncultivable waste (*usar*) for each village under his jurisdiction. In all likelihood, it is during the course of the above operation that productivity of different crops per unit area from good, middling and low fertility soil, a system introduced during the time of Sher Shah, was valued and fixed. *Karori* or some other state official monitored prices of food-grains in the local *mandis* during harvesting seasons and conveyed these to the central administration. To absorb seasonal fluctuations both in productivity and prices, data were collected over a period of five years. For the preceding five years similar information was obtained from 'knowledgeable persons', or from those local officials, including perhaps the *zamindars* also, who were actively engaged in revenue management. The entire process has been termed as *Ain-i dahsala*. Ten years' average, computed out of multiple of productivity and price, data was considered as the value of produce per

unit area (known as *bigha*) and one third of this value, in terms of cash, was promulgated as the final crop rate for individual crops. Suppose one *bigha* of land produced 12 *maunds* of a certain crop, which was sold at the rate of 12 *dams* per *maund*, the total value of this crop will be (12 x 12) 144 *dams*. As 1/3 of the value of the produce was collected by the state the crop rate would be 48 *dams*. We shall come back to discuss the utility of the results of this exercise later.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Kirori Experiment.

2) Ain-i-dahsala System

12.5 MANSABDARI SYSTEM

Mughal mansabdari system was modelled on the Mongol *yassa* (decrees of Chengiz Khan). The Mongol tribes were led by Khans (chiefs). The Mongol aristocracy was based on heredity and noble birth and the council which elected the chiefs was composed of the direct descendants of Chengiz. These nobles were commanders of men (*Ulus-tribal units*) and they obtained tribute from the territories for sustenance and were not a permanent landed aristocracy since the assigned territories held by them could be transferred.

Akbar had inherited a system in which there does not appear to be much clarity on the hierarchy of the Mughal nobles and the size and salary at which they maintained armed contingents under their command. Remuneration and expenditure on these two entailed huge financial

liability on the State. Right from the time of the establishment of the Sultanate, payments for these two were made through alienation of state revenue from assigned territory to individuals. The Mughals too followed the same practice. Arrangement appears to have been very flexible. Evidence for the early years show that land or revenue assignment to a noble was announced first and thereon he spent a proportion of the income on the maintenance of his contingent. From all accounts it appears that each noble or commander was free to fix the size of his contingent as well as rates of payment for his soldiers. Following from this, if one or a group of nobles surreptitiously maintained a large or small sized contingent (for some evil design in their minds) they could do so.

One wonders if the rebellious behaviour of some of the groups of nobles during the early years of the 1560s was one of the manifestations of this kind. The possibility cannot be ruled out. The remedial step, which could not be considered radical but appears to take cognizance of revised yet highly inflated *jama* was standardisation of rates for the troopers in the 11th regnal year. Remuneration or allowances of individual nobles was not touched in order to avoid general discontentment among the very section that had provided strength and military support to the state.

In 1573-74 an innovative scheme was introduced that streamlined the position of the nobles in the state hierarchy. The arrangement was called *mansab* system. Under the *mansab* system ranks were expressed in numerical terms. The *Ain-i Akbari* has listed 66 ranks, though in practice only 33 were utilized. The entire hierarchical ordering of the state officials, irrespective of office and their work, was covered under the scheme, starting with the lowest rank of 10 reaching the highest of 5,000. Above 5,000 and up to 7,000 were reserved for the princes of royal blood. Though reference about numerical ranks from earlier times could be found, nothing was as elaborate and comparable to the Mughal *mansab* system.

During the Sultanate period ranking was expressed by designations that were separate for the military and civil personnel; lower rank commanders along with their contingents were integral to the contingent

of a higher ranked commander. Under the Mughals, each *mansabdar* (holder of a rank) maintained sanctioned strength of contingent and account for it and each was paid separately in accordance with the schedule of pay. By now the earlier three rates of payment fixed (1566-67) for the contingents were abolished and each member of the contingent, irrespective of his being part of a higher ranked *mansabdar* or a lower *mansabdar*, received the same salary, fixed at 8,000 *dams* per annum (per unit of *sawar* rank). To strictly ensure that the *mansabdars* properly maintained the sanctioned size of their contingents they were required to regularly bring their contingents, with the equipage, for inspection. The office of *bakshi* maintained descriptive rolls (*tashih*) of individual trooper and separate branding mark (*dagh*) for the war and transport animals of each *mansabdar*. Badauni informs us how many *mansabdars* cheated the exchequer by hiring untrained persons at the time of inspection and disbanding them once the inspection was over. Till about the 40th regnal year only one rank was used for the *mansab* which suggests that rank and size of contingent were the same.

The fraudulent practices noted by Badauni were perhaps also noticed by the Mughal administration. As a remedial step from the 40th regnal year onwards *mansabs* were expressed in dual terms, *zat* and *sawar*. While *zat* denoted the personal rank of an official, *sawar* indicated the sizes of contingents maintained by the *mansabdars*. Depending on the strength of the contingents *mansabdars* were placed in three categories. In the first, *zat* and *sawar* ranks were equal; in the second *sawar* rank was lower than the *zat* but stopped at half, or fifty percent, of the *zat* rank; under the third *sawar* rank was lower than fifty per cent of the *zat* rank. Salary for the *zat* rank varied accordingly.

The schedule of pay for the *mansabdars* given in the *Ain-i Akbari* was obviously redrawn after these changes were introduced. The schedule of pay in the *Ain* also lists size of stables, specifying species and numbers of war and transport animals, to be maintained by the *mansabdars*. The configuration that appears after the 40th regnal year is considered the classic form of the *mansab* system. The expenditure on the maintenance of these was borne out by the *mansabdars* out of their *zat* salary. Though

it cost about twenty five percent of the *zat* salary, the balance left with the *mansabdars* was still very substantial by any standard. The overall assignments given to *mansabdars*, around the year 1600, out of the total revenue of the Mughal empire is estimated at around seventy five per cent.

The system reflected transparency both for upward movement on the professional front as well as rewards for the services without any kind of racial or parochial considerations. The most significant achievement of the *mansab* system was that it cut the nobility to its size and the ruler emerged as the sole arbiter.

However, the systems and institutions so assiduously built by Akbar could not receive similar attention and modifications to meet the challenge of the changing time and situations. During the entire seventeenth century there does not appear to have been a single attempt to re-evaluate the revenue potential. We do find *jama* figures for different years of the seventeenth century and note that these are higher than those available in the *Ain*. However, factors responsible for the upward revisions are not known. If we take c. 1595 as the base year, the increase in *jama*, recorded in 1628, was 81%; it shot up by 251% around 1656. By all account these were massive increases that could only have been caused by very marked upward movement in prices, substantial expansion in cultivated area and remarkable increase in the cultivation of superior crops. However, we have no information on any of these.

Contrary to this, during Shahjahan's time assessed value of different areas were identified in terms of time-scale. Accordingly, *jagirs* were termed as nine-monthly or six-monthly and the like. This was done to compensate the gap between the estimated revenue (*jama*) and actual collection (*hasil*). The ranks were assigned on the calculation of estimated revenue while actual collection was much less than the estimate. In other words, officially it was accepted that yield from these stood at 75% or 50%, respectively of the recorded *jama* for them. While such a high magnitude of inflation in *jama* figures, recorded at the centre, was a common knowledge, it appears quite strange that the ruler did not initiate any corrective step.

The obligations of the *mansabdars* underwent changes during the time of successors of Akbar. Jahangir had introduced a new provision in the *sawar* rank. According to it a part of *sawar* rank was termed *du-aspa sih-aspa* (currently written in its short form as 2-3h) in case of select *mansabdars*. For this part additional payment at the same rate of 8,000 *dams* per *sawar* was sanctioned. Thus, if the *sawar* rank was 4,000 out of which 1,000 was *du-aspa sih-aspa*, salary for this rank was calculated as $3,000 \times 8,000 + (1,000 \times 8,000 \times 2) = 40,000,000$ *dams*. Without *du-aspa-sih-aspa* salary for the same 4,000 *sawar* would have stood at $(4,000 \times 8,000) 32,000,000$ *dams* only. The debilitation is more visible during the time of Shahjahan.

The numbers of *du-aspa sih-aspa* awards are on a much larger scale. In addition, a still more serious step taken was what could be termed as, the Rule of Proportion. The *mansabdars* were allowed to maintain 1/5, to 1/3 of the sanctioned strength of the *sawar* rank without any accompanying reduction in their claim on the maintenance amount for the *sawar* rank. While Aurangzeb continued with all these changes, an additional rank, called *mashrut* (conditional), was affixed. Apparently due to the Rule of Proportion the size of contingent available with a *mansabdar* was, at times, not considered adequate. Therefore, on appointment to *qiladar* or *faujdar* like positions the concerned official was given *mashrut* rank. It was withdrawn on removal from the office.

In addition, certain deductions from the salary of the *mansabdars*, introduced at the time of Shahjahan were carried forward by Aurangzeb. Nobles belonging to the Deccan region, called Deccanis in the Mughal records, compulsorily faced a deduction of one-fourth from their total salary calculated for both the ranks. In the records it is termed as *waza-i dam-i chauthai*. Aurangzeb apparently experienced further crunch in the resources and, therefore, added yet another deduction, called *khurak/rasad-i khurak* or *khurak-i dawwab*, towards meeting the cost for feed of animals in the imperial stables.

Mansabdari and *Jagirdari* systems explain the organisation of the Mughal nobility. *Mansabdars* receive their pay either in cash or in the forms of *Jagirs*. However most of them were *jagirdars*. They realised the

revenue from their *jagirs* (which were normally assigned outside the province where they were posted) and imperial officials were appointed to keep a check over them. It seems that *zat* rank was generally always higher than the *sawar* rank. In the Mughal system the main distinction was not between civil and military as Athar Ali points out “.... there was no division between civil and military services as such” (*Medieval India Quarterly*, p. 299.) The main dividing line was between the executive and financial duties i.e. *Subedar* and *Diwan*, *Amil* and *Faujdar*.

12.6 JAGIRDARI SYSTEM

Assignment of revenue from a limited and specified territory had been considered as the most convenient arrangement in lieu of payment for services to the state. *Iqta* was the term used during the Sultanate period. Prior to 1570s the Mughals appear to have continued with the arrangement that was not substantially different from administrative cum military appointments of the Lodi period for territories assigned to its commanders.

A recent study has shown that in those years *hukumat*, *hirasat*, *hakim*, *sardari* etc. were more commonly used terms than *jagir*, and that their jurisdiction extended over much larger areas in size. Apparently this was one of the reasons for the growing tensions between the central authority and the *hakims/sardars* who considered themselves free to make revenue assignments in territories under their administrative jurisdictions. Prevailing over initial difficulties, from the early 1560s the central administration took control over the assignment of revenue in its own hands; it also started to distribute it over different localities.

In the early phase we have examples of assignments made by jagirdars from their jagirs. For instance, when Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka was awarded additional ‘*jagir*’ area, valued at one *kror* (10,000,000) *tankas* in the Punjab, he apparently, was at liberty to distribute it among his kinsmen and followers. The ‘*jagir*’ of Mir Hashim located in Kahmard, Ghorbund and Zuhak was under the jurisdiction of the *hakim* of Kabul (Munim Khan); Munim Khan, a *hakim* of Kabul removed Khwaja

Jalauddin Mahmud from the '*jagir*' of Ghaznin in 1557; Ali Quli Khan, commandant of Lucknow assigned a '*jagir*' to Ismail Khan in Sandila (1558).

Major changes, like those in the revenue administration and the finalisation of the *mansab* system, also took shape in the *jagir* system during the 1570s. As pointed out earlier, all the *jagirs* in northern India were abolished in 1573-4 to neutralize the influence and interference of the nobility in carrying the extensive work primarily related to revenue assessment. Assignment of revenue, or *jagirs*, was re-introduced once details about the sum total of assessed revenue for villages attached to the lowest fiscal-cum-administrative units, *parganas*, had become available to the central *diwani*. Salary entitlements of a *mansabdar* were calculated on the basis of his *zat* and *sawar* ranks.

The salary was paid either in cash or through the assignment of a *jagir*, the latter being the preferable mode. In case the payment was made through the assignment of a *jagir*, the office of the central *diwan* would identify *parganas* the sum total of whose *jama* was equal to the salary claim of the *mansabdar*. Accordingly assignment order for the *jagir*, listing these *parganas*, was issued. In case recorded *jama* was in excess of salary claim the assignee was required to deposit the balance with the central treasury.

On the other hand, if it was less than the salary claim the short fall was paid from the treasury. However, none of these assignments were permanent or hereditary. The ruler could shift part or the entire *jagir* from one part of the imperial territory to another at any time. Based on French traveller Bernier's statement, made towards the middle of the seventeenth century, it has generally been assumed that *jagirs* were frequently transferred, on an average of three years. However, evidence from contemporary sources indicate that some of the *jagirdars* were allowed to keep their *jagir* assignments in one locality for as long a period as eighteen years; for instance Itibar Khan for 15 years and Saiyid Khan Jahan for 18 years held their *jagirs* in Gwalior, Abdullah Khan for 17 years in Kalpi, Raja Bithal Das held the *jagir* in Dhaulpur for 10 years.

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We get some references to a few specific types of jagirs being given. Of these *Watanjagirs* were given to the zamindars in their local dominions as remuneration for *mansab*(rank) accorded to them by the Mughal government for the services rendered by them. *Altamgha* jagirs (*jagirs* allotted to the nobles in their family town or place of birth) were given to non-zamindars since the time of Jahangir. Reference to these jagirs is also found in Aurangzeb's time. In the seventeenth century the practice of Ijaradari was extensive. According to this practice *jagirs* were leased out to troops for their maintenance by the small Jagirdars.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Define Mansab System.

2) Zaf and Sawar.

3) Mashrut Rank.

4) Watan Jagirs

12.7 ARISTOCRACY

Generally, in analysing the organisation of the Mughal nobility two major points have been highlighted: 1) patronage of Rajput chieftains at an unprecedented scale and their unflinching loyalty to the Mughal rulers, and 2) Akbar's brilliance in accommodating regional or ethnic groups till it reached a stage when all of them were almost evenly balanced. However, these suggestions do not adequately explain unflinching allegiance and faith of the Mughal nobility towards the ruling house during post-Akbar period.

The Mughal relations, including matrimonial, with the Rajput chieftains continued for several generations reaching well into the eighteenth century, and yet it could not arrest the crisis of the Mughal Empire. On the other hand, if Akbar's mobilization skill is considered to have produced a subordinate nobility, how could it have such a lasting effect that successive generations of political elites continued to accept their subordination to the Mughal rulers. Some of the Sultans of Delhi, who had risen from the ranks of nobles, too appear to have attempted to create or organise dependent nobility, by promoting and patronising one kind of group against another, to ensure their loyalty to the ruling house. The fate of the successors of all these rulers is too well known and, therefore, we need not go into those details here. Akbar was a visionary and had clear thoughts on how to establish structures with near permanent roles for nobles irrespective of their regional or ethnic lineage.

The main group of camp followers, or nobles of Babur and Humayun, were trained and brought up in a different tradition. Their allegiance to the ruler was limited; the underlying principal was acceptance of their near autonomous authority over a territory in return for military support. Taking advantage of Akbar's immature age and inexperience, some of these nobles had manoeuvred to obtain contiguous areas, in lieu of their services for themselves and their kinsmen. The Mirzas in Sambhal, the Uzbeks in Awadh, and the Atkas in Punjab are a few examples. So long as they were allowed near autonomous authority over their respective regions they continued to remain loyal. However, they did not hesitate to

Notes

take to arms against the central authority when the process to re-evaluate revenue potential (1561), engaging trained meritorious personnel, was initiated. They considered it as interference, and erosion of their autonomy.

Paradigm shift in the attitude of the nobility, from confrontation to cooperation, was needed. This transformation in the attitude could only be achieved through assurance of security and lucrative compensation by the state. To meet this prerequisite the *mansab* system clearly defined available hierarchies for the entire state officials, irrespective of ethnic, regional or any other kind of consideration. It also assured substantial compensation for their services. For example, a rank holder of 5,000 *zat* was allowed Rs. 30,000 per month. After meeting expenses for the maintenance of obligatory war and transport animals and equipment, around 25% of this amount, the balance of Rs. 22,500 per month was still very high and attractive by any standard for that age. The system was, in many ways, transparent and that removed suspicions of undue favours and rewards to others. It also did not make any distinction between an old associate and a newcomer, including the Indian elements.

Percentage of Hindu nobles out of the total nobles

Akbar Shahjahan Aurangzeb

	(1595)	(1628-58)
	(1658-78)	(1679-1707)
5000 and above	14.3	24.5
3000 to 4500	10.0	25.0
1000 to 2700	35.3	20.0
22.3	33.1	27.1
500 to 900	21.8	21.3

Total	22.5	22.4
	21.6	31.6

Ref. M. Athar Ali's *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*

This table shows that during Aurangzeb's reign, the percentage of Hindu nobles' increased due to the induction of Deccanis (Marathas etc.) into Mughal service. From later accounts, the change in the conduct and perspective of the nobility is well established. Individuals might have taken the extreme step of rebellion; they failed in garnering sufficient support to become a threat to the Mughal rule. They did take sides during times of succession problem yet there is not a single instance when any one from the nobility staked his claim for the throne. The subordination of the nobility was complete and final. Various racial groups were included in the Mughal nobility during Babur, Humayun and Akbar's period. The most prominent of these groups can be classified as Turanis (central Asia), Iranis (Persians), Afghans, Shaikhzadas (Indian Muslims) and Rajputs. In the seventeenth century Deccanis were also included, example, Bijapuris, Hyderabadis and Marathas.

12.8 REVAMPING ADMINISTRATION

Information obtained during the survey of the territories, under the supervision of the *karoris*, was further utilised for re-organisation of administrative divisions. Though we come across territorial classifications from the Sultanate period, paucity of related details would frustrate any attempt to demarcate either the 'provinces' of Alauddin or the *sarkars* of the Lodi period. It is a misnomer to call them provinces. Many of these appear to be similar in size to *sarkars* of Mughal period or present day districts; for example Delhi, Meerut, Baran (modern Bulandshahr), Kol (modern Aligarh), Amroha, Bahraich, Gorakhpur etc. Bengal and Orissa in the east to Kabul in the northwest and Gujarat in the southwest Mughal territories were divided into twelve *subas* (provinces) in 1582. Each *suba* was further divided into *sarkars*, each *sarkar* encompassing large numbers of *parganas*. Apparently geo-political considerations were the main determinant in the shaping of a *suba* and its lower divisions. Mughal demarcations of territories in many

cases were maintained subsequently during the British period. Later on threnew provinces were added i.e. Berar, Khandesh and Ahmednagar.

By the year 1582 the Mughal Empire had not only developed two major tiers of governance, central, provincial and local, it had also given shape to various administrative offices for ensuring efficient and effective working of the state both at the central as well as provincial levels. In the division of authority proper safeguards were provided to ensure that supreme power would be vested in the ruler.

12.8.1 Administration--Central

The office of *wakil-us Saltanate* had become most powerful during the period of Bairam Khan's regency, enjoining both the important functions of administrative and revenue departments. The arrangements continued for another two years when Munim Khan and Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka were elevated to this position one after the other. However, after the assassination of Shamsuddin Atka, Munim Khan also came under suspicion for the conspiracy; Akbar took advantage of the situation and drastically curtailed the powers of the *wakil*. Munim Khan was reappointed as *wakil* without the revenue department. It was not before long that while the office of the *wakil* lost all lustre, the office of *diwani* (revenue department), successively under the supervision of meritorious professional hands, emerged as one of the most important and powerful departments. However the emperor was the supreme head of the administration and the fountainhead of all powers. All the important appointments were made by the emperor.

Another important office at the centre was that of *bakshi*. The *bakshi* was responsible for keeping strict watch over proper maintenance of the sanctioned size of armed contingents and war equipage by the *mansabdars*. The office of *sadr*, bestowed on one of the most respected theologians of the time, on account of its almost unlimited authority to distribute allowances and stipends, had become very lucrative during the first twenty-five years of Akbar's reign. In the eyes of a contemporary, the largess squandered by this office, from about 1556 till around the middle of the 1570s, was far larger than the total value of earlier three hundred years. In a way this office had started to become another power

centre. However, the promulgation of *mahzar* (declaration according to which in case of conflicting views on religion Akbar's view would prevail) in 1580 ended their domination in matters of religion. It was followed by severe restrictions on the authority of a *sadr* for award of revenue-free grants etc.

12.8.2 Administration—Provincial and Local

The Mughal Empire was divided into twelve *subas* or provinces by Akbar in 1582. These were Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Ahmedabad, Bihar, Bengal, Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Malwa. Later on three more added after the conquest of Deccan. These were Ahmednagar, Khandesh and Berar. Subedar, diwan, bakhshi, *miradl (qazi)*, *sadr*, *kotwal*, *mirbahr* (in charge of port duties, customs etc.) and *waqianavis* were the key officials of *suba*. The *subedar* (governor or *sipahsalar*) was the head of the *suba* administration. The governor was entrusted with wide range of powers relating to provincial administration. In 1586-87 as a part of new experiment two governors were appointed in each *suba*. According to Abul Fazl in the case of inability of one the other could take his place. But the experiment was abandoned after sometime.

At provincial levels, separation and independence of authority of important officials was strictly enforced. Each province was provided with an administrative head, which was initially called Sipahsalar. Hakim, Nazim and Subedar were other designations. During course of time Subedar became a more common title used for this office. He, however, had no jurisdiction over the revenue department.

Next in importance was the *diwan*. Like the central *diwan (diwan-i kul)* provincial *diwan* was in-charge of all matters relating to revenue affairs. The diwan had under him a number of subordinate and local officials, such as *amin*, *qanungo*, *chaudhari* and *muqddam* who assisted him in the revenue administration of the parganas and villages. He directly reported to the *diwan-i kul* (central *diwan*).

This position of *diwan* in the *suba* independent of the governor, sometimes created administrative problems. In case the *diwan* and

Notes

governor of the *suba* did not work in harmony, the administration suffered. However, this separation prevented the governor from becoming very powerful. Another *suba* level official was *bakshi* who carried out the task assigned by *Mir Bakshi*, or central *bakshi*. The representative of the central *sadr* (*Sadr us Sadr*) at the provincial level was called *sadr*. He was responsible for the welfare of those engaged in religious activities and learning. As he was considered a learned person he was entrusted with the work of judiciary and in that capacity supervised the work of *qazis* appointed at lower level administrative divisions.

In every *suba* a number of *faujdar*s were appointed. From the sources it does not appear very clear whether under normal circumstances *faujdari* jurisdiction corresponded to a *sarkar*'s territorial jurisdiction. There are instances when a *faujdar* was appointed to supervise over two adjoining *sarkars* even if these belonged to two different *subas*; they were, sometimes, also appointed over areas covering a number of *parganas* within a *sarkar*. They were not only responsible to maintain law and order; they also assisted in the timely collection of revenue from their jurisdictions. They were assisted by the *amalguzar* in performing the task of revenue administration. *Faujdari* was an administrative division whereas *sarkar* was a territorial and revenue division. *Faujdar*s were appointed by imperial order.

Penetration of the state authority reached to the lowest level of administrative units through various other officials, like the *kotwals* (in charge of law and order) who were appointed mainly in towns by the imperial government, *qanungos*, *amils* (revenue) etc. Even the services of the *zamindars* were utilized for the maintenance of law and order in their areas as well as in the collection of revenue. The *shiqdar* was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, administration of criminal justice and general administration of pargana. In Akbar's period the office of *Amin* (dealt with religious grants) and *sadar* were combined. In the 17th century *amin* was placed under the provincial *diwan* as revenue assessment officer. The important officers of the province were appointed by imperial order. These were governor, *diwan*, *sadr*, *qazi*, *bakshi* and *muhtasib*. The subordinate officers in the *diwani* were also appointed by

imperial order viz. *daroga* (superintendent) of office, *mushrif* (head clerk), *tahvildar-i-daftarkhana* (treasurer of office). The *waqianavis* were posted in the provinces and kept the emperor informed of the happenings there.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Bakshi and Sadr

2) Mahazarnama

3) Shiqdar

12.9 LET US SUM UP

Seen in its totality it comes out very clearly that Akbar undertook the onerous task of building an empire by engaging competent and experienced persons from various areas of specialisation to frame and execute innovative systems of governance. When needed, he did not hesitate to adopt measures initiated by earlier rulers. He, however, fine-tuned them through long surveys and deliberations to make them acceptable, transparent and effective instruments of administration. Thus, without resorting to coercive methods, he maximised the resource potential of the state. These were implemented, through a transparent

hierarchical machinery, to organise a distinctly subordinate and cohesiveness out of heterogeneous social groups to supervise and maintain the territorial integrity of the Mughal state. However, his successors do not seem to have had either his calibre or foresight. They did not challenge the root cause and instead took recourse to such measures that at best could provide temporary relief to the ailing systems of governance.

12.10 KEYWORDS

Muqti :Governor; iqta holder

Khaqan: Chief of the Khans.

Nishans: An order issued by a Prince

Qazags: A tribe

Ain:literally rules. Abul Fazl in his book Ain-i Akbari presents the rules of Akbar's Empire. These rules refer to imperial household, mansabdars, imperial army, food-stuffs, royal stable, prices, revenue system, etc.

Ain-i-Rahnamuni :Ain 77. In this section Abul Fazl mentions His Majesty as the spiritual guide of the people.

Khutba: A sermon recited in mosques on Fridays wherein the name of the ruler was included.

Mahzar:*lit.* a decree. Akbar issued the famous decree of mahzar in 1580 which was drafted by Shaikh Mubarak. This decree recognised the superior position of Sultan over the mujtahids (interpreter of law).

Amin:Revenue assessor

Shariat: Islamic Law

Barawurdi:Under Akbar the advance paid to mansabdars for maintenance of troops was called barawardi. From the reign of Jahangir onwards it was used for regular payment given to nobles for the maintenance of troops.

Talab Khasa:Personal pay of the nobles.

Kanazad:The sons and close kinsmen of persons who were already holding positions in the nobility.

Khurak-dawab:Fodder allowance for animals.

Mashrut: Conditional rank given to nobles.

Tabinan:Contingent maintained by nobles.

12.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Discuss the working of the Revenue administration under the Mughals.
- 2) Describe the central and provincial administration of the Mughals.

12.12 SUGGESTED REDINGS AND REFERENCES

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R.C. Verma: *Foreign Policy of the Mughals*

A.R. Khan: *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar*

K.R. Qanungo: *Sher Shah and His Times*

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R. P. Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*

U.N. Day, *Mughal Government*

P. Saran, *Provincial Administration under the Mughals*

Anuruddha Ray, *Mughal Administration*

Ibu Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*

12.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The *jagir* and *mansab* became important as novel features introduced under the Mughals. A new territorial unit called *suba* was introduced. The *subedar* emerged as the supreme officer of the province. The *shiqdar* was

subordinated to the *faujdar* who became the officer in charge of either *sarkars* of two different subas/parganas in a *sarkar*. Further, important changes were introduced in administrative structure viz--mansab, jagir and revenue reforms-- which brought about a high degree of centralisation in the imperial edifice.

2) Diwan of royal Karkhanas or workshops.

Check Your Progress 2

1) It is for those territorial units whose sum total produced estimated revenue of one *kror* (10 million) *dams*. Each such unit of *khalisa* land was put into the charge of a *karori*. A *karori* was entrusted to carry out measurement of entire open lands reaching up to heavy forests, and clearly indicates land use under separate heads, like under habitation, water bodies (river, *talab* etc.), small hillocks, uncultivable waste (*usar*) for each village under his jurisdiction *Karori* also monitored prices of food-grains in the local *mandis* during harvesting seasons and conveyed these to the central administration.

2) Ten years average produce, computed out of multiple of current productivity and price, data was considered as the value of produce per unit area (known as *bigha*) and one third of this value, in terms of cash, was promulgated as the final crop rate for individual crops.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Under the *mansab* system ranks were expressed in numerical terms. The *Ain-i Akbari* has listed 66 ranks, though in practice only 33 were utilized. The entire hierarchical ordering of the state officials, irrespective of office and their work was covered under the scheme, starting with the lowest rank of 10 reaching the highest of 5,000. Above 5,000 and up to 7,000 were reserved for the princes of royal blood.

2) As a remedial step from the 40th regnal year onwards *mansabs* were expressed in dual terms, *zat* and *sawar*. While *zat* denoted the personal rank of an official, *sawar* indicated the sizes of contingents maintained by the *mansabdars*.

3) Aurangzeb an additional rank, called *mashrut* (conditional). Apparently due to the Rule of Proportion the size of contingent available with a *mansabdar* was, at times, not considered adequate. Therefore, on appointment to *qiladar* or *faujdar* like positions the concerned official was given *mashrut* rank. It was withdrawn on removal from the office.

4) *Watanjagirs* were given to the zamindars in their local dominions as remuneration for *mansab* (rank) accorded to them by the Mughal government for the services rendered by them.

Check Your Progress 4

1) The *bakshi* was responsible for keeping strict watch over proper maintenance of the sanctioned size of armed contingents and war equipage by the *mansabdars*. The office of *sadr* bestowed on one of the most respected theologians of the time, on account of its almost unlimited authority to distribute allowances and stipends, had become very lucrative during the first twenty-five years of Akbar's reign.

2) Declaration according to which in case of conflicting views on religion Akbar's view would prevail.

3) The *shiqdar* was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, administration of criminal justice and general administration of pargana.

UNIT 13 MEDIEVAL INDIA: SOCIO ECONOMIC BASIS--SULTANATE AND MUGHALS

STRUCUTRE

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Social Life

13.2.1 Sultanate of Delhi

13.2.1.1 Metropolitan Life

13.2.1.2 Countryside

13.2.1.3 Recreation Activities

13.2.2 State of Mughals

13.2.2.1 Metropolitan Life

13.2.2.2 Countryside

13.3 Financial System

13.3.1 Sultanateof Delhi

13.3.1.1 Extraction of Land Revenue

13.3.1.1.1 Alauddin Khalji--Agrarian Measures

13.3.1.1.2 Market Controlof Alauddin Khilji

13.3.1.2 Trading

13.3.1.2.1 Inland Commerce

13.3.1.2.2 Commerce--Foreign

13.3.1.2.3 Imports and Exports of Commodities

13.3.1.2.4 Means of Transport

13.3.2 State of Mughals

13.3.2.1 System of Land Revenue Evaluation

13.3.2.2 Extent of Land Revenue

13.3.2.3 Accumulation of Land Revenue

13.3.2.4 Inland Commerce

13.3.2.4.1 Domestic Trade

13.3.2.4.2 Trade Between Regions

13.3.2.4.3 Littoral Trade

13.3.2.5 External Trade

13.3.2.6 Various Trade Routes and Methods of Transport

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

13.5 Keywords

13.6 Questions for review

13.7 Suggested Readings and references

13.8 Answers To Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will study about the social and economic life during the period of Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

India is a land of villages. Even today the bulk of its population resides in villages. And what is true today would be even truer for those periods of history when industrial production was small, never going beyond a few scattered artisan and handicraft industries, and agriculture was the major vocation for a very large part of its population. How, then did the Indians live in villages? This is a big question that can itself be split into a number of smaller questions, a few of which could be: Was rural India a homogenous group or did several groups together comprises rural society? How was production organized in this society? What was the nature of interpersonal relationships? We shall in the following pages

seek to answer these problems with reference to the developments in Sultanate and Mughal period.

The conquest of North India by the Ghorids and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate not only changed the existing political structure but also brought economic change. The conquerors came with fairly well-defined concepts and practices regarding tax collection and distribution, and system of coinage, etc. But the existing systems could not be changed altogether immediately: in the beginning, these were superimposed on the older systems, and modifications and changes were introduced by different Sultans up to the close of the 15th century.

The central feature of the agrarian system under the Mughals was the alienation from the peasant of his surplus produce (produce over and above the subsistence level) in the form of land revenue which was the main source of state's income. Early British administrators regarded the land revenue as rent of the soil because they had a notion that the king was the owner of the land. Subsequent studies of Mughal India have shown that it was a tax on the crop and was thus different from the land revenue as conceived by the British. Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i Akbari* justifies the imposition of taxes by the state saying that these are the remuneration of sovereignty, paid in return for protection and justice.

13.2 SOCIAL LIFE

13.2.1 Sulatanate Of Delhi

The lifestyle of a people indicates their specific situation in a hierarchical society. In early medieval India, social formations were structured upon the ensuing contradictions that existed between a centralised State and its subject peasantry. In a principally agrarian economy, the social surplus produced by the peasants was extracted and distributed by a small ruling class among themselves. This led to their lavishly luxurious lifestyle that stands out in sharp contrast to that of the artisans and the urban poor.

13.2.1.1 Metropolitan Life

During the 13th-14th centuries, a number of towns and ports flourished in North India. Broach, Cambay, Lakhnauti, Sonargaon and Multan flourished as trading centres. Ibn Battuta gave a detailed description of Delhi; it was one of the largest cities in the Islamic world with a mixed population of merchants from India as well as Iran, Afghanistan, etc. It was said that overland trade with West Asia was in the hands of Multanis, who were mostly Hindus. The Gujarati and Marwari merchants were extremely wealthy and some of them, particularly the Jains, spent large sums in the construction of temples. They also had large residential buildings. Their houses were surrounded by orchards and fruit gardens which had many tanks. Cambay was a fine port city where there was an agglomeration of wealthy merchants. Not only did they live in fine houses, they consumed good food and wore fine clothes.

Men dressed themselves in cotton and silk garments, anointed themselves with sandalwood paste and wore rings, gold-earrings studded with precious stones and golden girdles. Women wore long flowing cloth (sari) and silken blouses. Women's jewellery was made of gold and silver metals. They wore earrings, anklets and plenty of rings on fingers and toes. The Muslim merchants who usually came from Central Asia dressed themselves in embroidered garments covered with gold and silver works. They also wore thick boots coming up to their knees. Many of these towns were also centres of craft production. The towns of Bengal and Gujarat were famous for the production of fine clothes. Cambay was also famous for gold and silver works. There were many other luxury crafts such as leather works, metal work, carpet weaving, etc. Many of these were exported to the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and some East Asian Countries.

13.2.1.2 Countryside

The towns needed to be fed and supplied with finished and raw materials from the countryside. The high level of taxation and the cash-nexus in combination ensured that the peasants would have to sell much of their produce in order to pay land revenue. Barani informs us how the high

pitch of demand under Alauddin Khalji forced the peasants of the Doab to sell grain by the side of the fields to the karwanis who took it to Delhi for sale. The towns, on the other hand, had little to send back to their villages since the taxation system assumed all the time a heavy balance of payments in favour of the towns, which were the headquarters of the Sultan and members of the ruling classes.

Farmers

A vast majority of them lived in villages. Cultivation was based on individual peasant farming and the size of land cultivated by them varied greatly from the large holding of the 'khuts' or headmen to the small plots of 'balahars' or village menials. Below the peasantry there must have existed a group of landless menial castes but little is known about them in this period.

Peasants generally had a pair of oxen and the plough. Land was abundant. Wells were probably the major source of artificial irrigation. Muhammad Tughluq advanced loans to peasants for improving agriculture. The peasants raised water needed for cultivation and sold their crop for payment of revenue in cash; there must have been differentiation among the peasantry. Barani designates men of the highest stratum among the peasants as khuts and muqaddams. Before Alauddin Khalji adopted the measures, the khuts were alleged to have been exempted from three major taxes. Furthermore, they levied a cess of their own on the villagers (qismat-i-khoti). When Alauddin prohibited them from levying the cess, they became quite poor and their wives worked as maidservants in the houses of Muslims.

The khuts and muqaddams were peasants, but peasants who stood on the borderland of the rural aristocracy. When prosperous, they imitated the ways of higher chiefs, i.e., rode horses, wore fine clothes and chewed betel leaves. In the reign of Feroz Shah Tughluq, a chronicler describes the general prosperity of the khuts. Everyone had large amount of gold and silver and countless goods; and none of the women of the peasantry remained without ornaments. In every peasant's house there were clean bed-sheets, excellent bed-cots and many other articles.

Houses of Farmers

The ordinary peasants lived in mud huts supported by bamboos or tree trunks with thatched roof. The floor was plastered with cowdung. Only the meanest requirements for shelter from winter, monsoon or the heat of summer were met in their dwellings. Very little furniture was used: men, women and children lived in small rooms huddle together. They usually slept on the floor on mats or cotton quilts. Only the prosperous peasants used metal vessels; the ordinary people used earthen pots. There was no separate place for bathing except the wells or ponds. No sense of privacy existed. The houses of the more prosperous peasants had more land around the main structure. They usually had more than one room with veranda, a courtyard and chabutara (platform) and even sometimes second story and the walls were pasted with cowdung and decorated with drawings. Often there was a small vegetable garden around their dwellings. In terms of food, the ordinary peasant ate bread made out of rice; they also use lintel, onion and chillies and as luxury they had some little ghee. They used to take meal twice a day. Generally, the Hindu peasants went bareheaded and barefooted. They usually wore a single dhoti cloth. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, they wore a red handkerchief around their head. Women usually wore two kinds of dresses: a sheet of cloth to cover themselves and a blouse. The second dress consisted of a lehanga or long skirt, a blouse and dupatta or a big scarf.

13.2.1.3 Recreational Activities

Wrestling was very popular even among villagers. Apart from these, fencing, spear throwing, horse racing were popular among the aristocracy. Polo (chaugan) was an aristocratic game. Apart from these each region has its own popular songs and dances. Folk theatre and jugglery by wandering entertainers called nuts can be seen even today. Oral recitation of the religious texts like Panchalis in Bengal or Alhakhand stories in Doab drew large crowds. In Rajasthan, bards went around singing heroic tales, became very popular.

Religious festivals and fairs offered an opportunity to the ordinary people to enjoy themselves. These, along with visiting holy places for pilgrimage, were the major diversions in the otherwise dull life of the

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common people. The bhakti movement and the works of popular preachers like Kabir, Dadu and others inspired popular poets and their songs acted as cementing bond between people of different religious sects.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Write short note on the following:-

a) Peasants

b) Recreation Activities

13.2.2 State Of Mughals

The urban history of Mughal India, despite being a subject of great importance, has not received adequate attention by the scholars. That the subject has multifarious facets is evident from the range of topics that possibly emerged from its domain. The expansion of urban centres, their actual size, urban economy and the society that an urban centre seemed to have, were some of the notable examples.

13.2.2.1 Metropolitan Life

It is an interesting fact that our sources for the study of the Mughal Empire abound with descriptions of urban life. The following sub-sections are thus based on such details.

Society

Joint family system was common. Woman was subordinate to man. The higher class women observed purdah. Barbosa comments that in

Khambayat, though, women observed purdah, they frequently visited their friends. There was ample freedom of social intercourse within the limits of purdah. The custom of jauhar was almost entirely confined totally among the Rajputs. Their women, in time of despair (during war, etc.), seeing the imminent defeat, to save their pride, used to set themselves afire. Babur gives a vivid description of the jauhar performed by Medini Rai's ladies at Chanderi.

Among the upper caste Hindus, the practice of sati or self-immolation was quite common. Akbar took a serious view when the daughter of Mota Raja of Marwar was compelled to burn herself against her wishes. Akbar appointed observers in every town and district to ensure that while those who on their own impulse wished to commit sati might be allowed to do so, they should prohibit and prevent any forcible sati. Akbar also took steps of permitting widows to remarry (1587). Both Hindus and Muslims favoured an early marriage age for boys and girls. Akbar criticised child marriage. He raised the minimum age limit for boys to 16 and for girls to 14 years. Birth ceremony was of great importance. Among the Muslims, the rite of aqiqa (shaving the hair of the head) was performed. The Hindu child was placed in the charge of a guru at the age of five while, as per Muslim traditions, a child was put in a school (maktab) after the completion of four years, four months and four days. The ceremony was known as bismillah Khwani. Usually in the 7th year, the Muslim child was circumcised and the occasion was celebrated with great rejoicing. Akbar prohibited circumcising before the age of 12 and even then left it to the option of the grown up boy.

The Hindus performed upanayana samsakara, i.e., tying of the tripple sacred thread at the completion of the 9th year. Marriage ceremony hardly differed from the present day celebrations. A Hindu marriage began with tilak or mangni, and then a marriage date (lagan) was fixed. Songs were sung. Marriage was performed with elaborate rites. Elaborate ceremonies were performed at the time of death also. Priests chanted mantras, distributed alms, etc., put sacred Ganga water followed by shraddha ceremony after a year. The practice of burning dead was quite

common among the Hindus. Muslims performed siyum ceremony on the 3rd day of death.

Education in Mughal Time

In general, education was beyond the reach of a common woman. But women of elite class got opportunity to study. Princesses were taught to read and write. Akbar was greatly interested in female education. Badauni comments that he recommended a new syllabus. He established a school for girls at Fatehpur Sikri. Some royal ladies were also interested in promoting education. Bega Begum, Humayun's consort, founded a college near the mausoleum of Humayun. Maham Anaga, the foster mother of Akbar, established a school at Delhi. Gulbadan Begum was well versed in Persian and Turki and wrote the Humayunama. She had a library of her own.

Similarly, Nur Jahan, Jahan Ara and Zaibunnisa (daughter of Aurangzeb) were literary figures of their age. Aurangzeb educated all his daughters well. But dance and music were frowned upon. Nur Jahan and Jahan Ara (daughter of Shah Jahan) played an active role in Mughal politics. The mansabdars were generally well versed in Persian. Some also studied mathematics, knew little bit of medicine and practised calligraphy. In Mughal India, the nobles maintained their personal libraries. Abdul Rahim Khan Khana had a huge library manned by 95 calligraphers, guilders, bookbinders, painters, cutters, illuminators, etc. Babur himself was a great scholar of Turkish. His autobiography, the Baburnama, is still considered one of the masterpieces of Turkish prose. He also knew Persian and was also a skilled calligrapher. Humayun and all other later Mughal Emperors knew good Persian. Though circumstances did not allow Akbar to have formal education, he patronized poets, philosophers, painters etc.

Amusement

Gambling, elephant fights, chaupar, chandal-mandal, chess, cards, polo, etc., were the sports greatly indulged in by the higher strata. Chaupar playing was very popular among the Hindus, specially the Rajputs. Akbar later substituted human figures for the pieces of chaupar and turned it into the amusing game of chandal-mandal. Cards (ganjifa)

appeared to have been first introduced in India by Babur. It became quite popular during Akbar's reign. Gambling was common. Pigeon flying and cock-fighting were common. Akbar used to feed his own birds and call the game (pigeon flying) by the romantic term *ishqbaazi* (love affair). Hunting was the most popular pastime of the royalty. The Mughals organised *qamargah* hunts. This was large scale manoeuvre organised in one of the imperial hunting preserves. Sometimes around 50,000 cavalymen and others encircled the hunting preserve and they gradually came closer to a point when the animals were confined into a sort of ring. The Emperor and other big nobles then entered the ring and hunted the animals. Deer, goats, elephants, etc., were also domesticated for the sake of hunting. Cheetahs were trained for hunting deer.

Generally, ladies of harem did not participate in outdoor games. But some played *chaugan* (polo). Nur Jahan was the lone example who shot tigers and lions. But pigeon flying and blind man's buff (*ankmicholi*) were common pastimes.

Festivities

Religious festivals and pilgrimages to holy shrines were popular means of amusement. Huge urs celebration were organised at the tomb of the sufis. At Delhi such celebrations were held at the tombs of Bakhtiyar Kaki and Nizamuddin Auliya. At the tomb of Hazrat Nasiruddin Chiragh Delhi, (Nizamuddin Auliya's successor) on every Sunday, both Hindus and Muslims gathered, especially during the month of Dipawali, 'Id-ul fitr, 'Id-ul zuha, Nauroz, Shabbarat, Holi, Dasehra, Dipawali, Rakshabandhan, Basant Panchami, etc. were also celebrated with great pomp and show. Fairs were also organised. The famous Garh Mukteswar fair, still celebrated in the traditional style, can be traced back to the Medieval times. Dasehra was popular among the kshatriyas and all agricultural classes. The Kumbha fair on the Ganga was most famous of all the fairs. On the occasion of Muharram, *taziya* (imitation mausoleums of the martyrs of karbala) processions were taken out through the streets of the town.

Singers and Musicians

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Big amirs arranged "mushairas" (literary evenings) in their mansions where poets recited their compositions. Singers and musicians performed their recital in the harem every day. Shah Jahan's favourites were Kavindra, Chitra Khan, Lal Khan and Sriman. Shah Jahan's amir Shah Nawaz Khan had a large number of musicians and singers. Muhammad Shah was also fond of music. Boli Khan, Jallah, Chamani and Kamal Bai were the most celebrated ones during his reign. Niamat Khan was the bin (flute) player and an expert in the khayal form of singing. Panna Bai, his disciple, possessed good voice. Taj Khan Qawali and Muinuddin, experts in Qawali, were other famous singers of Muhammad Shah's reign. Eunuchs performed dances in public. Miyan Haiga used to dance in the square of the Urdu Bazar, in front of the Shahjahanabad fort. A huge crowd assembled to watch him. Asa Pura, a Hindu dancing girl was also a great name. Ahlakhand and the stories of Nala Damayanti were recited by the balladeers. Sravana songs (Hindola and Sravani) were quite popular. Garabha, the Gujarati dance, was popular on the west coast. Puppet shows, antics of the monkeys, snake-charmer shows, tight-rope walker, etc. were eye-catchers.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Define the following:

a) Ishq Bazi

b) Qamargah Hunts

c) Chandal Mandal

13.2.2.2 Countryside

The rural society in medieval India was highly segmented. Thus, one would expect considerable inequalities within the same village. The references in our sources do not highlight these inequalities, and the rural population was generally treated as a monolithic block. We have made an attempt in the following sub-sections to draw a detailed picture of rural life in medieval India as is permitted by our sources.

SOCIAL LIFE

Social life in rural India was sparsely documented. However, a reconstruction may be attempted on the basis of scattered information gleaned from contemporary literature as also from stray references in the chronicles of the period.

Household

You are aware of the fact that in India joint family had traditionally been the most important institution of domestic life. For the peasants, the availability of additional lands in a family contributing to the agricultural production had an added economic significance. In most parts of India, the family system was mainly patriarchal in character. The senior male member was the head of the family. There was no individual property within the family. Members enjoyed only a right of maintenance from the property. Women members were generally subject to the dictates of the males of the family. Families gave distinct preference to male over female.

Social Custom and Traditions

Marriage was the most notable social institution in rural India. The responsibility of marrying sons and daughters vested primarily with the parents. Though there did not exist any fixed limit for the age of marriage, the common practice was in favour of an early marriage. We know on the authority of Abul Fazl that Akbar attempted to fix a minimum age for marriage—sixteen years for males and fourteen years

for females. But we are not certain about the execution of this order. If references to marriage in contemporary literature were any index, this attempt of Akbar remained confined on paper only. Different customs of marriage were followed among the Muslim and non-Muslim segments of rural population. For instance, marriage among the Hindus was a sacrament as against a contract among the Muslims. However, girls in both cases were unable to exercise their own choice. Similarly, dowry was a bane common to both the segments.

Festivities

Among the rural folk, a variety of festivals and amusements were popular. Although based on different religion affiliations, different kinds of festivals were celebrated by the Muslim and non-Muslim population, there is no reason to believe that these two segments of rural population did not participate in each other's festivities. Most of the festivals of the non-Muslims coincided with particular seasons. Their timing was such that the peasantry was in a state of comparative leisure and thus in a mood for enjoyment. The most popular of these festivals were Basant Panchami, Holi, Deepavali and Shivratri. The Muslim festivals, too, by this time (i.e., 16th-18th century), had become influenced by the Indian environment. Eid, Shabbarst and Muharram were the most popular festivals among the Muslims in the rural areas.

13.3 FINANCIAL SYSTEM

13.3.1 Sultanate Of Delhi

In this section we will study about the extraction of land revenue, reforms of Alauddin Khilji and trade and commerce during the Sultanate period.

13.3.1.1 Extraction Of Land Revenue

The Islamic land tax with which the new rulers of India were familiar was kharaj. It was essentially a share in the produce of the land and not a rent on the land. During the 13th century, the kharaj took by and large the form of tribute. As mentioned earlier, this tribute was paid, in lump

sum, either by the potentates some arrangement. Alternatively, from the recalcitrant areas (mawas) where such arrangements were not possible, the tribute was extorted through plundering raids. It was thus probably mostly in the form of cattle and slaves. The sources of Delhi Sultanate did not suggest that before the reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) any serious attempt was made to systematise the assessment and realization of Kharaj.

13.3.1.1.1 Alauddin Khalji--Agrarian Measures

Alauddin fixed the land revenue in kind but realization appears to be mostly in cash. Barani informs us that the revenue collectors were ordered to demand the revenue with such rigour that the peasants should be forced to sell their produce immediately at the side of the fields. At another place, Barani says that Alauddin Khalji brought the doab into khalisa and the tax (mahsul) from there was spent on paying the cash salaries to the soldiers.

Yet there was a rather contradictory statement by the same author that the Sultan ordered that the peasant should pay tax in kind and not in cash. According to Irfan Habib, it seemed to have reference to only some parts of the khalisa in the Doab. From there the Sultan wanted to obtain supplies for his granaries, otherwise the realization was normally in cash. Yet these new measures affected the rural intermediaries. The system of taxation introduced by Alauddin seems to have lasted for long though Ghayasuddin Tughluq (1320-25) modified it to some extent and exempted the khuts and muqaddams from paying tax on their cultivation and cattle. But he did not permit them to impose any cesses on the peasants.

13.3.1.1.3 Market Control Of Alauddin Khalji

Alauddin Khalji's measures did not remain confined to rural economy but extended to urban market as well. He was credited for issuing a set of seven regulations which came to be known as market-control measures. Barani, is our main source on this aspect and the only authority who gives these regulations in detail. The Sultan fixed the prices of all commodities from grain to cloth, slaves, cattle, etc. (Regulation 1). These prices were

Notes

really to be enforced since the Sultan carefully made all arrangements for making the measure a success. A controller of market (shahna-i mandi), barids (intelligence officers) and munhiyan (secret spies) were appointed (Reg. 2). The grain merchants were placed under the shahna-i mandi and sureties were taken from them (Reg. 4). The Sultan himself was to receive daily reports separately from these sources (Reg. 7). Regrating (ihtikar) was prohibited (Reg. 5). While ensuring strict control in the market, the Sultan did not overlook the more essential requirement, namely the regular supply of grains. Obviously, the grain merchants could bring supplies to the market only if they could get the grains and that, too, at sufficiently low prices. It was apparently for this reason that the Sultan decreed such a rigour in realization of land revenue in the Doab that the peasants should be forced to sell the grain to the karavaniyan (the grain merchants) at the side of the field (Reg. 6).

The Sultan established granaries in Delhi and in Chhain in Rajasthan. The land tax from the khalisa in the Doab was realised in kind. The grain went to the state granaries (Reg. 3). The Multanis who were cloth merchants were given 20 lakhs of tankas as advance loan to purchase and bring cloth to the market. The Sultan succeeded in maintaining low prices and ample supplies in the market as reported by all our authorities. But there are varying reasons mentioned for why the Sultan introduced the market control and in what region it was enforced. The poet courtier Amir Khusrau considers the measure to be of immense generosity taken for the welfare and comfort of all, the elite as well as the public at large.

The Chishti divine Nasiruddin Mahmud (Chiragh Delhi) attributes it to the Sultan's effort to do good to all the people. But the historians Barani's view was totally different. He did not credit it to Sultan's benevolent intentions but gives a hard financial reason. The Sultan was anxious to have a large army and to take other precautions such as building of forts at strategic places, fortification wall around Delhi, etc. against the Mongol invasions. If numerous additional cavalymen and troops were to be employed at the prevailing salaries, the drain from the state treasury was to exhaust it totally. The salaries could be reduced only if the prices were kept at a sufficiently low level. Barani's reasoning

appears of course, more valid. Since the main lashkargah (army encampment) was in Delhi and most of the royal troops were to be stationed in or around Delhi, the main area of price control was Delhi itself. However, since the supplies of cheap grain were to be made available to the grain merchants in the surrounding district of the Doab, the low prices ought to be prevalent there as well.

The market control did not survive its enforcer and we do not hear about it after Alauddin Khalji's time. A very efficient and alert administration was imperative for the success of price control. Therefore, one possible reason for its not surviving could be the lack of sufficiently competent administration. Irfan Habib, however, offers a different reason for the abandonment of price control by the successors of Alauddin Khalji. Since the prevalence of low prices implies lower revenues from the low-price zone, the price control was viable as long as the zone of low prices was restricted and most of the expenditure was concentrated there. With the Mongols no more remaining a threat, the army and the expenditure was to be dispersed more widely and not to be concentrated at and around Delhi alone. The interest of the state treasury was now in dismantling the price control.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Discuss the measures taken by Alauddin Khalji to introduce price control.

13.3.1.2 Trading

We have seen that there emerged some considerably big flourishing towns as well as numerous townships during the 13th and 14th centuries. These towns naturally needed to be fed and supplied raw material for craft production. At the same time, there was growing practice of land revenue realization in cash. By the time of Alauddin Khalji, the cash

nexus came to be well developed and the ruling class tended to claim almost the entire peasant surplus by attempting to reduce the share of rural intermediaries.

Both these factors were conducive to the development of inland trade. To pay the land revenue in cash, the peasantry was forced to sell its surplus produce while merchants had a market in newly emerged towns for agricultural products. This trade resulting from the compulsions of land revenue system is termed as induced trade.

13.3.1.2.1 Inland Commerce

The inland trade developed at two levels: (a) the short distance village town trade in commodities of bulk and (b) long distance inter-town trade in high value goods. The village-town trade, as already explained was a natural consequence of the emergence of towns and realization of land revenue in cash. The urban centres were dependent for supply of food grains and raw material for manufactures from the surrounding villages whereas the villages had to sell the agricultural products to receive cash for meeting the land revenue demand. The peculiar nature of this trade was the one way flow of commodities. While the towns received grains and raw material from the villages in the vicinity, they had no need to send their products in exchange to the villages which were by and large self-sufficient. This one way trade was owing to the land revenue demand imposed upon villages which naturally led to a continuous drain on rural sector and made the towns dependent on villages. The turnover of this trade was high in terms of volume but was low in terms of value. The commodities were food grains, that is wheat, rice, gram, sugarcane, etc. and raw material like cotton for urban manufactures.

The inter-town trade was mainly in luxury articles and was thus high value trade. The manufactures of one town were taken to another: for example Barani reports that Delhi, the capital itself, received distilled wines from Kol (Aligarh) and Meerut. Muslin (fine cloth) from Devagiri and striped cloth from Lakhnauti (Bengal) while, according to Ibn Battota, ordinary cloth came from Awadh and betel-leaf from Malwa (twenty four days journey from Delhi). Candy sugar was supplied to

Multan from Delhi and Lahore and ghi from Sirsa (in Haryana). The long distance inter-town trade also carried goods coming from other countries exit points. Multan was perhaps the great entrepot for overland foreign trade and served as a centre of re-export, while Gujarat ports such as Broach and Cambay were exchange centres for overseas trade

13.3.1.2.2 Commerce--Foreign

During the Sultanate period, overland and overseas trade were in a flourishing state.

Trade through Sea

The Khalji annexation of Gujarat must have enlarged trade relations between the Delhi Sultanate and the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Gujarat was connected with the Persian Gulf as well as the Red Sea. Hormuz and Basra were the chief ports for the ships passing through the Persian Gulf, while the ports of Aden, Mocha and Jeddah along the Red Sea were important for Gujarat. Through these ports, commodities moved on to Damascus and Aleppo, on the one hand, and Alexandria on the other. Aleppo and Alexandria opened up to the Mediterranean Sea with linkages to Europe. Merchandise of Gujarat were also carried towards the East - the port of Malacca situated at the Malacca straits and Bantam and Achin in the Indonesian archipelago.

The main export from Gujarat to Malacca was the coloured cloths manufactured in Cambay and other Gujarat towns. These cloths were in demand in these places. In exchange, the Gujarati merchants came back with spices grown there. This pattern of--spices for coloured cloths--continued even after the Portuguese advent in the Asian waters.

The ports of Bengal had trading relations with China, Malacca and Far East. Textiles, sugar and silk fabrics were the most important commodities exported from Bengal. Varthema noted that about fifty ships carried these commodities annually to many places, including Persia. Bengal imported salt from Hormuz and sea-shells from the Maldivian islands. The latter were used as coins in Bengal, Orissa and Bihar. Sindh was yet another region from where seaborne trade was carried on. Its most well-known port was Daibul. This region had

developed close commercial relations with the Persian Gulf ports more than the Red Sea zone. Sindh exported special cloths and dairy products. Smoked-fish, too, was its speciality.

Littoral Trade

It was natural for the coastal trade to flourish right from Sindh to Bengal, touching Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandel coasts in between. This provided an opportunity for exchange of regional products along the coastal line distinct from inland inter-regional trade.

Trade through Land

Multan was the major trading centre for overland trade. India was connected to the central Asia, Afghanistan and Persia through the Multan-Quetta route. But on account of continued Mongol turmoil in Central Asia and Persia this route was less used.

13.3.1.2.3 Imports And Exports Of Commodities

The two principal items of import were: (a) horses - that were always in demand for cavalry since superior horses were not bred in India and Indian climate was not well suited to Arabian and Central Asian horses. They were primarily imported from Zofar (Yemen), Kis, Hormuz, Aden and Persia; (b) precious metals viz. gold and silver, especially silver that was not at all mined in India but for which there was a high demand not only for metallic currency but also for fashioning luxury items. Brocade and silk stuffs were imported from Alexandria, Iraq and China. Gujarat was the major centre from where the luxury articles from Europe used to enter. The Sultanate India mainly exported grain and textiles. Some of the Persian Gulf regions totally depended on India for their food supply. Besides, slaves were exported to Central Asia and indigo to Persia along with numerous other commodities. Precious stones like agates were exported from Cambay.

13.3.1.2.4 Means Of Transport

It appears that the goods were transported both by pack animals and on bullock-carts. Perhaps the share of the pack animals was more than the latter. Ibn Battuta mentions 30,000 mans of grains being transported on

the backs of 3,000 bullocks from Amroha to Delhi. Bullock-carts were also used, according to Afif, for carrying passengers on payment. The pack-oxen were of course a cheap mode of transport travelling slowly, grazing as they went and moving in large herds, thus reducing the cost of transport specially along the desert routes. Ibn Battuta describes that highways ran through the empire marked by minarets spaced at set distances. On the testimony of Shahabuddin al Umari, the author of the *Kasalik ul Absar*, we may infer that efforts were made to create conditions conducive to trade. Inns were built at each stage (*manzil*). In Bengal, Iwaz Khalji built long embankments to safeguard from floods. Boats were employed for riverine routes to carry bulk goods, while large ships used for seaborne trade.

13.3.2 State Of Mughals

13.3.2.1 System Of Land Revenue Evaluation

We will discuss here a few commonly used methods during the medieval period.

1) Ghalla Bakhshi (Crop-sharing): In some areas it was called *bhaoii* and *batai*. The *Ain-i Akbari* notes three types of crop-sharing: a) Division of crop at the threshing floor after the grain was obtained. This was done in the presence of both the parties in accordance with agreement. b) *Khet batai*: The share was decided when the crop was still standing in the fields, and a division of the field was marked. c) *Lang batai*: The crop was cut and stacked in heaps without separating grain and a division of crop in this form was made.

2) *Kankut/Danabandi*: The word *kankut* was derived from the words *kanand kut*. *Kanand* notes grain; while *kut* means to estimate or appraisal. Similarly, *dana* means grain while *bandi* was fixing or determining anything. It was a system where the grain yield (or productivity) was estimated. In *kankut*, at first, the field was measured either by means of a rope or by pacing. After this, the *perbiga* productivity from good,

middling and bad land was estimated and the revenue demand was fixed accordingly.

3) Zabti: In Mughal India, it was the most important method of assessment. The origin of this practice was traced to Sher Shah. During Akbar's reign, the system was revised a number of times before it took the final shape.

Sher Shah had established a rai or per bigha yield for lands which were under continuous cultivation (polaj), or those land which very rarely allowed to lie fallow (parauti). The rai was based on three rates, representing good, middling and low yields and one third of the sum of these was appropriated as land revenue. Akbar adopted Sher Shah's rai. Akbar introduced his so-called karori experiment and appointed karoriesall aver North India in 1574-75 A.D. The entire jagir was converted into khalsa. On the basis of the information provided by the karoris regarding the actual produce, local prices, productivity, etc. in 1580, Akbar instituted a new system Ain-i-Dahsala, where the average produce of different crops as well as the average prices prevailing over the last ten years was calculated. Onethird of the average produce was the state's minimum share.

Under karori experiment, measurement of all provinces took place. Bamboo rods with iron rings called tanab were used instead of hempen ropes. On the basis of productivity and prices prevailing in different regions they were divided for revenue purposes into dastur circles. The rates of assessment in cash for each crop in every dastur were decided and the demand was fixed accordingly. The main features of the zabti system as it finally came into operation under Akbar were: i) measurement of land war essential; ii) fixed cash revenue rates known dastur ul amal or dastur for each crop. iii) allthe collection was made in cash.

Nasaq was not an independent method of assessment; it was subordinate to other methods. It was a method or procedure which could be adopted whatever be the basic method of revenue assessment and collection that was in force. In North India it was nasaqizabti, while in Kashmir it was nasaqi gallabakshi. When it was applied under zabti the annual

measurement was dispensed with and previous figure were taken into account with certain variations. Since zabti system involved annual measurement, the administration and revenue payers both wanted to replace it. Zabti-i-harsala or annual measurement was, therefore, set aside with some modifications.

13.3.2.2 Extent Of Land Revenue

Sher Shah formed three crop rates on the basis of the productivity of the soil and demand was fixed at $1/3$ of the average of these three rates for each crop. Abul Fazl comments that under Akbar, Sher Shah's $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ of revenue demand formed the lowest rate of assessment. Recent studies show that revenue demand under the Mughals ranged between $1/3$ to $1/2$ of the produce, and sometimes even $3/4^{\text{th}}$ in some areas. On close scrutiny we find that the revenue demand varied from suba to suba. In Kashmir, the demand in theory was $1/3^{\text{rd}}$ while in practise it was $2/3^{\text{rd}}$ of the total produce. Akbar ordered that only $1/2$ should be demanded. It may be safely assumed that in general the rate of revenue demand was from $1/2$ to $1/3$ of the produce. Since, the revenue was imposed per unit of area 'uniformly' irrespective of the nature of the holding, it was regressive in nature--those who possessed large holdings felt the burden less than those who possessed small holdings.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Elaborate zabti system.

2) Discuss the magnitude of land revenue in Mughal India.

13.3.2.3 Accumulation Of Land Revenue

Under Gallabakhshi, the state's share was seized directly from the field. In othersystems, the state collected its share at the time of harvest. Abul Fazl maintains that the collection should begin for rabi from holi and for kharif from Dashra. The officials should not delay it for another crop. In the kharif season, the harvesting of different crops was done at different times and the revenue was accordingly to be collected in three stages depending on the type of crops. Thus, under kharif the revenue could only be collected in instalments. The rabi harvest was all gathered within a very short period. The authorities tried to collect revenue before the harvest was cut and removed from the fields. By the end of the 17th century, the authorities in desperation started preventing the peasants from reaping their fields until they had paid their revenue.

Usually, the revenue was deposited in the treasury through the 'amil' or revenue collector. Akbar encouraged the peasants to pay directly, Todar Mal recommended that the peasants of trusted villages, within the time limit, could deposit their revenue in the treasury themselves and could obtain receipt. The village accountant, patwari, made endorsement in his register to establish the amount paid. Irfan Habib considers these regulations as precautionary measures on the part of administration to avoid fraud and embezzlement.

13.3.2.4 Inland Commerce

Now we will discuss the inland trade at local, regional and inter-regional levels.

13.3.2.4.1 Domestic Trade

As discussed previously, land revenue was realized in cash. This meant that the surplus agricultural produce was to be sold. Bulk of this was sold in the village itself. Most of this purchase was made by banjaras--the traditional grain merchants. They, in turn, carried it to other towns and markets. Tavernier, a French traveller who came to India in the second half of the 17th century, says that in almost every village could be bought rice, flour, butter, milk, vegetables, sugar and other sweets. In

some villages even sheep, goat, fowl, etc. were available. According to him, every big village would have even a sarraf or money-changer. In addition, every locality had markets in the nearby towns where people from the surrounding areas would come to buy and sell things. Apart from these regular markets, there were haats and peths where people from the villages could exchange or buy things of their daily need. These haats or peths were periodic markets which were held on fixed days in a week. Sometimes there were haats for specific goods. In these local markets, food grains, salt, simple tools and equipments of wood and iron for agriculture and domestic needs and coarse cotton textiles were available.

The products from nearby towns, suburbs and villages found their way to these centres. Patna, for example, had silk from Baikantpur, cotton clothes from Nandanpur and Salimpur; fruits vegetables, opium and sugar from different other parts of the suba. There were some towns that specialised in the trading of specific commodities: for example, Burhampur (cotton mandi), Ahmedabad (cotton textiles), Cambay (gems market), Surat-Sarkhej (indigo), Agra for Bayana indigo, etc. All these commercial centres had mints which struck silver, copper and at some places gold coins.

13.3.2.4.2 Trade between regions

During the period of our study, trade between different regions of India was quite developed. Considering the time consuming and expensive mode of transport, such large scale inter-regional trade was phenomenally high in volume. Goods produced at one place were carried to long distance of hundreds and in some cases thousands of miles for purposes of trade. The main commodities of large scale interregional trade were food grains and various sorts of textiles. Luxury items, metals and weapons also occupied a prominent place in the long distance trade.

In the east, Bengal had developed trade relations with all parts of India. The important trading centres of Bengal were Hugli, Dacca, Murshidabad, Malda, Satgaon, Tanda, Hijili, Sripur, and Sonargaon. Of these Hugli was one of the most prominent centres of trade. Here products

from Bihar, Orissa and some parts of Bengal were brought. Bengal supplied foodgrains to all parts of the country. Rice and sugar from Patna also was brought to the market of Bengal. Textiles of all sorts from Bihar, Benaras and Jaunpur could be bought in Bengal. Textiles produced in Lakhawar, a small town near Patna, were bought by merchants coming from all parts of India and even abroad. The Bengal textiles were available at Patna and as far as Ahmedabad in Gujarat. The large scale silk manufacture in Gujarat and Bihar was completely dependent on the raw silk from Bengal. The silk cloth produced from this raw silk found its way to all parts of India and abroad. Saffron from Kashmir was freely available in the markets of Bengal and Bihar. Bengal procured certain varieties of cotton chintz from as far a place as Burhanpur. Bengal also had trade links with Agra, Benaras and various other towns in the north.

13.3.2.4.3 Littoral Trade

Because of long distances and slow moving transport system inter regional trade was also conducted through the sea route involving large number of coastal areas. This coastal trade was most prominent on the western coast. The eastern coast also had substantial trading operations. The trading operations on the two coasts were organised in different ways. Piracy on the western coast was rampant. As a result most of the traffic here was conducted through convoys. While on the eastern coast small boats plied throughout the year.

On the western coast between May and September the merchant boats in convoys under protection plied two or three times between Goa and Cochin and Goa and Cambay. The Cambay convoy would have around 200-300 boats and ships of various sizes. They carried stuffs like wheat, oil, pulses, sugar, textiles and miscellaneous other items. The convoy between Cochin and Goa were not so large but carried a big range of commodities. Ships coming from Malacca and the east were usually joined somewhere off Ceylon by coasting boats from Bengal and the Coromandal coast, and the whole fleet was convoyed under protection to

Cochin. Boats laden with copper, zinc, tin, tobacco, spices and chintz came from Coromandal coast to the coastal towns of Bengal. Coromandal coast in turn received copper, mercury, cinnabar, pepper etc., from Gujarat, and spices from Malabar.

The coastal towns of Orissa also had links with Coromandal and Malabar coasts. Cloth, foodstuffs, iron, steel and other metals brought from Vijaynagar and Golkunda reached Bengal via Coromandal. Rice, textiles and various other items from various towns from coast of Bengal reached to the western coast. The movement of coastal trade was most prominent between Sind-Cambay; Gujarat-Malabar; Bengal-Coromandal and Malabar-Coromandal.

13.3.2.5 External Trade

For centuries India had maintained trading relations with other countries. The pattern of trade and commodities underwent changes over the period. During the 16th and 17th centuries also India had a flourishing trade with a large number of foreign countries. The significant aspect, of foreign trade during this period was the coming of the Europeans. This increased India's foreign trade manifold. Most of this trade was in the form of exports of Indian goods. The imports were very small. In this section, we will take account of this foreign trade. We shall discuss it under the heads of exports and imports.

Export of Goods

Textiles, saltpetre and indigo formed the major share of Indian exports. Other important items were sugar, opium, spices and other sundry commodities.

Cloths

As we noticed textile production in India had reached new heights during this period. The increasing exports contributed to the increase in production. Before the coming of the Europeans, the main purchasers of Indian cotton textiles were the Mughals, Khorasanis, Iraqis and Armenians who carried them to Central Asia, Persia and Turkey. These

Notes

goods purchased from all parts of India were taken by land route via Lahore. It was difficult to have an idea about the total volume of this trade. The Dutch and English concentrated on Indian textiles from the 17th century onwards. The main varieties of cotton fabrics were baftas, Samanis, Calico, Khairabadi and Dariabadi, Amberty and Qaimkhani and muslin and other cotton cloths. Later on, various varieties of cotton textiles from Eastern coast were also procured. Chintz or printed cotton textiles were the most favourite items of export. Carpets from Gujarat, Jaunpur and Bengal were also bought.

Silk cloth from Gujarat and Bengal also occupied a prominent place. Beside woven cloth, there was a demand for cotton and silk yarn also. Moreland estimates that the demand of the English Company alone was 200,000 pieces in 1625; 1,50,000 pieces in 1628 and around 1,20,000 pieces in 1630. The famines of Gujarat in the 1630s affected the supply, but during 1638-41 the shipment from Surat carried more than 50,000 pieces per year. After 1650, the east coast was also explored and the supply from Madras was around a lakh pieces or more per year. The Dutch demand was also more than 50,000 pieces a year. An account of 1661 estimates that the Armenians bought cotton textiles worth 10 lakh rupees to be sent to Persia.

The above figures give only rough estimates for the exports; nevertheless, they provide an idea about the large scale textile exports.

Gunpowder

Saltpetre, one of the important ingredients for making gunpowder was much in demand in Europe. There were no references to its export in the 16th century. In the 17th century, the Dutch started exporting it from Coromandal. Soon the English also followed. During the first half of 17th century, the Dutch and the English were exporting moderate quantities from Coromandal, Gujarat and Agra. In the second half of the 17th century, its trade from Bihar via Orissa and Bengal ports started. Soon Bihar became the most important supplier.

Dye Manufacturing--Indigo

Indigo for blue dye was produced in most of northern India - Punjab, Sind and Gujarat. The indigo from Sarkhej (Gujarat) and Bayana (near Agra) was much in demand for exports. Prior to its supply to Europe, large quantities of this commodity were exported to the Persian Gulf from Gujarat and to Aleppo markets from Lahore. The Portuguese started its export around the last quarter of the 16th century. Europe's demand was very large for dyeing woollen cloths. The Dutch and English started exporting it in the 17th century. Besides, merchants from Persia purchased it for Asiatic markets and Eastern Europe. The Armenians were also buying substantial quantities. In the 17th century, the Dutch, English, Persians, Mughals, and Armenians competed to procure the commodity. Around the middle of the 17th century, the Dutch and English were procuring around 25,000 or 30,000 maunds per annum. The demand continued to increase during the following years.

Import of Goods

As compared to exports from India, the imports were limited to only a few select commodities. Silver was the main item of import as it was brought to finance the purchases of European Companies and other merchants from different parts of Europe and Asia. Copper, too, was imported in some quantity. Lead and mercury were other important commodities brought to India. Silk and porcelain from China were imported into India by the English. Good quality wine, carpets and perfumes were brought from Persia. Some items like cut glass, watches, silver utensils, woollen cloths and small weapons from Europe were in demand by the aristocracy in India. Horses from Central Asia were imported in large number for military uses. The state was the main purchaser. Besides, India had trade relations with its immediate neighbours in the hill kingdoms. Musk was brought from Nepal and Bhutan to India where it was bought by the Europeans. Borax was also imported from Tibet and Nepal. Iron and food grains were supplied in return to these hill regions.

13.3.2.6 Various Trade Routes And Methods Of Transport

To meet the demands of the large volume of inter-regional and foreign trade, there was a need for a network of routes and a developed transport system. In this section we will take note of these two aspects which were crucial to the commercial activities.

Various Trade Routes

In this sub-section we will discuss inland and overseas trade routes.

Agra-Delhi - Kabul Route

Agra-Faridabad-Delhi-Sonepat-Panipat-Kamal-Ambala-Ludhiana-Fatehpur-Lahore-Rohtasfort-Rawalpindi-Shamsabad-Peshawar Fatehabad-Kabul.

Agra-Burhanpur-Surat Route

Agra-Dholpur-Gwalior-Narwar-Sironj-Handiya-Burhanpur-Talner-Nandurbar-Kirka-Surat.

Surat-Ahmedabad-Agra Route

Surat-Broach-Baroda-Ahmedabad-Palampur-Jalore-Merta-Ludana-Hinduan-Fatehpur Sikri-Agra.

Agra-Patna-Bengal Route

Agra-Firozabad-Etawa-Sarai Shahzada-Allahabad-Banaras-Sahasram-Daud Nagar- Patna-Munger-Bhagalpur-Rajmahal-Dampur-Dacca.

The river route from Agra to Bengal ran almost parallel to the land route.

Foreign Trade Routes

Foreign and Indian merchants traded through, both, the overland and overseas routes.

i) Route By Land

The most frequented overland route during the medieval period was the one connected with the 'great silk route'. The 'great silk route' beginning from Beijing passed through Central Asia via Kashghar, Samarqand and Balkh and Kabul. Indian hinterlands were connected with this great route at Lahore. It passed through Multan, Qandahar (and then entered Persia via Yezd and Isfahan), Baghdad, and after crossing the Euphrates it reached Aleppo. From there, the commodities were taken to Europe aboard ships.

ii) Route By Sea

The sea routes on both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal were well frequented. Before the discovery of the sea route via the Cape of Good

Hope, the most frequented sea routes in the north were: a) from Cambay, Surat, Thatta to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea; b) from other parts like Dabhor, Cochin and Calicut to Aden and Mocha. At Mocha certain commodities were carried via Red sea and then through overland route to Alexandria via Cairo. Alexandria was another point of distribution of commodities into European countries. With the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, the European countries got new openings.

As for Eastern seas, since long the Indian merchants were having seaborne trade with China and the Indonesia Archipelago. From Hugli, Masulipatnam and Pulicat commodities were sent directly to Achin, Batavia and Malacca. Through the Malacca straits, merchants used to go as far as Macao and Canton in China.

Methods of Transport

Here we will confine our discussion to the means of transport in use for commercial purposes only.

Transport By Land

Oxen played a major role. They were used as pack animals for carrying load on their backs. We get references to grain merchants travelling with 10000-20000 pack animals in one caravan called tanda. Apart from the banjaras, other merchants also used them for transporting goods. Oxen drawn carts were also used to transport goods. An ox could carry four maunds and a cart 40 maunds. The oxen which drew carts could travel 20 or 30 days without break, covering on an average 20-25 miles per day. Camels were commonly used in the western part of the country for carrying goods. They carried goods by land to Persia and Central Asia. On high mountain regions, mules and hill ponies were used to carry heavy loads. Here human labour was also employed.

Transport By River

Large number of rivers provided a network of river routes. The most frequent use of boats was in Bengal and Sindh. There was regular traffic of goods between Agra and Bengal through boats. The boats carrying goods from Agra via Yamuna joined Ganga at Allahabad and went to Bengal. Contemporary sources refer to the plying of hundreds of boats between Agra and Bengal. Manrique noticed around 2000 boats in anchor

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at Rajmahal. Our sources refer to around forty thousand boats in Sindh. Each 'patella' (a kind of flat boat) plying between Patna and Hugli had a carrying capacity of around 130 to 200 tons of load. The other goods carrying boats had a capacity of 1000 to 2000 maunds each.

While moving in the direction of the flow of the river, it was much faster. Generally it took less than half the time than by road. At the same time, river transport was cheaper also. For example: from Multan to Thatta the goods by river would cost Rs $3/4^{\text{th}}$ per maund, while for a shorter distance by land it would cost around Rs. 2 per maund.

Check Your Progress 5

1) List the main towns on Agra-Patna-Bengal route.

2) Describe the sea-route from Indian ports to Europe.

13.4 LET US SUM UP

With the coming of the Turks a new ruling class came into existence replacing the old one. This change did not bring much of a difference in their lifestyle. Like their predecessors they too led a luxurious life. The Hindu society was divided on the basis of castes. But with the coming of the Turks, slight improvement in the positions of the shudras and outcastes as visible. The Hindu woman enjoyed some property rights, but the custom of purdah was prevalent during this period. The Delhi Sultans maintained large number of slaves who were employed in the royal karkhanas and bodyguards as well. Merchants, too, enjoyed favourable status and lived comfortably. But the peasants' condition was not good.

In this Unit, the overall constituent structure of rural and urban society during Mughal period has been outlined. The standard of living, viz., food, clothing and housing of the rural classes has been taken into account. Various aspects of social life, viz., family, social institutions and customs, festivals and amusements have also been dealt with.

Further, you have also studied the impact of the Delhi sultanate and Mughal rule on Indian economy. We have traced how gradually the previously existing systems of revenue collection and distribution changed and cash nexus grew.

13.5 KEYWORDS

Domestic Production: Production in which tools as well as raw materials were owned by the artisans

Entrepot : Trading central port for import and exports

Mal: Land revenue

Putting-out system: Production in which the tools were owned by the artisans but cash was supplied by the peasants.

Cash-crops: Crops produced for markets

Distillation: Lit. Substance was turned to vapour by heating. Then the condensed vapour was collected.

Kroh/Kuroh: Used for measuring distance. 1 Kuroh = 2.5 miles

Kharif : Autumn crop

Kharaks : Cattle-pens

Rabi : Winter crop

Jama : assessed revenue

Hasil : actual collection

Qabuliat : acceptance

Nabud : not-existing

Patta : a written document issued by the revenue department to the peasants in which the rate of revenue demand, etc., were entered.

Taqavi : agricultural loan

Zortalab : refractory

13.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- 1) Write a note on Rural Life in Medieval India.
- 2) 'Mughals introduced far reaching changes in Revenue administration'.
Elaborate
- 3) Write a note on Inland and Foreign Trade routes in Medieval India.
- 4) Describe the role played by hats and penths in the local trade.
- 5) Write a brief note on indigo export from India.
- 6) List the main items of import in India.

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13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) a) Cultivation was based on individual peasant farming and the size of land cultivated by them varied greatly from the large holding of the 'khuts' or headmen to the small plots of 'balahars' or village menials. Peasants generally had a pair of oxen and the plough. The peasants raised water needed for cultivation and sold their crop for payment of revenue in cash; there must have been differentiation among the peasantry. Barani designates men of the highest stratum among the peasants as khuts and muqaddams.

b) Wrestling was very popular even among villagers. Apart from these, fencing, spear throwing, horse racing were popular among the aristocracy. Polo (chaugan) was an aristocratic game. Apart from these each region has its own popular songs and dances. Folk theatre and jugglery by wandering entertainers called nuts can be seen even today. Oral recitation of the religious texts like Panchalis in Bengal or Alhakhand stories in Doab drew large crowds. In Rajasthan, bards went around singing heroic tales, became very popular.

Check Your Progress 2

1) a) Pigeon flying and cock-fighting were common. Akbar used to feed his own birds and call the game (pigeon flying) by the romantic term *ishqbaazi* (love affair).

b) The Mughals organised *qamargah* hunts. This was large scale manoeuvre organised in one of the imperial hunting preserves. Sometimes around 50,000 cavalymen and others encircled the hunting preserve and they gradually came closer to a point when the animals were confined into a sort of ring. The Emperor and other big nobles then entered the ring and hunted the animals.

c) Chaupar playing was very popular among the Hindus, specially the Rajputs. Akbar later substituted human figures for the pieces of chaupar and turned it into the amusing game of *chandal-mandal*.

Check Your Progress 3

Notes

1) The Sultan fixed the prices of all commodities from grain to cloth, slaves, cattle, etc. (Regulation 1). A controller of market (shahna-i mandi), barids (intelligence officers) and munhiyan (secret spies) were appointed (Reg. 2). The grain merchants were placed under the shahna-i mandi and sureties were taken from them (Reg. 4). The Sultan himself was to receive daily reports separately from these sources (Reg. 7). Re-grating (ihtikar) was prohibited (Reg. 5). Sultan decreed a rigour in realization of land revenue in the Doab and the peasants were forced to sell the grain to the karavaniyan (the grain merchants) at the side of the field (Reg. 6).

Check Your Progress 4

1) The main features of the zabti system as it finally came into operation under Akbar were: i) measurement of land was essential; ii) fixed cash revenue rates known dastur ul amal or dastur for each crop. iii) all the collection was made in cash.

2) It may be safely assumed that in general the rate of revenue demand was from 1/2 to 1/3 of the produce. Since, the revenue was imposed per unit of area 'uniformly' irrespective of the nature of the holding, it was regressive in nature--those who possessed large holdings felt the burden less than those who possessed small holdings.

Check Your Progress 5

1) Agra-Firozabad-Etawa-Sarai Shahzada-Allahabad-Banaras-Sahasram-Daud Nagar- Patna-Munger-Bhagalpur-Rajmahal-Dampur-Dacca.

2) From Cambay, Surat, Thatta to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea; b) from other parts like Dabhor, Cochin and Calicut to Aden and Mocha. At Mocha certain commodities were carried via Red sea and then through overland route to Alexandria via Cairo. As for Eastern seas, from Hugli, Masulipatnam and Pulicat commodities were sent directly to Achin, Batavia and Malacca. Through the Malaccastraits, merchants used to go as far as Macao and Canton in China.

UNIT 14 FORMATION OF REGIONAL POLITIES

STRUCTURE

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Background For The Emergence of Regional Polities
- 14.3 Successors
 - 14.3.1 State of Awadh
 - 14.3.2 State of Bengal
 - 14.3.3 State of Hyderabad
- 14.4 The New Ones
 - 14.4.1 Marathas State
 - 14.4.2 State of Punjab
 - 14.4.3 State of Jats
- 14.5 The Independent States
 - 14.5.1 State of Mysore
 - 14.5.2 Rajput State
 - 14.5.3 State of Kerala
- 14.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.7 Keywords
- 14.8 Questions for review
- 14.9 Suggested Redings and refernces
- 14.10 Answers To Check Your Progress

14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will be introduced to the developments preceding the formation of regional polities;the different types of states that emerged following the collapse of the Mughalimperial authority andthe functioning and failure of the regional powers.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Subsequent to the decline of the Mughal Empire, a significant development of this period was the emergence of independent regional states. However, there has been a tendency in the writing of contemporary Persian and the early British historians to overlook this development by overprojecting the decline of the Mughal Empire and by glorifying the establishment of the British rule. Contemporary researches on the 18th century have drawn our attention to the need of studying the 18th century India on its own, not from the perspective of the decline of imperial authority or the beginning of colonial rule. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made in this Unit to familiarize you with the various facets of the emergence of the regional polities during the first half of the 18th century.

14.2 BACKGROUND FOR THE EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITIES

In our discussion on the Mughal administrative system, we have explained the mechanism of the provincial administration under the Mughals. In the context of the development of independent regional polities, what is important to understand is the dynamics of the Mughal provincial polity during 18th century. This would help us identify the trends and process of the emergence of the regional powers. The Mughal administration was centralized in character. Its success was heavily dependent on the power and ability of the emperor to subdue the nobles, zamindars, jagirdars and provincial officials. In fact, there was balance and coordination of interests and aspirations between the Emperor (who was always in a dominant position) and others. This position started changing; it is said, with the death of Aurangzeb. For various reasons, the authority of the Mughal Emperor got emasculated.

The diwan (head of the revenue administration) and the nazim (the executive head) were the two most important functionaries. Both of them were directly appointed by the Emperor and through them the imperial

control over the provinces was retained. Besides, there were other officials like amils, faujdars, kotwals, etc. who were also appointed by the Emperor. The provincial governors also depended on the goodwill of the Emperor to continue in their job. Thus, through the control over appointment, the Emperor indirectly controlled the provincial administration.

Unfortunately, the central administration was crippled by financial crisis and factional rivalry among the nobles. The Emperor was not in a position to prevent the crisis. It failed to provide the required protection to the provincial governors. As a result, the provincial governors engaged themselves at the beginning of the 18th century to develop an independent base of power. Some of its indications were that the local appointments were made by them without the prior permission from the Emperor, and attempts were made to establish dynastic rule in the provinces.

What happened during this period was that, except the theoretical allegiance to the Mughal Emperor in the form of sending tributes, the provincial governors virtually established their independent authority over the provinces. Even the autonomous states in Deccan, Rajputana, etc. who were not directly under the Mughals but acknowledged the authority of the Mughals also cut off their ties with the Empire. The trend of making independent authority is clearly visible in different regions whether directly under the Mughals or not in the first half of the 18th century. The states that emerged during this period can be classified into three broad categories: the states which broke away from the Mughal Empire; the new states set up by the rebels against the Mughals; and the independent states. In the following sections we will discuss in brief about these states.

14.3 SUCCESSORS

Awadh, Bengal and Hyderabad fall in the category of successor states. All these three provinces were directly under the control of the Mughal administration. Though the sovereignty of the Mughal Emperor was not challenged, the establishment of practically independent and hereditary

authority by the governors and subordination of all offices within the region to the governors showed the emergence of autonomous polity in these regions. A new political order came into existence within the broader Mughal institutional framework.

14.3.1 State of Awadh

As a province of the Mughal Empire Awadh's place was strategic since it linked the eastern provinces to the centre (route from Delhi via Lucknow to Patna and Hugli). A large number of *mansabdars* and other nobles belonged to Awadh. In the case of Awadh it is important to study how the governors tried to enhance their power in the province and the process by which they emerged autonomous and established autonomous rule. The problems related to various groups such as the *zamindars*, *madad-i-mash* grantees and the *jagirdars/mansabdars* could be resolved by the governor by adopting measures which at times encroached on the imperial power and the position of the nobles at the court and those serving outside Awadh.

It is important to study the emergence of autonomous states in the context of the alienation of various social groups and categories of the regions from the centre. This may have facilitated decline of the central power but this did not imply a corresponding decline of the economy and polity of the region. In the 17th century the province of Awadh witnessed economic prosperity. However, in the 18th century the imperial power was weakened and the *zamindars* and the peasants defied the imperial authority and resisted them. This compelled the governor to seek greater powers for the proper functioning of provincial administration.

Through an analysis of the Persian sources we find reference to *zamindar* or rural resistance, which was a consequence of their desire to obtain a share in power and authority. They tried to organize armed resistance against the central power by mustering their clan and kin support. The rebellions were mainly planned and executed by the big and strong *zamindars*.

Under Sadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk nawabi rule got firmly rooted in Awadh. Several changes were made in the *faujdar* and *jagir*

administration and the widespread practice of *ijaradari* enabled the *subedar* to establish autonomous rule in Awadh. The *amils* as agents in *jagirs* were placed directly under governor. *Amils* were responsible for administration of *jagirs* under the supervision of governor. By 1722 the *faujdar*s were placed under the governor and their appointments were made by governor and he was responsible to the governor as his deputy in the *sarkar* and *chakla*.

It has been pointed out that due to the political stability and harmony under the Mughals economic growth got a boost. Trade was instrumental in linking the towns and markets in various regions of the empire. Economic prosperity proved advantageous for the *zamindars* and merchants. As a powerful local group the *zamindars* had managed to find a place in the Mughal system but their aspirations continued to rise since they wished to have a greater share in political power. However, they could not pose a major threat because they constituted a narrow group based on kin and clan interests. The *madad-i-mash* holders as a privileged group came into conflict with the *zamindars*. They became rich enough to acquire *zamindaris* and *ijaras* and also lent money to *zamindars*. The *jagirdar*s power was enhanced by conversion of their *jagirs* into permanent possessions. In 1719 Giridhar Bahadur the governor of Allahabad rebelled against the centre. The defacto Sayyid brothers were forced to give him the *subedari* of Awadh along with the *diwani* and *faujdar*i. The chief characteristics of new *subedari* were extended period, total control over administration and military spheres etc.

The failure of the local groups to unite against the Mughals enabled the provincial governor to mobilize those groups to his own advantage and emerge as an autonomous power in the region. The independent region of Awadh continued to pay allegiance to Mughal Emperor for a long period of time. The Mughal institutions continued but were transformed to suit the local purpose. In Awadh the new *subedari* emerged on the basis of new alignment with the *zamindars* and *jagirdars*. During the Nawabi period the office of the governor was confined to the family of the Nawab and it was called the *suba-i-mulki* (home province) of the

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governor. The symbolic link with the imperial power was not broken and the *subedars* maintained their connections with the nobles at the court.

The Mughal authority symbolized prestige and power and though it could not prevent the regions from asserting their independence but it still inspired awe in the minds of the people. Thus the attempts by the governors posted in the province to acquire positions at the court reflected their aspirations to validate their position in the province by having access at the centre. Once the provincial governor had subdued and won over the local elements he tried to consolidate his regional power base by obtaining a position at the court.

Thus the periphery tried to maintain its links with the centre for furthering its regional aspirations. But the Mughal prestige was unchallenged in the 18th century and the autonomous regions had to seek the allegiance of Mughals for legitimacy. The problems related to the disintegration of Mughal Empire were manifested in the *zamindar* rebellions and for countering them the provincial officials sought greater authority which the emperor perceived as a threat to the central structure. Thus the balance between the emperor, nobles and local groups was disturbed. Since the reign of Farukhsiyar the provincial governor had tried to arrogate greater power by ensuring an extended tenure, bringing provincial finance under his purview, etc. In 1716 the governor opposed the conferment of military and executive powers on the provincial *diwan* by the imperial power. In this period the powerful nobles themselves took decisions regarding the administrative affairs. Giridhar Bahadur was appointed *subedar* of Awadh in 1719, a position he had himself asked for. The emperor was dependent on the nobles for support. He permitted the governors to exercise greater powers in order to keep them away from the centre. At the court he generally sought the support of the faction which was comparatively less ambitious to maintain his power.

Farukhsiyar initially depended on Sayyid brothers (nobles) but later the relations between the two became strained and gave rise to factional politics at the court. The provincial governor's attempt to get wider power also suited the interests of the other categories of ruling groups in the

province. The weakened centre was not in a position to provide guidance or security to the province. Thus the provincial authorities themselves tried to resolve their problems by forging alliances with the local groups. The central power itself was ridden with factional politics at the court and this percolated down to the provinces and brought about instability and confusion. The governor emerged as powerful and the classical Mughal system of checks and balances received a setback. The politics at the court (nobles v/s emperor) also permeated into the provinces and the provincial appointments were affected.

An important feature of administration in Awadh in the 18th century was the transformation of offices into hereditary positions. The *qazis* as holders of *madadi-mash*, which was granted to them in lieu of their services, tended to treat them as hereditary. The *jagirs* also got metamorphosed into hereditary domains of *zamindar* and non-*zamindar mansabdars*. The imperial power found it difficult to control the provincial administration when the local officials defied the agents of *jagirdars* or *amils* in *khalisa*. The *waqianavis* were ineffective and did not get the support of the *jagirdars* for obtaining information.

An important feature of the 17th century was the boom in economy. Trade and artisanal production received impetus. In the 18th century the central and southern districts of Awadh were connected with the towns in the provinces of Allahabad and Agra. This area recorded remarkable agricultural growth due to favourable physiography. This got reflected in the high *jama* (revenue demand) from the 16th century. In this situation the powerful *zamindars* allied with the peasant groups and tried to strengthen their position by encroaching upon the adjoining territories. This brought them into conflict with centre, other *zamindars* or the provincial authority. Against the background of economic growth, which benefited the *zamindars*, the latter were better equipped to challenge Mughal imperial power.

The Mughal system was poised on the delicate equilibrium between the local groups and the emperor, his nobles and *mansabdars*. The local groups led by *zamindars* could never emerge supreme because they were organized on caste and community basis and had a parochial character.

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Sometimes the *zamindars* allied with the Mughals against their own king groups. Mansa Ram, a Bhumihar *zamindar* of Gangapur, forged an alliance with the Mughals against the Rajputs and established the Banaras Raj. To further their aspirations the mutinous *zamindars* were hostile to the symbols of imperial power like *qazi*, *kotwal* trade and urban centres.

The provincial authority thus had to contend with the power of the *zamindars* and the *madad-i-mash* grantees. To meet the challenge the governor tried to augment his power. Thus the governor tried to combine the powers of *diwan* and *faujdar*, which brought him into conflict with the other officials posted in the province who acted as a check on the power of the governor. In this way the Mughal model of equilibrium among various groups was disturbed. The governor's desire for extended tenure also emanated from the need to re-organise the political alignments in the region. Burhan-ul-mulk was transferred through imperial order to Malwa. He however defied the imperial directive and laid the foundation of Nawabi rule in Awadh. His sister's son Safdar Jang succeeded him in Awadh. The governor's political and administrative initiatives were based on securing his position in the province and at times were in conflict with the position of the imperial power in Delhi. Though the position of governor was independent of the centre yet the aura of imperial centre and emperor still persisted and the imperial symbols were not totally abandoned.

In 1739 during Nadir Shah's invasion Burhan-ul-mulk came to the aid of the Emperor. However, at times the governor defied the imperial *farman*. The functioning of the *jagir* administration also created problems for the governor. The *jagirs* in Awadh were assigned to nobles posted either at the court or in other provinces. The agents of the *jagirdars* along with the other rural and urban groups posed a challenge to the governor. The emergence of *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* and the practice of giving *faujdari* rights to *jagirdar* also served as a threat to the governor therefore, further changes were introduced in jagir administration.

The formal links with the Emperor helped the governor to legitimise and further strengthen his position and also to obtain favours from the

Emperor. Burhan-ul-mulk and Safdar Jang kept themselves informed and aware of the court politics. The nobles who held *jagirs* in Awadh tried to interfere in the provincial administration through the medium of their agents in *jagirs*. Therefore, Burhan-ul-mulk introduced changes in the working of the *jagir* administration.

Jagirs in the region were a manifestation of imperial authority and symbolized the *jagirdars* power. The agents of *jagirdars* often tried to subvert the power of the governor. The reduction of the *jagirs* and converting them into *khalisa* would have incurred the wrath of nobility therefore under Burhan-ul-mulk the agents responsible for revenue collection were made directly subordinate to the governor rather than to the *jagirdars*. Thus he could ensure proper revenue collection through local service groups. The interference of *jagirdars* was reduced and payments were made to them by the officials under the control of governor. The big *jagirs* of nobles outside Awadh were also reduced. The *jagirs* in Awadh were now mainly held by the officials and military men of the governor.

Various local groups (*shaikhzadas* and Afghans) were inducted into the provincial administration and the army by the governor. The *shaikhzadas*, Afghans and Hindus constituted the local ruling groups in Awadh. The *madad-i-mash* holders were also appeased by conversion of their grants into *zamindaris*. The conciliatory move with regard to the *zamindars* (esp. Baiswara) through the *taahud* (a contractual system which permitted the *zamindars* to collect revenue and pay a fixed sum to the government in lieu of military, administrative powers etc) arrangement led to the emergence of *taluqdaris* in 18th century Awadh. The decline of *faujdaris* is attributed to the combining of governorship with *faujdaris* rights and the appointment of local men as *naib* and *nazim* or the governor's subordinate entrusted with executive and financial authority.

14.3.2 State of Bengal

The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 was marked by the decay of Mughal Empire especially the central power in Delhi. This was followed by the emergence of successor states which represented the *subas* of Mughal

Notes

Empire. Let us examine whether the provinces were undergoing a phase of decay or decline.

It has been argued that in the 17th century the Mughal administration was extremely compact and cohesive. The *mansabdars* appointed by the centre and posted in the provinces constituted the upper layer of administrative official hierarchy. Their position was transferable and the central government had absolute control over the provincial administration especially through the various officials (viz. *subedar* and *diwan*) posted there who served as a curb on each other's power. Bengal however was a unique province because the *zamindars* as land holders at the local level enjoyed tremendous power and performed the function of revenue collection and maintenance of law and order. In the administrative hierarchy the provincial officials supervised the *zamindar* and other landholders and peasants. In the 17th century the *zamindaris* in Bengal were not large and therefore it was easier for the imperial government to manage them.

During the 18th century with the weakening of the central government the provincial government in Bengal also underwent transformation. The power of the *mansabdars* in Bengal weakened and the size of imperial contingents was reduced. The *mansabdars* found it difficult to send remittances to Delhi due to the declining military capabilities. Now a new phenomenon emerged in the form of an alliance between the representatives of Mughal power in the province (*Subedar, Diwan*) and the *zamindars*. This collaboration later incorporated the commercial and the financial groups in Bengal. In the 18th century Aurangzeb was confronted with the Maratha problem. He needed to mobilize resources for meeting the Maratha challenge. Irfan Habib in his *Agrarian System of Mughal India* points out that in comparison to the 1580 the revenue demand did not increase much in Bengal in the 18th century, although in other provinces of northern India the increase was higher as compared to Bengal.

Due to devaluation of silver coinage (influx of metal due to European traders) in the 17th century agricultural prices soared but correspondingly the *jama* did not increase in Bengal. Bengal in the 17th century was quite

prosperous. Evidence shows that on account of extension of cultivation, growth of trade and influx of silver, the province of Bengal was economically quite stable. We have pointed out that in spite of economic prosperity the revenue demand in Bengal did not increase. The evidence of the administrative document (*Risala-i-Ziraat*, written in about 1760) informs us that the revenue demand had continued to be the same since Akbar's period and it had not been subject to revision on the basis of actual measurement. The officials responsible for revenue collection i.e. the *mansabdars* who possessed *jagirs*, the *zamindars* and other intermediate groups (collectors) remitted the revenue to the centre in accordance with the official rate of demand whereas the actual collection was much higher.

Therefore the *mansabdars*, *zamindars* etc. were amassing huge amounts at the cost of the centre. Hard pressed for funds to finance wars against the Marathas, Aurangzeb decided to streamline the revenue administration in Bengal since its *jama* was low and it remitted only a small sum to the central treasury. Therefore in 1700 he sent Murshid Quli Khan from the Deccan to Bengal as *Diwan*. He had earlier demonstrated his skill in revenue administration in the Deccan. In Bengal he proved to be an adept revenue administrator who was initially appointed as *Diwan* but later combined the office of *Diwan* and *Nazim*. His revenue reforms prepared the ground for increase in *jama* (estimated revenue) and *hasil* (revenue collected) in the 18th century Bengal.

Murshid Quli Khan was successful in raising the revenue collection in Bengal. The increase in *jama* in the 18th century was about 22.5 % as compared to the figures of revenue demand in 1580. This increase was however not very high if we compare it with the increase in the other provinces of north India in the 17th century. The increase in *hasil* between 1700-1722 was about 20% as compared to rise of 22.5% in the 17th century. The upward swing in revenue collections was accompanied by transformation of the revenue administration in Bengal and the establishment of new political alignments in Bengal due to the growth of trade and banking. In this period the sum total of *zamindaris* decreased but there was increase in large *zamindaris*. Money lenders and bankers

emerged as important groups and they provided finance to the *zamindars* who served as the revenue appropriating agency at the local level for the *Nazim*.

The revenue reforms introduced by Murshid Quli entailed increasing the revenue demand and collection through measurement and thereby abiding with the Emperor's order for increased remittances to Delhi. This was also meant to act as a check on the *jagirdars*, *zamindars* and others who were depriving the center/government of revenue. The important steps taken by Murshid Quli Khan for achieving his aim of increasing revenue collection were: the *jagirs* of the *mansabdars* in Bengal were shifted to Orissa and consequently those lands in Bengal were placed under *Khalisa* (they yielded more revenue than the lands of Orissa) and thus the revenue collection went directly into the state coffers. The *Nazim* tried to tighten his hold over the *zamindars* by enquiring into their collections and ensuring that they paid revenue in accordance with state demand. By bringing *jagir* land under *khalisa* he was able to ensure that revenue assessment was proper and officials were sent to inquire into the revenue yielding capacity through actual field investigation.

Although surveys and investigations were conducted by the *Nazim* through his officials to get information about the revenue paid by the *zamindars* but it seems that these could not have been done at the village level as mentioned in the contemporary evidence (chronicles) and the efforts of the provincial government were directed to make the *zamindars* and the lower intermediate landholders accountable for proper revenue assessment and collection.

Zamindari sanads (documents relating to revenue records) refer to assessment only upto *zamindari* level and not village level. Thus, the *Nazim's* policies were aimed to control the *zamindar* and the lower intermediate land holders and affected the peasants only indirectly. In such a situation a *zamindar* that was not able to pay the state demand was deprived of his holding and it was either taken over by the government or money lender or given to a capable and loyal *zamindar* who would be able to fulfill the government's demand.

Certain *zamindars* were encouraged to create big *zamindaris* by bringing other *zamindaris* under their control and also due to grant of lands to them by the *Nazim*. Rajshahi developed as a big *zamindari* between 1700-1727. Dinajpur, Nadia and Burdwan also emerged as large *zamindaris* in this period. By 1727 half of the revenue collected for the province was provided by 15 large *zamindaris* which existed in this period. The policies of the *Nazim* eliminated the *zamindars* that were not able to pay their dues in time. The *zamindars* that made prompt remittances to the government were rewarded for their performance. *Zamindars* along with the bankers and money lenders had emerged as a powerful group within the province both economically and politically.

In the period when Murshid Quli served as the *Nazim* in Bengal the power of the central government (Mughal) continued to weaken further and this gave opportunity to him to exercise greater autonomy in provincial matters. He tried to strengthen his position by appointing to official position those who were his relatives and who were loyal to him and removing antagonistic *mansabdars*. The big *zamindars* were his supporters since they had been permitted to enlarge their *zamindaris* and the government did not investigate into their activities as long as they adhered to the schedule in paying their dues. The category of money lenders and bankers too profited and they had the official backing in this context.

Murshid Quli was able to establish a firm foothold in Bengal. He was interested in handing over the *Nizamat* which he had created to someone in his family. This was the first manifestation of the autonomy gained by Bengal since the centre had little real role to play in the important provincial appointments henceforth. During the period of Shuja-ud-din (son-in-law of Murshid), the successor of Murshid Quli the bond between the centre and the province was further undermined. Although he did not possess his father-in-law's acumen, but he was an efficient administrator and imperial revenues continued to be transmitted to Delhi in his period. The fact that Bengal now relied mainly on its own resources (mobilizing troops) for maintenance of law and order meant that he had to seek the support of *zamindars*, bankers and local militia in Bengal. The

military support from the centre could not be sought (due to the decline of *jagirs* and removal of *mansabdars*) in the context of independent policies pursued by the *Nazim*. Shujauddin initiated measures to win the loyalty of *zamindars* and bankers. The *zamindars* who had been defaulters earlier and had been punished by Murshid Quli were pardoned and an advisory council was established which had as its member Jagat Seth Fateh Chand. Shujauddin tried to secure his position by sending huge amounts to Delhi. Thus in the 1730s the provincial administration in Bengal was carried out through the cooperation between *Nazim*, *zamindars* and bankers. This was not in accordance with the Mughal system. Thus it seems that the administrative link between the centre and province had been loosened and it was on the verge of being cut. Under Shujauddin taxes (*abwabs*) were imposed on the basis of the prevailing *jama* as a fixed percentage. It seems that a comprehensive assessment below the *zamindar* level (pargana level) was not carried out. During Murshid Quli's period surveys of *zamindaris* had been conducted to get information about the productivity and efforts were made to arrive at assessment, which was based on field investigations. In Shujauddin's period this policy was given up and therefore we find that revenue records of the period after Murshid Quli till 1757 were fewer and less comprehensive.

The emergence of big *zamindars* in Murshid Quli's time enabled the provincial government to increase the *jama* and *hasil*. In the subsequent period (Shujauddin's) these *zamindaris* posed a problem. Murshid Quli being a stern administrator was able to control the big *zamindars* but his successor was not able to put a check on the growing power of the big *zamindars*. The imposition of *abwabs* further aggravated the problem as it led to peasant distress. The *zamindars* however continued to benefit.

In the 1730s the banker and the *zamindar* category emerged powerful vis-a-vis *Nazim*. In 1739 the *Nazim* Sarfaraz Khan was removed due to the connivance of the Jagat Seth and the *zamindars* who installed a military commander Alivardi Khan as *Nazim*. Thus the coup of 1739 marks a new phase in the history of the province of Bengal. It shows the complete alienation of the province from the centre which was now virtually being controlled by *zamindars*, bankers and the ambitious

militarymen. Alivardi was raised to the position of *Nazim* on the pretext that Sarfaraz was inefficient and Alivardi would provide better governance to the province. Thus in the 18th century, as a province of Mughal empire, Bengal was able to move on the path of autonomy. But independent Bengal did not witness a crisis in administration but a transformation of the Mughal pattern and many new features were introduced in its political system.

14.3.3 State of Hyderabad

As a Mughal province of the Deccan, Hyderabad in the 18th century witnessed frequent transfers of the officials which were at times a consequence of the political activities at the Delhi court. Rivalries and hostilities at the imperial court had the impact on the appointments and postings of officials at Hyderabad. The emergence of Marathas in the western Deccan as a major contender for power further aggravated the problem. In this situation Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah I strengthened his power in the Deccan and gained autonomy for the province in 1724. His initial appointment as *Subedar* took place in 1713. He was summoned to Delhi by the Mughal Emperor many times between 1719 to 1737. In 1719 he was called upon to confront the Marathas, in 1722 he was made *Wazir* of the Empire and in 1737 he was deputed to fight the Marathas and was again made *Wazir*. He came back to the Deccan as *Subahdar* in 1719 and in 1724 by forcing the Emperor to grant him the governorship.

The year 1724, was a landmark since he was able to establish his superiority over the entrenched Mughal *subedar*. By 1740 the position of the *Nizam* was secure in the Deccan. He made appointments and also removed officials without reference to the imperial court. This was a sign of independence acquired by Hyderabad under the *Nizam*.

The *Nizam* maintained merely a pretension of allegiance to the Mughal emperor. Karen Leonard points out “Nizam-ul-mulk conducted war, made treaties and conferred titles and *mansab* appointments himself.” The *mansabdars* appointed by the *Nizam* were known as ‘Asafia’ *mansabdars* to maintain the distinction with the ‘Padshahi’ *mansabdars* appointed by the Mughal Emperor. In this period the symbols of

Notes

imperial authority which illustrated the subordination of the province to the Mughal Emperor were replaced. The 'Padshahi Diwan' whose function was to confirm the land grants and supervise the revenue assessment and collection ceased to exist. Certain practices which served as the basis of link and bond between the centre and the province and which also emphasized the subordination of the province to the centre were discontinued. Gestures such as gifts to Mughal Emperor, festivities related to regnal year and ceremonies observed when *farmans* were received were practiced comparatively to a lesser degree. Although for practical purposes the *Nizam* had emerged as an independent ruler but he continued to rely on the outward manifestations of owing nominal or symbolic allegiance to Mughal power through mentioning the Emperor's name in the *Khutbah*, inscribing his name on the coins and procuring his orders (*farmans*) for imparting legitimacy to the appointments.

The second half of the 18th century was marked by the shift of the capital from Aurangabad to Hyderabad. Here the establishment of a court and an administrative system which was based on certain novel features laid the foundation of a new phase in Hyderabad's political history. Between, 1762-1803 Nizam Ali Khan became the ruler. In this period, a political structure emerged which was no longer a replica of the Mughal pattern.

Karen Leonard refers to the patron-client paradigm in analyzing the nature of Hyderabad state. An important feature of the system which emerged in Hyderabad was the participation of *vakils* or intermediaries who were basically middlemen employed by local nobility and outsiders (other local powers). All these categories were woven into the system through a complicated network.

The *Nizam* and the nobles in the late 18th century, on the strength of the revenues from the *jagirs* could support a large administrative, military and household apparatus. The nobles gave employment in their personal capacity in the form of administrative appointments or made cash payments for services rendered. They could also procure positions for their clients in the *Nizam's* estate. The Noble's position was

reflected through the patronage extended by him to various clients, relatives, employees, artisans, poets, etc. These patron-client ties were not based on clan considerations but rested on individual relationships. The *vakils* or intermediaries played an important role in the Hyderabad political system. The nobility maintained its ties with the *Nizam* through the *vakils* who performed the role of diplomatic agents of the noble and all kinds of exchanges and transactions (official, personal, ceremonial) were conducted through them.

The *vakils* sometimes played the role of patrons when they found employment for others in their master's establishment. The *vakils* of political powers also performed the role of diplomats in the *Nizam's* court on behalf of their masters (viz. Peshwa, Nawab of Arcot etc.). These *vakils* managed the estates of their employers in Hyderabad and were able to employ men for assisting them. Although they were deputed by outsiders but they were able to win over the confidence of the *Nizam* who assigned *jagirs* to them and sometimes they shifted their loyalties to the *Nizam* along with their clients.

The court at Hyderabad was initially dominated by the Mughal *vakils* but towards the end of the 18th century *vakils* of the *Peshwa*, the Maratha chiefs (Scindia, Holkar) and of the *Nawab* of Arcot was able to secure an important position at the court. The dominions of the *Nizam* were being ruled by many local hereditary chiefs who gave annual tribute to the *Nizam*. There were roughly eight important *samasthan*s or Hindu royal houses who had their own courts and they performed the role of patrons in the same manner as the *Nizam* and the nobles at Hyderabad. These local rulers were based mainly in Telingana (including Raichur), however, the exception was Sholapur in Marathwara. They hailed from the Telegu peasant castes. The territories ruled by these chiefs had been granted to them by the powers viz. Bahmani, Vijayanagara, Mughal etc. as a reward for their military services. The tributary relations of these local chiefs were an important feature of the political system in this period. These local landholders turned local chiefs ruled over their hereditary territories and maintained formal, tributary relations with the

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suzerain power which bestowed titles and honours upon them thus providing legitimacy to them.

The bankers, moneylenders and military commanders (generally mercenaries) also took part in the political activities of this period. The latter performed the role of military personnel and military commanders in wars. The bankers and moneylenders were responsible for the financial transactions. This group comprised of several communities viz. the Komati (Telegu), Marwaris, Agarwals, Jains etc. who had come from North India as merchants in the 18th century. The nobles and the *Nizam* depended on these financial groups in times of monetary emergency.

The army of the *Nizam* was not organized on the basis of central command. The troops were placed under the command of nobles who were paid by the *Nizam* in cash for maintaining the troops. These contingents were made available to the *Nizam* whenever required. The commanders of the troops belonged to the community from which the troops hailed. However, European military commanders were also employed by the *Nizam* in the 18th century. The troops placed under the European military adventurers were recruited from Deccani Hindu martial castes and they were organized in accordance with European standards.

The categories comprising of the nobles, *vakils*, military and financial groups played an important role in the political set up in Hyderabad. The nobles exercised power on account of their military capability and diplomatic acumen. The external *vakils* also played an important role as agents of other local powers and they together with the local *vakils* also performed the function of patrons. The civil administration was not centralized. Power was dispersed since the administrative offices were largely hereditary which accounted for the fragmented nature of the polity. The most important feature of the administrative system was the emergence of specialized hereditary offices related to record keeping. They played an important part in Hyderabad state under the *Nizam*. The administrative system though derived from the Mughal pattern was strikingly different in many ways. The most noticeable difference was

with regard to the maintenance of financial records and land revenue administration.

The *Nizam* as *subedar* of the Deccan was the supreme authority in the state. The next important officer was the *diwan* appointed by the *Nizam*. His function was to look after the administration of revenue, to conduct diplomatic relations and to appoint *talukdars* (revenue contractors). Another important functionary in the administrative hierarchy was the *daftardar* (record keeper). This office was hereditary and though the *diwan* was the head of the matters related to revenue administration but in Hyderabad real power of supervision of finances was vested with the *daftardar*. The two offices: *Daftar-i-diwan* and *Daftar-i-mal* were created in Hyderabad around 1760. The officers were responsible for record keeping in various areas and their jurisdiction was divided region wise viz. Marathwara region, Telangana region etc.

The task of record keeping entailed the work of maintaining statistics related to income and expenditure. They performed the role of registering the revenue assignments viz. *jagir*, *inam* and grant of *mansab* rank. The important appointment orders viz. those of *talukdar* were formally issued by this office. Though the officers associated with these offices were subordinate to the *diwan* but in practice they subverted the power and position of the *diwan*.

In the Mughal revenue administrative system there existed a hierarchy of officials who were responsible for collection and assessment of revenue who were placed at various levels arranged vertically viz. centre, province and local. In Hyderabad the Mughal system was replaced by a system in which contractors were responsible for revenue administration. These autonomous contractors were called *talukdars* and they entered into an agreement with the *diwan* for assessing and collecting revenue for a particular area. They were given a fixed sum for their services and the surplus collected by them was also retained by them. Their transactions with the government were conducted through the office of *daftardar* who determined the revenue demand, issued their appointment orders as *talukdars* and also fixed their jurisdiction. The *talukdars* also maintained their personal records.

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Under the Mughals revenue farming was deliberately avoided since it was not considered a proper method of revenue collection though it came to be extensively practiced in the 18th century. In Hyderabad direct control of the centre over the *parganas* and villages could not be established. The *talukdars* were not subordinated to the centre and functioned according to the terms of the contract. At the *pargana* level the hereditary intermediaries (*deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*) negotiated with the *talukdars* as representatives of the local village officials. The *mansab* and *jagir* system in Hyderabad also differed from the Mughal pattern. The composition of the nobility in Hyderabad was also at variance from the organisation of the nobility under the Mughals. In Hyderabad *mansabs* (ranks) represented merely a ceremonial and military honour whereas in the Mughal system the *zat mansab* determined status of the noble. In Hyderabad the category of noble was characterized as possessing hereditary *jagirs*. However, the most important feature of the nobility was its hereditary character (especially of the jobs) i.e. administrative or military positions held and the personal relations with the *Nizam*.

Check Your Progress

1) What were the efforts taken by Murshid Quli Khan to improve revenue administration in Bengal?

2) What were the duties of 'daftardars' in Hyderabad?

3) State the measures taken by Burhan-ul-mulk after assuming the *nawabship* in Awadh?

14.4 THE NEW ONES

The second group of regional states were the 'new states' which came into existence as a protest against the Mughals.

14.4.1 Maratha State

Among the various provincial states that emerged during this period, the most prominent was the Maratha state. The rise of the Marathas was both a regional reaction against Mughal centralisation as well as a manifestation of the upward mobility of certain classes and castes. The Mughals never had proper control over the heartland of the Marathas. During the period of Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath the office of the Peshwa became very powerful and the Maratha state system attained the status of a dominant expansionist state. Starting from Balaji Vishwanath to the reign of Balaji Rao, the Maratha power reached its zenith and the Marathas spread in every direction South, East, North and Central India. The Third Battle of Panipat in 1761 between the Afghans and the Marathas was a major setback for the Marathas and their victory march was halted by the success of the Afghans in this battle. So far as the administration is concerned, there were non-regulation and regulation areas. In non-regulated areas, the existing zamindars and chieftains were allowed to run the administration, but they had to pay tribute regularly to the Peshwa. In regulation areas direct control of the Marathas was established. In these areas a system of revenue assessment and management was developed of which the most important was the watan system. The watan-dars were holders of hereditary rights in land, whose rights vested not in an individual incumbent but in a brotherhood of

patrilineal relatives. The Marathas adopted some parts of the Mughal administrative system, but their major thrust was on extraction of surplus. In the absence of well-defined provincial authority, they failed to consolidate their influence.

14.4.2 State of Punjab

The development in Punjab was different from other regions. Zakaria Khan, the governor of Lahore, had tried to establish an independent political system in Punjab. But he failed mainly because of the struggle of the Sikhs for independent political authority. The Sikh movement, which was started by Guru Nanak to reform the religious beliefs and strengthen the Sikh brotherhood, changed into a political movement during the 18th century. The Sikhs organised themselves into numerous small and highly mobile jathas and posed serious challenge to the Mughal imperial authority. The foreign invasion (Persian and Afghan), the Maratha incursion and internal rivalry in the provincial administration created a very fluid situation in Punjab which helped the Sikhs to consolidate their base. In the second half of the 18th century, the different Sikh groups had regrouped themselves into 12 larger regional confederacies or *misls* under the leadership of various local chieftains. The process towards the establishment of an autonomous state became complete only under Ranjit Singh at the beginning of the 19th century.

14.4.3 State of Jats

The Jats were an agriculturist caste inhabiting the Delhi-Agra region. Among the different agrarian revolts that the Mughal Empire faced in the second half of the 17th century, the revolt of the Jats was a significant one. Following the contemporary trend, the Jats also tried to establish an autonomous zone of their control. Churaman and Badan Singh took the initiative but it was Suraj Mal who consolidated the Jat state at Bharatpur during 1756-1763. The state was expanded in the east upto the boundaries of the Ganga, in the south the Chambal, in the north Delhi and in the west

Agra. The state was feudal by nature and it was the zamindars that were in control of both administrative and revenue powers. The state did not continue for long after the death of Suraj Mal.

14.5 THE INDEPENDENT STATES

The third categories of states were independent kingdoms. These states emerged primarily taking the advantage of the destabilization of imperial control over the provinces.

14.5.1 State of Mysore

The kingdom of Mysore was located to the south of Hyderabad. Unlike Hyderabad, Mysore was not under direct control of the Mughals. Mysore was transformed from a viceroyalty of the Vijaynagar Empire into an autonomous state by the Wodeyar dynasty. The Wodeyar rulers were overthrown to strengthen the autonomy of the state by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan during the 18th century. The major threat before Mysore initially came from the Marathas on the one hand and that of Hyderabad and Karnataka on the other, while the English were waiting to take advantage of the situation. Starting his career as a junior officer in the Mysore army, Haidar Ali became its brilliant commander. He rightly realized the importance of modern army and accordingly tried to modernize the Mysore army after the European manner. With the help of the French, he tried to strengthen organizational discipline in the army. By 1761, he was able to overthrow the real power behind the Mysore throne, the minister Nunjaraj. He extended the boundaries of the Mysore state and incurred the hostilities of the Marathas, Hyderabad and the English. In 1769, the British forces were defeated by Haidar Ali. But the conflict continued. After his death in 1782, his son Tipu Sultan carried on the task of his father till the end of the 18th century.

14.5.2 Rajput State

The Rajput rulers also tried to establish independent political authority. They pursued the policy of expansion by grabbing the territory of their

neighbours. The principal Rajput states like Mewar, Marwar and Amber formed a league against the Mughals. But the internal rivalry among the Rajputs for power weakened their authority. Most prominent among the Rajput rulers were Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Jai Singh of Jaipur.

14.5.3 State of Kerala

Kerala was divided into small principalities under the control of local chieftains and rajas at the beginning of the 18th century. Mughal control was not visible in this area. But by the second half of the 18th century, all small principalities had been subdued by the important states of Kerala, Cochin, Travancore and Calicut. The expansion of Mysore under Haidar Ali put Kerala in a very difficult situation. Haidar Ali in fact annexed Malabar and Calicut. Travancore, which escaped from Haidar Ali's invasion, was the most prominent one. It was King Martanda Varma who extended the boundaries of Travancore from Kanya Kumari to Cochin. He tried to organise the army along Western Model, and took various administrative measures to develop the state.

14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, the focus was on the emergence of regional polities during the first half of the 18th century. In order to understand this process, we first discussed the situation arising out of the collapse of the Mughal Empire. This was followed by a discussion on the three categories of the states, i.e., the successor states, the new states and the independent kingdoms. These states established their independent authority, but at the same time they did not completely sever their linkages with the Mughal Empire. Obviously, then, these regional powers could not have developed a new political system of all-India level which could replace the Mughal imperial system. This flaw paved the way for takeover by the European powers.

14.7 KEYWORDS

Misl: It refers to the Sikh confederacy that arose in Punjab in 18th century following the collapse of Mughal rule.

Jathas: An armed parade by Sikhs.

Subah-i-Mulki: Home province.

Shaikhzadas: Indian Muslims.

Taahhud: A contractual system which permitted the zamindars to collect revenue and pay a fixed sum to the government in lieu of military, administrative powers etc.

Risala-i-Ziraat: Administrative document.

Abwabs: Taxes.

14.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) Analyse the pattern of the emergence of autonomous kingdoms during the early 18th century.

2) Write a note on Mysore State.

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14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

1) The important steps taken by Murshid Quli Khan for achieving his aim of increasing revenue collection were: the *jagirs* of the *mansabdars* in Bengal were shifted to Orissa and consequently those lands in Bengal were placed under *Khalisa* (they yielded more revenue than the lands of Orissa) and thus the revenue collection went directly into the state coffers. He tried to tighten his hold over the *zamindars* by enquiring into their collections and ensuring that they paid revenue in accordance with state demand.

2) An important functionary in the administrative hierarchy was the *daftardar* (record keeper). This office was hereditary and though the *diwan* was the head of the matters related to revenue administration but in Hyderabad real power of supervision of finances was vested with the *daftardar*. The two offices: *Daftar-i-diwan* and *Daftar-i-mal* were created in Hyderabad around 1760. The officers were responsible for record keeping in various areas and their jurisdiction was divided region wise viz. Marathwara region, Telangana region etc.

3) Under Sadat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk nawabi rule got firmly rooted in Awadh. Several changes were made in the *faujdari* and *jagir* administration and the widespread practice of *ijaradari* enabled the *subedar* to establish autonomous rule in Awadh. The *amils* as agents in *jagirs* were placed directly under governor. *Amils* were responsible for administration of *jagirs* under the supervision of governor. By 1722 the *faujdar*s were placed under the governor and their appointments were made by governor and he was responsible to the governor as his deputy in the *sarkar* and *chakla*.