



**M.A.**  
**SEMESTER - I**  
**HISTORY PAPER-III**  
**SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE**  
**HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA**  
**(1200 CE - 1700 CE)**  
**SUBJECT CODE : 73487**

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## **Core Paper III: Social, Economic and Administrative History of Medieval India (1200 CE – 1700 CE)**

**Objectives:** To facilitate students with the evolution of socio-cultural, religious and political processes in Medieval Indian past and introducing them to important social, cultural ideas and institutions.

### **Module 1. Medieval Indian Political Scenario**

- (a) Theories of State: Sultanate, Mughal, Vijayanagar and Marathas.
- (b) Nature of Kingship: Delhi Sultanate, Mughal, Vijayanagar and Marathas.
- (c) Mansabdari System and Watan System

### **Module 2. Social & Cultural Developments**

- (a) Islamic Intellectual Traditions: Al-Beruni; Al-Hujwiri
- (b) Class, Caste, Untouchability and Forced Labour
- (c) Education

### **Module 3. Religious scenario**

- (a) Bhakti Movement – Nature, Spread and Importance
- (b) Sufism – Silsilas and Doctrine
- (c) Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi and Syncretism

### **Module 4. Economic Transformations**

- (a) Experiments in Revenue Administration
- (b) Industries, Crafts and Urbanisation; Indian Ocean Trade Networks
- (c) Monetary and Banking System

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## **THEORIES OF STATE: SULTANATE, MUGHAL, VIJAYNAGAR AND MARATHAS**

### **Unit Structure:**

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Theories of State: Sultanate
- 1.3 Despotism: Benevolent and Tyrannical
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 Questions
- 1.6 Additional Readings

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### **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To understand the theories of state of the Sultanate and the Mughal
- To understand the theories of states in Vijaynagar and Maratha Empire
- To understand the theories of states in medieval period in India.

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### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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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 thirteenth century when it was at its formative stage were different from the concerns of the state in the fourteenth 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

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### **1.2 THEORIES OF STATE: SULTANATE**

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The Turks who came to India were deeply influenced by the Islamic thinking or practices regarding the state, though they could not completely shake off their tribal traditions. They also showed themselves to be intensely practical in their political dealings, simultaneously trying to remain within the framework of Islamic law (sharia).

## **Legal, Political and Social Character of the State**

From a legal point of view, the Delhi sultanate can be considered an independent entity with the rise to power in 1206 of Qutbuddin Aibak, a slave of Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam, and the end of its subordination to Ghazni. However, it was not till the consolidation of Iltutmish's power that the rulers of Ghazni ceased to claim suzerainty over the territories comprising the sultanate of Delhi. In fact, this was a consequence of the conquest of Ghazni by the Mongol leader, Chingiz Khan. It led to the flight of Yalduz, the successor of Muizzuddin bin Sam, to Delhi, and his defeat and imprisonment by Iltutmish.

Although asserting their independence, the rulers at Delhi were keen to maintain their links with the rest of the Islamic world. One method of doing this was to get a formal letter of investiture (*manshur*) from the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad. In 1229, Iltutmish received such a letter of investiture, along with splendid robes, from the Caliph of Baghdad. Henceforth, the sultans of Delhi inscribed the name of the Caliph in their coinage, and his name was included in the *Khutba* at the time of the Friday prayers. The sultans also styled themselves *Nasir-amirul*-the lieutenant of the leader of the faithful, the Khalifa or Caliph. It has been argued that legally the sultans of Delhi became subordinate to the Caliphs. However, the legal aspect was the least important in the eyes of contemporaries.

The legal independence of the sultans of Delhi had not been questioned by any one before the receipt of the letter of investiture. Nor was the legal status of the sultans questioned by anyone even when Mubarak Shah, the successor of Alauddin Khalji, repudiated allegiance to the Caliphs, and declared himself Imam or Khalifa. The question of getting the Caliph's letter of investiture was really a moral question. It also catered to, and helped to maintain the fiction of the unity of the Islamic world under the leadership of the Caliph. But this unity had broken down much earlier, partly on account of the rise of various religious sects, and partly on account of the rise of independent kingdoms under the Turkish and other adventurers. The rise of the Mongols fractured this unity still further.

When Muhammad bin Tughlaq was facing a series of internal revolts, he sought and obtained an investiture from a descendant of the Abbasid Caliph, who was living at Cairo after the murder in 1259 of the Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad by the Mongol leader, Halaku. This was in 1343. Earlier, he had removed his own name from the coins, and put in its place that of the Caliph. But these steps had little impact on the leaders of the rebellions. Firuz Tughlaq twice obtained investiture and robes of honour from the Caliph, even before he stood forth as a champion of orthodoxy. But the prestige of the Abbasid Caliph had gradually declined. With the advent of the Turks, a new type of state was introduced in north India. During the early phase, maximum freedom was given to the military leaders to carry out conquests in different parts of the country while a strong corps of troops was stationed with, and operated under the direct control of the Sultan. This type of loose or decentralized despotism was

replaced by a highly centralized state by Balban. With some interruptions, as for example, under Jalaluddin Khalji, the Delhi sultanate maintained its highly centralized character till the end of the 14th century when, following the downfall of the Tughlaqs and the rise of the Lodis to power, a brief experiment was made at reasserting the principle of decentralized despotism, with Afghan tribal leaders claiming a larger share in power. This led to renewed clashes between the Sultan and the nobles leading to the defeat of Ibrahim Lodi at the field of Panipat in 1526.

Despite its outer appearance, the character of the state varied considerably during the 13th and 14th centuries. During the 13th century, the state was very much the institutionalized form of a foreign conquest. The nobles, mostly of the Turkish extraction had little knowledge or links with the country, and exercised control over the countryside from their military cantonments in the towns and the forts sprinkled over the country. It was during this period that the Sufi Saints, particularly the Chishtis, played an important role in establishing links between the new ruling class and the populace as we already seen.

Balban's reign has many contradictions. Balban destroyed power of the chihalgani Turks. Simultaneously, he set his face against the India-born Muslims, even for the appointment in the lower rungs of the administration. The Khaljis ended the Turkish domination or the policy of Turkish exclusivism. They had not discriminate against the Turks, but through the doors open to the talents among various sections of the Muslims. Thus, Allauddin's wazir was Nusrat Khan Jalesar, and Zafar Khan his Mir Arz. Both were famous warriors but were non-Turks, possibly Indian Muslims. Another non-Turk who rose to power was Malik Kafur.

The earliest Muslim political thinker in India Fakr-i-Mudabbir, who wrote during the reign of Iltutmish, says: "Posts of diwan, shagird and muharrir (revenue posts) should be given only to ahl-i-qalam (the educated sections) and whose ancestors had served rulers and Amir's." Ziauddin Barani who wrote his political tract, Fatawa-i-Jahandari, while in prison during the early years of Firuz Tughlaq, echoes the same views. He says that at the time of creation, some mind were inspired with the art of letters and of writing, others with horsemanship, and yet others in the weaving, stitch-craft, carpentry, hair cutting and tanning.

### **Religious Nature of the state**

The process of formation of the Delhi Sultanate started with the rise of Qutbuddin Aibak to power in 1206. However, 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 observes that the state was not a theocracy because sharia 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,

### **Influence of Ulemas**

The powers and the position of the ulema in the state, and its relationship with the secular rulers has been a matter of continuous debate in the Islamic world. After the end of the rule of the first four Caliphs at Macca, there was a division between the spiritual and secular authority, most of the leading clergymen remaining at Mecca, and the center of political authority being shifted by the Umaiyyad Khalifas to Damascus. With the shifting of the political control to Baghdad by the Abbasids, who claimed descent from the Prophet, an attempt was made to reintegrate spiritual and political authority under their aegis. However, in effect, the political elements often dominated the spiritual. Even this unity, however limited, ended with the break up of the Abbasid Caliphate towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the rise of independent kingdoms mostly under the Turkis sultans.

The Turks who were newly converted to Islam, paid great deference to the clergy, the ulema, who were supposed to interpret Islam to the community. But they kept effective political control in their hands. The attitude of contempt towards the clergymen and lower officials (nawisandan, or writers) for advising about higher political affairs is explained by the remarks of Alauddin Khalji to Alaul Mulk, the kotwal of Delhi, when he advised Alauddin to persuade the Mongols to depart by using diplomatic and other means. Alauddin rejected the advice and followed strong measure against the Mongols.

It has been argued that the state set up by the Turks was theocracy because it was based on the Muslim holy law, the Sharia, which could be interpreted only by the ulema. In this connection, it may be pointed out that the word “theocracy” was originally applied to the Jewish commonwealth from the time of Moses to the rise of monarchy, and is understood as “government or state governed by God directly to through a sacerdotal class.” It was also implied that for such a sacerdotal class to govern, it should be organized formally, as in the case of Jewish or Christian Churches. It has been said that in the absence of an organized church, the Muslim ulema could not govern, and hence there could be no theocratic state.

In general, the sultans in India, while paying deference to the ulema, did not feel bound to consult them or accede to their views where matters of state were concerned. Thus Iltutmish did not consult the theologians before he declared Razia as his successor. Balban introduced pre-Islamic ceremonials in his court, including sijda and Paibos which were considered un-Islamic by the ulema. In Alauddin Khalji's time, Qazi Mughis declared that the treasures looted by him from Deogir were bait-ul-mal, or part of the public treasury, and that as a sultan, he was entitled

to take from the treasury only as much as was allowed to a common trooper.

Alauddin rejected the advice of the Qazi, and declared-“Although I have not studied the Book (the Quran), nor am I learned, I am a Muslim. To prevent rebellions in which thousands perish, I issue such orders as I conceive to be for the good of the state, and the benefit of the people. Men are heedless, disrespectful, and disobey my commands. I am then compelled to be severe and bring them to obedience. I do not know whether this is according to the Sharia or against the Sharia-whatever I think for the good of the state or suitable for the emergency that I decree.”

### **Position of the Hindus**

In addition to loyalty and service to the ruler, the Hindus are also required to pay *jizyah*. The origins of *jizyah* are not clear, some trace it to poll-tax on individuals levied in Greece and pre-Islamic Iran from which it was taken over, others consider it to be a tax in lieu of military service, and still others equate it to land-tax or *kharaj*. Some theologians argued that as idolater, and not having a revealed book like the Quran, the Hindus were ineligible for *jizyah*, and should be given the option of only Islam or death. If Barani is to be believed, such an argument was put forward before Iltutmish by a group of theologians. On behalf of the Sultan, his wazir, Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, replied that such a policy was contrary to tradition, not having been enforced by Mahmud the hero of Islam and impractical because the Muslims were too few in numbers, “like salt in a dish (of food).”

Barani perhaps did not know that the Turkish Sultans were only following the example of the ruler of Sind who had granted the Hindus there the option of paying *jizyah*, and employed many of them in civil administration. It is also necessary to remember that in the Delhi sultanate, the Hindus formed a predominant section of population, even in the heart of the empire, Delhi. They continued to dominate the countryside as *khuts*, *muqaddams*, *chaudhari*, *rana*, *thakur*, etc., as also trade and finance in the towns, as well as the transport trade (as *banjaras*). To what extent the Sultanate affected the daily life of an average Hindu is a matter of debate. According to one view, he was hardly affected because the state interfered with his life as long as he paid his taxes which, in the villages, continued to be collected by the *khuts* and *muqaddams*, or *rana* and *thakurs*.

However, in a centralized state, the influence of the state tended to grow, as was shown by the agrarian policies of Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. In matters of religion, considerable freedom was accorded. Jalaluddin Khalji's observation that the Hindu passed in procession, beating gongs and symbols, outside his palace, to immerse the images in the Jamuna exemplifies it. Muhammad bin Tughlaq even participated in Hindu festivals, such as, Holi, and held discussions with Jogis and Jain saints.

Thus, while claiming to be Islamic, the State was militaristic and aristocratic in character, being dominated by a narrow clique of military leaders, headed by and under the control of sultan.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the nature of theories of state in Sultanate period.

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### **1.3 DESPOTISM: BENEVOLENT AND TYRANNICAL**

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In their thinking about the state, Muslim political thinkers raised questions about the nature and legitimate objectives of state power, and the basis of the moral authority of the state and the sultan. Political thinkers considered monarchy to be the only safeguard against social anarchy in which property and the honour of women could not be protected. In general, the political thinkers, preferred the rule of one individual, the Sultan, who had the necessary social and moral qualities, and who, in a sense, enjoyed the mandate of heaven over a oligarchy, or 'noblocracy'. The question of despotism or autocracy bothered many medieval Muslim thinkers. Ziauddin Barani considered despotism to be basically un-Islamic, and considered that religion was the only check against despotism or abuse of personal power by a monarch. However, they did not give the right of rebellion against an unjust ruler, except in some special circumstances, such as open blatant violation of the *Sharia*. Barani compromised with despotism because giving of harsh punishment was inescapable in a situation such as India. Specifically, Barani believed that the mean and ignoble, whom he compares to "animals and beasts of prey" were "plentiful and abundant." Their punishment and stern repression by a despotic ruler was not only inescapable but desirable. Thus, Barani finds a social justification for despotism.

#### **Theories of State under the Mughal**

The Central Asian polity was adopted by the Mughals in many ways, bearing Turkish and Mongol traits. But controversy exists about the magnitude of Turkish and Mongol influences. Some scholars hold that Mongol traditions were predominant, while others suggest that Turkish influence was so strong that the Mongol system had really been converted into what can only be designated as Turk-Mongol. Akbar was proud of Central Asian connections and traditions. A blend of Central Asian and Indian traditions with appearance of Perso-Islamic principles is, therefore noticed in various spheres of Mughal politics and administration.

#### **Babur and Humayun**

Some historians argue that the Timuri polity was influenced by the Turco-Mongol polity and it was absolutist in nature and essentially

oriented towards highly centralized state structure. They consider it superior to the structure of the Afghan power which had reduced the Sultanate to a confederacy of tribes holding different regions. But for others, it was only in the beginning that the Mongol influence was later, the Mongol polity losing its centralizing and absolutist character.

The division of the Empire among the sons of the ruler was the cardinal principle of Mongol theory of kingship. But Babur never approved this concept: when after the death of Husain Mirza. His two sons shared sovereign powers, he showed his surprise. Similarly he also rejected any idea of sharing sovereignty with his begs (nobles). But the Mughals at early stages do not seem to have totally alienated themselves from Mongol influences. The Mongol principle of the division of the Empire was put to test soon after the death of Babur. Humayun divided his Empire among his brothers but failed. In 1556 at the battle of Ushtargram, Akbar and one of the daughters of Kamran were put on the throne, but it was a short lived emergency measure. Nonetheless, Babur assumed the title of 'Padshah' -a Turkish title. The Mughals considered sovereignty as personal property of the 'Padshah'. Even the so-called hereditary privileges of the nobles got the sanction of the ruler. Such privileges had to be renewed by the new ruler. Therefore, it is not quite correct to infer that the prevalence of hereditary privileges among a large section of nobility discouraged the growth of absolutism in the early Turco-Mongol polity. Later, both Babur and Humayun are known to have respected the Chaghatai code of laws (turah) which was allergic to the concept of more than one ruler at one time.

### **Akbar**

**Abul Fazl says:** "No dignity is higher in the eyes of God than royalty. Royalty is a - remedy for the spirit of rebellion ...." Even the meaning of the word Padshah shows this for pad signifies stability. A king is therefore, the "origin of stability and possession". He adds "Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun. Modern language calls this light farriizidi (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it kiyan khwarah (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone. Again many excellent qualities flow from the possession of this light like a paternal love towards the subjects, a large border, trust in God, prayer and devotion, etc. At another place, Abul Fazl repeats that "The shamsa of the arch of royalty is a divine light, which God directly transfers to kings, without the assistance of men" The king was therefore deemed to be divinely appointed, divinely guided and divinely protected.

The theory of sovereignty propounded by Abul Fazl on behalf of Akbar and reflected in his mahzar and "Ain-i rahnamuni" seems to be as close to the Central Asian and Perso-Islamic concepts as to the Chingizi traditions of sovereignty. It is significant that, the absolute traditions of sovereignty and conjunction of spiritual and temporal ruler ship was developed at many courts as a defense mechanism against undue encroachment upon king's authority.

Abul Fazl elucidates that "when the time of reflection comes, and men shake off the prejudices of their education, the thread of the web of religious blindness break and the eye sees the glory of harmoniousness ... although some are enlightened many would observe silence from fear of fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men. The people will naturally look to their king and expect him to be their spiritual leader as well, for a king possesses, independent of men, the ray of Divine wisdom, which banishes from his heart everything that is conflicting. A king will, therefore, sometimes observe the element of harmony in a multitude of things. Now this is the case with the monarch of the present age. He now is the spiritual guide of the nation."

### **Theories of state in Vijaynagar Empire**

Some scholars like Nilakanta Shastri, Ishwari Prasad and Vincent Smith believed that the Vijayanagara Raya was an autocrat. Scholars like Mahalingam argue that it was a paternalistic kingship characterized by a concern for the welfare of the people. Other scholars say that he did not exercise absolute power, and argue that there were certain important institutional checks on the power of the Raya. One was the Council of Ministers, customs and traditions also acted as a check on the Vijayanagara Raya. Along with the local institutions also acted as a check on the power of the king.

### **Centralization of the state**

Scholars like Shastri and Mahalingam says that the Vijaynagar polity was a centralized polity, and the king had control over the nayaks and the provincial governors. Shastri emphasized the centralized nature of the Vijaynagar state more emphatically than Mahalingam. He said that Vijaynagar state was a centralized bureaucratic set up. This view is based on the accounts of Paes and Nuniz, Portuguese travelers, who described the nayaks as agents of the Vijaynagar state, indicating a centralized state structure.

### **Segmentary State**

Burton Stein completely rejected this theory of centralized state. Vijayanagara state was not a centralized bureaucratic state like the Cholas or the Pandya states. He applied the Segmentary state model and argued that the Vijaynagar king exercised a ritual authority just like the Chola king. He identified certain Core regions, which were located in the fertile riverine regions having high population density. Here the king exercised maximum authority. The Chola state was located in the Kaveri river basin. For the Vijayanagara state, the core region was situated in the Tungabhadra region. He saw the macro areas where the king's authority takes the form of ritual authority, in the form of gifts, tributes and military assistance. Stein saw this as constituting a pyramidal structure, with the core region at the apex of the pyramid, where the relations between two units were replicated at various levels. The relationship between the king and the nayakas and the provincial governors were described in a ritual manner. Scholars like Shastri and Mahalingam criticized the model of proposed by Stein as the provincial governors were subject to transfer and

dismissal, and were under greater control of the king as compared to the nayakas who enjoyed relatively more autonomy.

### **Theories of State in Maratha**

There are various interpretation about the nature of Swarajya founded by Chhatrapati Shivaji. Hindvi Swaraj is a term for socio-political movements seeking to remove foreign military and political influences from India. Imperialist historiography generally characterized the eighteenth century Maratha domination as chaotic and anarchic. M. G. Ranade and J. N. Sarkar has repudiated the theory of Grand Duff in their writings. In 'the rise of the Maratha power' Ranade has accounted several factors responsible for the rise of the Maratha power. King Shivaji provided them the leadership and created confidence among themselves hence they rallied around him in the work creating independent state.

In attempt to develop Nationalist historiography, several Maratha scholars saw the Maratha state as the last reincarnation of the Hindu empire. Satish Chandra locates the successful bid for regional independence by the Marathas in the crisis of the Mughal jagirdari system which failed to balance income and consumption. C.A. Bayly notes the emergence of three warrior states-Marathas, Sikhs and Jats and argues that they reflected popular or peasant insurgency directed in part against the Indo-Muslim aristocracy. The Marathas, he elaborates, drew their strength from the ordinary peasant pastoralist castes.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Define concept of despotism.

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## **1.4 SUMMARY**

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With the advent of the Turks, a new type of state was introduced in north India. During the early phase, maximum freedom was given to the military leaders to carry out conquests in different parts of the country while a strong troops was stationed with, and operated under the direct control of the Sultan. The Vijaynagar polity was a centralized polity, and the king had control over the nayaks and the provincial governors.

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## **1.5 QUESTIONS**

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- Q.1) Explain the theory of state in the Sultanate period.
- Q.2) Describe the theory of state in the Mughal period.
- Q.3) Trace the theory of state in Vijaynagar and Maratha Empire
- Q.4) Describe the theory of state in medieval period in India.

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## 1.6 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 1) Ishwari Prasad, History of Mediaeval India, the Indian press (publications) Allahabad
- 2) Satish Chandra, Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals, Delhi, 1999
- 3) Burton Stein, Vijayanagara. The New Cambridge History of India. Cambridge University Press
- 4) M. G. Ranade, Rise of Maratha Power, Panalekar co, Mumbai, 1901
- 5) Dr. R. S. Tripathi, Some aspects of Muslim administration, Central Book Depot, Allahabad



# Unit - 2

## NATURE OF KINGSHIP: DELHI SULTANATE, MUGHAL, VIJAYNAGAR AND MARATHA

### Unit Structure:

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Nature of kingship: Delhi Sultanate
- 2.3 Alauddin Khilji: Supremacy of King
- 2.4 The Lodis: Absolutism in Monarchy Declined
- 2.5 Nature of Kingship : Mughal rule
- 2.6 Nature of Kingship in Vijaynagar Empire
- 2.7 Nature of Kingship in Maratha
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 Questions
- 2.10 Additional Readings

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit the student will be able to

- 1) Understand the nature of the kingship in the Sultanate.
- 2) Explain the nature of kingship in medieval India.
- 3) Explain the nature kingship in Vijaynagar and Maratha Kingdom.

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In medieval India, the monarchy held omnipotent power, but it could not function entirely according to the king's whims. Several scholars think that the institution of monarchy was not an Islamic institution. It emerged steadily due to various circumstances. Gradually, the sultan became the center of society and polity. The powers of the state came to be concentrated in his hands and he tended to be an absolute ruler. He became the chief executive and legislator, ultimate court of appeal in all judicial cases and the commander in chief of the armed forces. He maintained a magnificent court, and had great prestige and honour as patron of scholars, artists and religious men.

The Turkish rulers of Delhi used the title of Sultan. The sultanate was established in 1206 and the accession of Qutubuddin Aibak is



regarded as the beginning of the new political order. It was Iltutmish whose reign marks the stability of the sultanate. Although the Sultans of Delhi professed allegiance to the Caliphate, the Sultanate was independent in political matters. Iltutmish introduced dynastic principles into the government of the sultanate. A tradition of hereditary rule in favour of the Shamsi dynasty has been established. During the reign of Iltutmish the position of the sultan was not much higher than that of noble. Nonetheless, with the accession of Balban, The prestige of the Monarchy increased.

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## **2.2 NATURE OF KINGSHIP: DELHI SULTANATE**

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The Muslim jurists assigned the following functions to the sultan: protection of the Islamic faith; settlement of disputes between his subjects; defense of territories of Islam, and keeping the highways and roads safe for travelers; maintenance and enforcement of the criminal code; protection of the frontiers against aggression; waging of holy war against those who act in hostility to Islam; collection of taxes and duties; appointment of officers to help him in his public and legal duties; keeping in touch with public affairs and the condition of the people by personal contact. Though the sultan was apparently an absolute ruler, in actual practice his authority was limited by certain factors. It has been pointed out that that unrestricted individual despotism is a myth. According to both Hindu and Muslim tradition religion was the major institutional check on the misuse of power by a monarch. He was required to function within the ethical and moral norms prescribed by the religion. The ruler who violated the Quranic Law could be removed from power by the people, supported by the religious leaders. Besides, the power of the sultan rested on the loyalty of the army, support of the nobility, and the co-operation of the Muslim theologians.

### **Balban: Theory of Divine Right**

Balban decided to exalt monarchical prestige and power till it became synonymous with despotism. To enhance the prestige and power of the monarchy, Balban believed in the theory, which resembled the theory of Divine Right of Kings. He expressed his views to his son Bughra Khan. He said, "The heart of the king is the special repository of God's favour and in this, he has no equal among mankind." He emphasized the sacredness of the king's person. He had an inherent despotic disposition. He was convinced that unalloyed despotism alone could exact obedience from his subjects and ensure the security of the state. Balban strengthened his claim to the throne by asserting that he was a descendent of the mythical Turkish hero, Afrasiyab.

### **Splendour of the Court**

Balban established a pattern of court etiquettes, traditions and customs that built a halo of splendour around him and his court and held all the nobles in awe of his personality. According to Barani no sovereign had ever before exhibited such pomp and grandeur in Delhi. For the twenty-one years that Balban reigned, he maintained the dignity, honour and majesty of the throne in a manner that could not be surpassed. On his

accession, Balban gave up drinking wine and kept himself in studied aloofness and dignified reserve. He prohibited drinking of wine by his courtiers and officials, prescribed for them a special dress and a fixed ceremonial from which no deviation was permitted. He introduced the sijda (prostration) and poibos (kissing the monarch's feet) in the court as normal forms of salutation. To heighten the splendour of the court, Balban regulated the court ceremonials on the model of the Persian court. He introduced the annual celebration of the Persian New Year, Nauroz. He appointed tall and fearsome bodyguards, who were to stand round the king's person with their swords drawn and dazzling in the sun.

### **Promotion of the Turkish Nobility**

To strengthen his claim to the noble blood, Balban stood forth as the champion of the Turkish nobility. Important government posts were granted to only those who belonged to the noble family. Lower officers had no access to him except through the higher dignitaries. He maintained a grave demeanour in the court. No one was allowed to laugh or even smile in his court. Thus, Balban infused dignity into monarchy and by rigid ceremonials and dignity, he succeeded in restoring the prestige and power of the court.

While claiming to act as a champion of the Turkish nobility, Balban was not prepared to share power with anyone, not even with members of his own family. He realized that one of the great obstacles in the way of the sultan's absolute despotism was the select group of leading Turkish nobles, the 'group of forty', who had reduced the crown to a mere figurehead. To make the throne safe for himself and for his successors, Balban decided to destroy the 'Group of Forty'. To reduce the importance of the 'Group of Forty', Balban promoted junior Turks to important positions. To win the confidence of the public, he administered justice impartially. He inflicted severe punishment on the members of the 'Group of Forty' for even slight faults to repress them and reduce their importance in the eyes of the people.

To keep himself informed of all happenings in the kingdom and the movements of the Turkish amirs and refractory Hindu chiefs, Balban organized an extensive espionage system. He appointed secret news-writers at every level of administration. They were required to transmit to him daily report of all important events and movements. He paid special attention to ascertain the character and loyalty of the news-writers. He gave them good salaries and made them completely independent of the provincial governors. If the news-writer failed in his duty, he was given exemplary punishment. The well-established and efficient espionage system became one of the important means of Balban's despotism.

### **Organization of the Army**

For safeguarding his security and also that of the state, Balban decided to reorganise the army on a sound footing. Balban did not abolish the old practice of assigning lands in place of military service but took care to see that only such persons who were capable of rendering active

military service were given such assignments. Balban placed the cavalry and infantry under officers of experience, who had given proof of their courage and loyalty in battles. He put the army under the charge of Imad-ul-Mulk, a very competent and loyal officer and made him diwan-i-ariz (Minister in charge of the Army). He was made independent of the ministry of finance. Imad-ul-Mulk took special interest in matters relating to recruitment, training, equipment and salary of the troops. Under Balban the army became a powerful instrument of force and the basis of his despotism.

Having strengthened the position of the monarchy and reorganization the army, Balban directed his attention to the suppression of lawlessness in the Doab and the other neighbouring regions. He took stern measures and suppressed the brigands and marauders. He also put an end to the state of insecurity, which had been prevailing for some time in the Doab and Awadh regions.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Explain the Kingship theory of Divine Rights in Sultanate period.

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## **2.3 ALAUDDIN KHILJI: SUPREMACY OF KING**

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Alauddin Khilji was a true militarist. To support his theory of absolute kingship and to satisfy his ambition of conquests and annexations and to guard the sultanate against the recurring Mongol invasions, it was necessary to have a powerful army. With these objectives Alauddin introduced far reaching military reforms.

Alauddin Khilji's idea of kingship in its practical form is to be deducted from some of his political and administrative measures. He sought to enforce a code of conduct. Alauddin was opposed to ecclesiastical interference in matters of state, and in this respect, he departed from the traditions of the previous rulers of Delhi. The Sultans political theory of kingship is outlined in his conversation with Qazi. Alauddin clearly stated that he issued commands which he considered to be beneficial to the state and prudent under the circumstances without inquiring whether these were permitted by Shariat or not. In exercising independent judgment in opposition, whether necessary, to the interpretation of the Shariat by the Ulema.

### **Muhhamad Bin Tughalak**

Like Alauddin Khilji, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was determined to keep the secular issue free from the control of the Ulema. He did not go out of his way to defy the Shariat. But at the same time, he did not strain

himself to win over the support of the Ulema on important matters. The sultan wanted to make himself not only the absolute head of the state but also claimed himself to be 'the shadow of God.' He dropped all references to the Caliphate. This naturally turned the Ulema hostile towards the sultan. Initially the sultan did not think it necessary to seek the investiture from the Caliphate. But, in spite of his justice, generosity and personal ability, the sultan found that he was becoming more and more unpopular. Thus, he changed his attitude towards the Caliphate and sought confirmation from the Caliph of Egypt of his position as the sovereign. He removed his own name from the coins and inserted that of the Caliph. However, these measures did not restore the popularity of the sultan, neither was he spared from the recurring rebellions which ultimately proved detrimental to his authority and ruinous to the sultanate.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Define the nature of Kingship in Tughalak period.

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## **2.4 THE LODIS: ABSOLUTISM IN MONARCHY DECLINED**

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The idea of a sovereign king, superior to them in status and power, remains foreign to the Lodi Nobles. At best, they regarded the tribal head as 'first amongst equals'. Consequently, "their traditions did not allow them to think of a state where the relations of a ruler and the people could be reduced to the status of a ruler and the ruled. The Afghans refused to concede any individual as their superior, including Bahlol Lodi who had founded the Afghan empire. The position of the monarchy, therefore, was inherently weak in such an organization as the throne was always the cynosure all powerful tribal chiefs. As a result, the monarch had to constantly persuade them. Bahlal Lodhi, Infact, invited the Afghans as the members of the Afghan tribes to come and take due share in the kingdom of India. While Bahlol and Ibrahim Lodi, tries to conciliate their nobles- Bahlol always referred to his kingdom as one of brothers. Sikandar made deliberate attempts to elevate the monarchy. In the bargain, however, he lost his throne. The Afghan polity required, a rare blending of brilliance of arms and a Machiavellian shrewdness that could constantly cajole the nobles and outwit them. As far the Lodis, constantly harassed with the paradox of strengthening their kingship within the structure of the principles of equality, often find it impossible to function effectively and had to pay heavily for their tribal concepts. Despite of their best objectives, they failed to consolidate their dominions into a political whole and paved way to the establishment of Mughal rule in India.

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## 2.5 NATURE OF KINGSHIP: MUGHAL RULE

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Rulers of early medieval India did not style themselves fully sovereign. The sultans of Delhi and local Muslim rulers regarded the Caliph as their legal sovereign and usually used his name on the coins issued by them and read the Qutba in their name. However, during the Mughal Empire the position of the monarch underwent a drastic change. Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, took the title of padshah, meaning emperor, and asserted his constitutional supremacy. His successors continued to retain that title, till the dynasty came to an end. The Mughal rulers refused to recognize the nominal sovereignty of the Caliphs and regarded themselves as fully sovereign. They regarded themselves as God's representatives on earth. The Mughal ruler was also known as the Amir-ul-Mominin (ruler of the Muslims). He was responsible to his jamait (Muslim public) for his acts of omission and commission.

### **Akbar's Theory of Kingship**

The rulers of the Mughal Empire saw themselves as appointed by Divine Will to rule over a large and heterogeneous populace. Although this grand vision was often circumscribed by actual political circumstances, it remained important. One way of transmitting this vision was through the writing of dynastic histories. The Mughal kings commissioned court historians to write accounts. These accounts recorded the events of the emperor's time. Besides, their writers collected vast amounts of information from the regions of the subcontinent to help the rulers govern their domain. Modern historians writing in English have termed this genre of texts chronicles, as they present a continuous chronological record of events. Chronicles are an indispensable source for any scholar wishing to write a history of the Mughals. At one level they were a repository of factual information about the institutions of the Mughal state, painstakingly collected and classified by individuals closely connected with the court. At the same time, these texts were intended as conveyors of meanings that the Mughal rulers sought to impose on their domain. Therefore, they give us a glimpse into how imperial ideologies were created and disseminated.

Court chroniclers drew upon many sources to show that the power of the Mughal kings came directly from God. One of the legends they narrated was that of the Mongol queen Alanqua, who was impregnated by a ray of sunshine while resting in her tent. The offspring she bore carried this divine light and passed it on from generation to generation. Abu'l Fazl placed Mughal kingship as the highest station in the hierarchy of objects receiving light emanating from God (farr-i izadi). Here he was inspired by a famous Iranian sufi, Shihabuddin Suhrawardi who first developed this idea. According to this idea, there was a hierarchy in which the divine light was transmitted to the king who then became the source of spiritual guidance for his subjects.

Akbar changed this concept of kingship when he became the emperor of Hindustan. Akbar asserted that the monarchy was a divine gift. Abul Fazal observes, "Kingship is a gift of god and is not bestowed till many thousand good qualities have been gathered together in an individual. Thus, the Emperor, the 'Shadow of God on Earth' was the fountainhead of the administration, the center of all civil and military authority and the highest court of appeal in all judicial and executive matters." After conquering the whole of North India by 1576 by a combination of diplomatic skill, military strength and religious toleration, Akbar read the Qutba in his own name (1577). He initiated the practice of sijda (prostration) and zaminbos (kissing the ground in front of the monarch). Through these practices, Akbar proclaimed his absolute sovereignty. He did not make a distinction between his subjects on grounds of religion. He regarded himself as the king and benefactor of all his subjects. From Abul Fazal's Akbarnama we know Akbar's views on kingship. He said, "King cannot be fit for this (kingly) lofty office, if he does not inaugurate universal peace (toleration) and if he does not regard all classes of men and all sects of religions with a single eye for favour." Akbar claimed to be both the spiritual and political head of all his subjects, both believers and kafirs (non-believers or infidels). Akbar's ideal of kingship was indeed lofty and noble. The Mughal Emperors including Akbar tried to conform to the Quranic laws and did not do anything contrary to it.

The emperor protects the four essences of his subjects, namely, life (jan), property (mal), honour (namus) and faith (din), and in return demands obedience and a share of resources. Only just sovereigns were thought to be able to honour the contract with power and divine guidance. Many symbols were created for visual representation of the idea of justice which came to stand for the highest virtue of Mughal monarchy. One of the favourite symbols used by artists was the motif of the lion and the lamb (or goat) peacefully nestling next to each other. This was meant to signify a realm where both the strong and the weak could exist in harmony. Court scenes from the illustrated Badshah Nama place such motifs in a niche directly below the emperor's throne.

Royal despotism was a common feature during the medieval period. In this respect, the Mughal Emperor was an absolute monarch enjoying unlimited powers. The Mughal state was a centralized autarchy (autocratic monarchy). There were no institutions or office, which could check his supreme power. He was the supreme authority in the state. He was the head of the state and government, the supreme commander of the state forces, the fountainhead of justice and chief legislator. In the absence of a clear law of succession, there used to be plots and counter plots by the contenders to the throne. The principle of survival of the fittest operated. The contender with a superior military force was able to establish his power.

### **Royal privileges**

To strengthen his de jure and de facto position in the eyes of the people, Akbar vested certain special prerogatives in the monarchy. These prerogatives were intended to enhance the power and prestige of the monarchy. Some of the important prerogatives included: (a) Jharokha Darshan, a practice by which the emperor used to appear in a special balcony to receive the salutation of his subjects. The jharokha darshan signified that all was well with the emperor. Only when the king was away on an expedition or sick, he was not able to give darshan. However, Aurangzeb discontinued this practice. (b) When the emperor held the court or went out, a powerful kettledrum (naqara) was beaten to the accompaniment of many other musical instruments. (c) The emperor alone could confer titles on his subordinates. (d) The emperor only had the privilege to affix his special seal (mohar) and in special cases a vermilion print of his palm (panja) on the farmans issued by him. (e) Capital punishment such as death could be awarded by the emperor only. (f) The emperor alone could organize elephant fights. (g) Akbar adopted the practice of weighing the emperor on his birthday against gold and other precious metals, which were later dispersed in charity.

### **A unifying force**

Mughal chronicles present the empire as comprising many different ethnic and religious communities – Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians and Muslims. As the source of all peace and stability, the emperor stood above all religious and ethnic groups, mediated among them, and ensured that justice and peace prevailed. Abul Fazl describes the ideal of sulh-i kul (absolute peace) as the cornerstone of enlightened rule. In sulh-i kul all religions and schools of thought had freedom of expression but on condition that they did not undermine the authority of the state or fight among themselves. The ideal of sulh-i kul was implemented through state policies – the nobility under the Mughals was a composite one comprising Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Rajputs, Deccanis – all of whom were given positions and awards purely based on their service.

### **Sher Shah's Benevolent Despotism**

Sher Shah was an enlightened despot who regarded administration as a part of his duty and gave personal attention to every business concerning the administration of the kingdom. He was the first Muslim sovereign of Delhi who placed before him the ideal of promoting public welfare without distinction of caste or creed. He wanted to build his greatness on the happiness and contentment of subjects and not by oppressing them. Among the Muslim rulers of India, Sher Shah was the first attempted to found an empire broadly based upon the people's will.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write a note on Akbar's theory Kingship.

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**2.6 NATURE OF KINGSHIP IN VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE**

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The Vijayanagar administration was a vast feudal organization presided over by the king. The king of Vijayanagar, like all contemporary rulers, was an autocrat with unlimited authority in civil, judicial and military matters. However, the desire of the king to promote the welfare of the people according to the principles of dharma limited the urge for despotism. A detailed study of Krishnadevaraya's book Amuktamalyada helps us to understand the nature of political philosophy of the Vijayanagar kings. Krishnadevaraya advises the king in these words, "With great care and according to your power you should attend to the work of protecting the good and punishing the wicked, without neglecting anything that you see or hear." He further says, "A crowned king should always rule with an eye towards dharma." Enumerating the king's duties Krishnadevaraya says that he should rule collecting around him people skilled in state craft, counteract the activities of his enemies by crushing them with force and protect one and all of his subjects.

**DIVINE ORDAINED KINGSHIP**

There was a lot of religious resonance to the idea of kingship: the king performed a sacred role, and in some ways he was seen as an incarnation of God. The structure of Vijayanagara seemed to consist of the military system, the brahminical system and then the king-there was little else. There certainly was no independent bureaucracy or an independent idea of the state. The king was the military commander who upheld justice according to dharma, the idea of sacred duty and law in the Hindu tradition.

The concept of dharma, which is the basis of the Hindu tradition, integrates the human with the divine very closely. It is cosmic, divine and human at the same time. It confers duties on the individual as a member of a caste, as a member of a wider ethnic or religious group and it is also (or at least aspires to be) a reflection of some kind of universal law. It is sacred, according to an understanding of religion that doesn't separate religion from real life.



### **Check your Progress :**

1) What is divine ordained Kingship with reference to Vijaynagar empire.

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## **2.7 NATURE OF KINGSHIP IN MARATHA**

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Imperialist historiography generally characterized the eighteenth century Maratha domination as chaotic and anarchic. On the other hand, in an attempt to develop Nationalist historiography, several Maratha scholars saw the Maratha state as the last reincarnate on of the Hindu empire. Satish Chandra locates the successful bid for regional independence by the Marathas in the crisis of the Mughal jagirdari system which failed to balance income and consumption. C.A. Bayly notes the emergence of three warrior states-Marathas, Sikhs' and Jats and argues that they reflected popular or peasant insurgency directed in part against the Indo-Muslim aristocracy. The Marathas, he elaborates, drew their strength from the ordinary peasant pastoralist castes. The Brahmin administrators who were on the ascendant pictured the Marathas state a classic "Brahmin" kingdom, protecting the holy places and sacred cattle.

The king was the pivotal point of the administration of the Marathas. He was the only superman who used to run the very difficult administrative machinery. Everyone in the administration like all heads of eighteen Karkhanas, the twelve mahals, officers of secretariat as Fadnis, Sabnis, clerks, military commanders and eight Pradhans used to receive and execute orders of the king. The king was the final authority, without his sanction no one, no department could actualize any design or plan.

Charge of the ecclesiastical department never tried to take any decision without the sanction of the king. In the same way even Kalush, the powerful minister of Sambhaji had consulted the king to readmit to a repentant renegade into his former caste after he had undergone necessary penance. Naturally, everything depended on the personal ability and qualities of the sovereign king. There was no force to check him except his own good sense and the external factors like wars of formidable Muhammadan invaders. Hence, this elaborate administrative system required a very strong and farsighted ruler like the founder of this administration.

All the Maratha kings from the founder, Chhatrapati Shivaji to Shahu were the most efficient and powerful kings and were able to carry out the functions of the administration properly and without any hindrances. But after the death of Chhatrapati Shahu due to changed circumstances the central administration gradually came under the influence of the Peshwas Fadnis , originally , one of the officers rose to

power considerably next to Peshwa and consequently, the central administration was transferred from Satara to Poona. Although, there were gradual changes in The Central administration but there were no changes in the village communities even under. The Peshwas continued them and the provincial administration as earlier. The king was the head of the administration. The king was assisted by his Council of Eight Ministers, which came to be known as the Ashta Pradhan Mandal.

### **A benevolent administrator**

Dr. R.C. Majumdar writes of him, “He was not merely a daring soldier and successful military conqueror but also an enlightened ruler of his people.” Shivaji was readily accessible to his all subjects. He was a popular monarch. He kept a close watch on the administrative affairs of the state. All powers were concentrated on him but he ruled with the advice of his ministers. The common people regarded him with great devotion. They considered him as their greatest benefactor.

Under his rule the employment was provided to the members of all castes and tribes to maintain balance among them. He assigned separate responsibilities to the ministers and each of them was made responsible for his work to him. No hereditary officers were appointed. The practice of confirming jagir or vatan was discouraged. He gave special attention towards the administration of the forts. In matters of administration, he gave superior position to his civil officers as compared to military officers.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Discuss the nature of Kingship in Maratha period.

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## **2.8 SUMMARY**

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Iltutmish introduced dynastic principles into the government of the sultanate. Balban decided to exalt monarchical prestige and power till it became synonymous with despotism. Balban established a pattern of court etiquettes, traditions and customs that built a halo of splendour around him. Alauddin was opposed to ecclesiastical interference in matters of state, and in this respect he departed from the traditions of the previous rulers of Delhi. The rulers of the Mughal Empire saw themselves as appointed by Divine Will to rule over a large and heterogeneous populace. The Marathas, he elaborates, drew their strength from the ordinary peasant pastoralist castes. In Maratha kingdom, the king used to discuss the matters with ministers nonetheless the final decision was taken over by the king.

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## 2.9 QUESTIONS

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- Q.1) Explain the nature of the kingship in the Sultanate.  
Q.2) Describe the kingship in the Mughal period.  
Q.3) Trace the nature of kingship in Vijaynagar and Maratha Empire

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## 2.10 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 1) Ishwari Prasad, History of Mediaeval India, the Indian press (publications) Allahabad
- 2) Satish Chandra, Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals, Delhi, 1999
- 3) Stein Burton, The New Cambridge History of India: Vijaynagar, Cambridge University press, New York
- 4) J. N. Sarkar, Shivaji and his times, Orient Blackswan Private Limited - New Delhi
- 5) Dr. R. S. Tripathi, Some aspects of Muslim administration, Central Book Depot, Allahabad
- 6) [http://fathom.lse.ac.uk/Seminars/21701738/21701738\\_session5.html](http://fathom.lse.ac.uk/Seminars/21701738/21701738_session5.html)



# Unit - 3

## MANSABDARI SYSTEM AND WATAN SYSTEM

### Unit Structure:

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Meaning of Mansabdari
- 3.3 Benefits and drawbacks of the Mansabdari System
- 3.4 Watan System
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Questions
- 3.7 Additional Readings

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the Mansabdari system during Mughal period.
- To analyze watan system under Maratah rule

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the medieval period Sultanate, Mughal and Maratha Empires follows different types of land revenue methods and land management. Mansabdari in the Mughal Empire and Watandari in the Maratha Empire are examples of this. Before the rise of Maratha empire under the leadership of Shivaji the Great, the watandari system was prevalent in Deccan. Although King Shivaji abolished the watandari system and introduced the system of cash pay, the successors started it again.

The Mughal administration was run by a bureaucracy consisting of different grades of military officers known as mansabdars. When Akbar ascended the throne, the condition of the Mughal army was far from satisfactory. The empire was divided into jagirs. The amirs who held them were required to maintain certain number of horsemen and were required to serve the empire in times of need. The soldiers maintained by the amirs were mostly inefficient and absolutely unfit for service.

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### 3.2 MEANING OF MANSABDARI

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The word mansab means rank, dignity or office. Irwin, who has made a close study of the military system of the Mughals, writes that the

object of the mansabdari system was to settle precedence and gradation of pay. It implied that the holder of the mansab was bound to render military or civil service when he was called upon to do so. Akbar's attention was drawn to the necessity of military reforms. In 1571, when Shahabaz Khan was appointed to the office of Mir Bakshi, the emperor drew up a scheme of military reforms. The entire military establishment was reorganized on the basis of the mansabdari system. According to Dr. Satish Chandra, "The mansabdari system, as it developed under the Mughals, was a distinctive and unique system which did not have any parallel outside India".

### **Ranks in the Mansabdari System**

The mansabdari system existed during the sultanate period. However, Akbar seems to have perfected it. Abul Fazal, in his *Ain-I Akbari* maintains that there were sixty-six grades or mansabs, but it appears that there were not more than thirty-three grades in actual existence. The army was organized on decimal basis, the lowest unit of command was ten and the highest was ten thousand or more whose commander was designated as the khan. The rank of 5,000 and above was reserved for members of the royal family. During the rule of the later Mughals this highest rank went up to 50,000.

### **Appointment and Elevation of the mansabdar**

The appointment, promotion, suspension or dismissal of the mansabdars rested entirely with the emperor. No portion of the mansabdars dignity was hereditary. The sons of the mansabdar, as the custom was, had to begin life anew after their fathers' death. A mansabdar did not always begin with the lowest grade. If he happened to be a favourite of the emperor or a person whom the emperor was delighted to honour, he could be appointed to any rank open to him. This shows that a person could get the highest mansab without having to pass through the various grades by long and faithful service. Raja Biharimal was appointed to the rank of 5,000 right in the beginning. This mansab was usually reserved for members of the royal family. Akbar depended on his judgment of people in making appointments. During Akbar's reign, his Hindu subjects could aspire for the higher ranks as he recognized merit. Raja Todarmal and Raja Birbal held high mansabs. The mansab was a way of fixing salaries and status of imperial officials.

### **The Zat and the Sawar Ranks**

The three fold gradation of mansabdar's caused much confusion in the army ranks. The central government found it impossible to ascertain the exact or even an approximate number of regular soldier's controlled by all the imperial mansabdar's. The difficulty was solved by the introduction of two ranks Zat and Sawar for each mansabdar historians are divided over the interpretation and significance of these ranks. Some like A.L. Srivastava says that while the rank of Zat indicates the total number of soldier's number a mansabdar, the rank of Sawar indicates the number of horsemen under him, other like Dr. R.P. Tripathi hold the view that the rank of Sawar was given to mansabdar's to fix their additional allowances. A

mansabdar was paid rupees two per horse therefore, if a mansabdar received the rank of 500 sawar he was given rupees one thousand as additional allowance. According to Dr. J.L. Mehta, the Zat rank was not a new introduction; it simply referred to the original mansab enjoyed by an officer earlier, and it determined both its status and standing in the administrative hierarchy as well as his position in the court. The sawar rank referred to the actual number of soldiers under the command of an officer. The sawar was essentially a military rank that showed the distinction between the civil and military characters of the mansabdars. The introduction of the double rank, however, made the threefold classification of the mansabdars more intelligible and precise.

During later years of his reign, Akbar introduced the rank of zat and sawar in the mansabdari system. There is a distinction between the zat and sawar rank. The zat rank was the personal rank of the mansabdar. It indicated the number of cavalrymen a mansabdar was expected to maintain to render service to the state. To this rank was added a number of extra horsemen for which the mansabdar was allowed to draw extra allowances. This was called his sawar rank. For every additional horseman the mansabdar received extra salary. He got an increase of two rupees in his zat salary for every sawar he maintained. Individual sawars received payment according to their nationality; for example, a Muslim sawar received more salary than a Rajput or an Indian Muslim sawar. For a force of ten men the mansabdar was expected to keep twenty or twenty-two horses, so that replacement of horses during warfare was possible. On the basis of this distinction, the mansabdars except those who held mansabs of 5000 or above were classified into three categories: A mansabdar belonged to the first category if his rank in zat and sawar were equal; second category if his sawar rank was half of his zat rank, and third category if his sawar was less than half of his zat rank or there were no sawars at all. Blochman, who had made a deeper study into the military system of the Mughals, is of the view that the zat rank indicated the number of soldiers the mansabdars was expected to maintain and the sawar rank indicated the number of soldiers actually maintained by the mansabdar. However, this view does not seem to be correct. Akbar introduced the sawar rank later during his reign, sometime during his Deccan campaigns and rebellion of Salim. The Mughals preferred to have mixed contingent of Irani, Turani, Indians, Afghans, Rajputs and Mughal soldiers to break the monopoly of any one particular group. During the reign of Akbar and his successors a commander was expected to furnish  $\frac{1}{3}$  of his sawar rank in Northern India,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of his sawar rank in the Deccan and  $\frac{1}{5}$  for service outside India.

### **Payment and Jagir**

The mansabdar had to meet his personal expenditure out of his salary. He also had to maintain certain number of horses, elephants, camels, mules and carts. The mansabdar was paid handsomely. A mandabdar of the rank of 5,000 could get a salary of Rs. 7,000 a year. Roughly the mansabdar spent quarter income of his salary in maintaining his force. The Mughal mansabdar was said to be the highest paid official

in the world then. In certain cases the mansabdars were assigned a jagirs and not paid in cash. The mansabdars also preferred this, as normally there used to be a delay in payment of cash from the treasury. Receiving a jagir or land in lieu of a salary also added to the social prestige of the noble. The department of revenue kept a register, which showed the jama or the assessed income of the various areas. The account was kept in dams, forty dams were equivalents to a rupee. This document was known as jama-dami or assessed incomes based on dams.

### **Control over the Mansabdars**

Every mansabdar kept a descriptive roll or chehra of his troopers. Every horse had two brands, the imperial sign and the first word of the name of his commander. The emperor used to review his contingent once a year. If the dag system worked badly the state used to suffer. The mansabdari system was indeed a complex one. There was one imperial service for both military and civilian officers. An officer could be transferred at a short notice to an entirely new appointment. Birbal the famous wit of Akbar's court had spent many years at the imperial court, but he was given a military assignment on the north-west frontier, where he died fighting. Abul Fazal, a literary luminary and Akbar's biographer conducted military operations in the Deccan. Under Akbar mansabdari system was not hereditary. He appointed only men of merit. As time passed the system tended to become hereditary and worked to the disadvantage of the empire.

### **Dakhils and Ahadis**

Besides the mansabdars, there were certain other soldiers called dakhils and ahadis. The dakhils were those soldiers who were recruited on behalf of the emperor but were put under the charge of his mansabdars. The ahadis were the soldiers of the emperor. They were looked after the diwan and the bakshi. They were recruited, trained, disciplined and maintained on behalf of the emperor. They were paid well. The mansabdari system worked effectively as long as the emperor was powerful and served by highly competent wazirs. The nobility remained loyal when their services were rewarded and recognized. When merit was recognized the system functioned well as the right men were chosen for the right job. It was with the help of the mansabdars that the Mughal Emperors built and administered their vast empire. But the military system was not without its limitations. The troops were more loyal to their immediate master, the mansabdar, than to the king. The mansabdar recruited and paid them. If the mansabdar happened to raise his banner of revolt against the emperor his troops were likely to follow him. There was no uniformity in training or equipping the soldiers. They were not properly disciplined. They were not organized in any special regiments. It was left to the mansabdar to organize them. Nothing much was done to upgrade the infantry.

According to K.N. Chitnis, "The Mughal nobility constituted the bed-rock of the Mughal administration. It formed the steel-frame of Mughal bureaucracy and military system. It was the army, peerage and

civil service all rolled into one. All the nobles were brought under the mansabdari system”.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Define the mansabdari system.

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### **3.3 BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF THE MANSABDARI SYSTEM**

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The mansabdari system was an improvement over the systems of tribal chieftainship and feudalism; was a progressive and systematic method adopted by Akbar to reorganize his army within the fold of despotic monarchy. Although many mansabdari were allowed to recruit soldiers on tribal or religious considerations, they were also made to know that they owed unconditional allegiance to the central government. These men generally attached themselves to chiefs from their own race. Mughals became the followers of Mughals, Persians of Persians and so on. This led to certain homogeneity of military traits and the development of tactics particularly suited to the military prowess of individual groups.

Certain groups began to be identified with qualities. Rajput and Pathan soldiers were considered most valuable for their martial prowess and fidelity, for instance. As a result of the mansabdari system, the emperor had no longer to depend exclusively on the mercenaries of the feudal chieftains. The mansabdari system put an end to the jagirdari system within the territories under the direct control of imperial government. No portion of a mansab was hereditary, and a mansabdar's children had to begin afresh. All appointments, promotions, suspensions and dismissal of the mansabdars rested entirely with the emperor. Every mansabdar was thus held personally responsible to the monarch; this factor eliminated chances of disaffection and revolts by the military officers and may be said to be a major achievement of mansabdari system. Nonetheless, the mansabdari system suffered from many disadvantage as well. The system did not give birth to an army of national characters since two-thirds of the mansabdars were either foreigners or descendants of foreigners immigrants. In spite of Akbar's secular policy in the matter of recruitment, Hindus formed barely nine percent of the aggregate strength of the imperial cadre. The state's failure to recruit all the soldiers under the supervision of a central or imperial agency, was to cost it clearly. Since mansabdars were free to recruit their soldiers as they pleased, they preferred to enroll men of their own tribe, race, religion or region. While this led to homogenization of military tactics, it also divided the imperial army into many groups.



### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe benefits and drawbacks of mansabdari system.

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### **3.4 WATAN SYSTEM**

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During the period of Marathas land was the main source of income. It was considered much more important than any other sources and was called watan. Watan means one's own native place and the land it possessed over there. The one who held land was very proud of that and was called watandar by virtue of its possession. The Marathas who were the land holders were ready to do everything as well as prepared to undergo any ordeals to retain the title of their land because their land was called watan. The land or watan also was called Inam was inherited by one's children as successors.

#### **Development of watan system**

The watandari system was practiced in the medieval period before the advent of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He was a great king, creator and builder of civil institutions and a realistic ruler of Maharashtra. He, therefore, tried to introduce several changes in the watan system which was already prevailed in his territory since the medieval times. He came to know that cultivators under the period of previous rulers, used to respect the watandars more than the king. Because, the watandars used to collect the revenue, deposit very small portion of the collected revenue in the Government treasury and keep the remaining revenue for them. The watandars were in immediate touch with the cultivators and used to collect much more revenue than actually assessed. This led them to be dominant , behave independently and develop the habit of defying the orders of king . Naturally, such watandars recruited their own army and constructed houses like forts for their own defense in any emergency. Shivaji dismantled the fortifications of watandars, appointed his own people to various forts and reduced the powers of the watandars considerably and made them as ordinary people or cultivators in his kingdom. He confiscated their illegally amassed property and fixed all privileges and dues of watandars and other officials working at various levels like villages, parghanas and prants. Although, Shivaji created new watans on various occasions, he took care of their growing influence over the cultivators and brought watandars under his strict control .Thus he proved himself a strict disciplinarian and an efficient administrator. Therefore, Ranade compared him with Napoleon Bonaparte.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj started paying his soldiers in cash and offered cash rewards to those who rendered meritorious services to the

state. This led to create his utmost control on watandars and ultimately on the administration. This was the reason that the Maratha Sawaraj could survive through the titanic struggle with the forces of Aurangzeb for more than twenty seven years.

### **Types of watan**

The king was the ultimate owner of the land in his kingdom upto the medieval period in India and other countries of the world. But in order to cultivate the land, it was handed over to the cultivators. Gradually, they possessed it and they came to be known as the owner of the land. The king ultimately, conferred the title of ownership of land upon the cultivators, who were cultivating the land since the beginning. Thus, the class of Mirasdars or the peasant- proprietors come into existence and most of the village land was held by such peasant- proprietors under the Marathas. The rest of the land was controlled by the Government assigned it to the upris or tenants or farmers for appropriation of revenue. Thus the village land was categorized as Khalisati and Inamati.

**Khalisati land** - it means the revenue of this land was directly deposited in the King's treasury. Even that was also recovered by the Government machinery.

**Inamati land or watandari land** - This was the land which was allotted to various inamdars or watandars by the King or Government. These inamdars or watandars were allowed to appropriate the revenue from this land in lieu of cash payment by the Government or King. Therefore, this land was called Inamati or watandari land. In short, the land held in perpetuity by virtue of office was called watan or watandari land or inamati land. There were several such inamdars or watandars in every village as Deshmukh, Deshkulkarni, Mukadam, Kulkarni, Padewar and several military officers. These officials were hereditary inamdars or watandars, who held around twenty percent of land under the Marathas. Although, these watandars or inamdars or jagirdars collected the land revenue with the help of their own machinery, they did not dispossess the cultivators under them from their rights. These cultivators paid the land revenue as the cultivators of Khalisati land and other cultivators in the village. It was with these inamdars or watandars or jagirdars whether to use the whole land revenue for themselves or part with some portion either to the king or for any other purposes.

### **Natures of watandari land**

There were several personal and impersonal kinds of land grants made by the king or the Government from which watandari or inamdari system came into existence. These inami or watandari grants can be summarised as under-

**Religious Grants or Watans**- These were the impersonal grants or watan sanctioned to religious bodies or institutions. These institutions employed cultivators to cultivate the land sanctioned to them and used the land revenue for maintaining such institutions or defray the expenditure

incurred by these institutions. These grants, watans or inams also were called Devasthan inama or watans. They were granted to Temple, Mosque, Math, Samadhi and Varsasanas. These watans or inams are discussed in detail as under-

**Temple-** The Marathas sanctioned grants or watans to Temples for religious worship or performing religious services or rites and rituals. As Chhatrapati Shivaji had assigned a piece of land as watan or inam to the temple of Dyandeva at Alandi. During the period of Peshwa not only this watan or inam was confirmed but a new inam also was sanctioned for the same temple.

**Mosque** - Sabhasad Bakhar mentions that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj granted land as well as sanctioned allowances to temples as well as mosques equally for defraying the daily expenditure of them and other purposes of those religious institutions.

**Mathas** - As watan to temple and mosques, the Marathas also granted some watans to mathas located at various places. Chhatrapati Shivaji granted watan and inam to Ramdas, his guru for the maintenance of his own matha at Caphal. He also had sanctioned some of watans or inams to Maunibava of Patgar for maintaining the math-located at that place.

**Samadhi** - There were a number of saints during this period, who attracted the attention of people in general by their spiritual and religious instructions to them. Such saints received posthumously some watan or grants for maintenance of their Samadhi. For example the Samadhi of Sopander at Sasvad received watan for its maintenance.

**Varsasanas** - This was one more type of religious watan or inam which was sanctioned for performing religious services under the Marathas. It was the varsasanas. It is said that a Brahmin was granted thirty bighas of land for performing puja to a deity as his maintenance. In the same way Gosavi of Jejuri received twelve bighas of land as watan for the similar work which he used to perform to a local deity.

**Agrahara watan or inam :-** This was one more type of watan or inam granted during the period of Marathas. Agrahara inams or watans were granted generally to Brahmins for their sustenance during the period of their education and learning. These inami or watan lands were either exempted completely from the taxes or were made to pay rents at reduced rate.

### **Sanadi watan**

The watan or inami lands granted during this period could be classified as -Sanadi inami lands or watans, Customary inam or watan. Sanadi Watan, in this watan, Sanad (charter) in connection with the watan was given by the ruler or king to the watandar. In this watan the nature of the watan like free from the government taxes, perpetuity or the period, whether any portion was reserved like an half, one third, one

fourth as government claims were mentioned. The king or the ruler created and confirmed such watans by the royal firman as and when the king wished. Customary inam or watan was not reduced to any writing or conferred by any sanad or firman. This watan was oral and as valid as the sanadi watan.

### **Watans granted to Artisans**

Artisans in every village were granted some land as watan on which they were not required to any revenue or taxes. Generally, these artisans were given the land in watan which was reclaimed from the waste land. Such inam or watan was called as Tikanati Begari, which means the land given to certain people for particular services to the village without any remuneration. Artisans could mortgage this kind of watan but could not sell it and they could also resume the watan even if they failed to render the particular services to the people. Wilson in his Glossary mentions such inam or watan as watan Maval means such watans were granted in the Maval area than the Desh or the Ghat-matha.

### **Creation and confiscation of watan or inami land**

The king or the village granted watan or inam to appropriate persons and they terminated the watan in case of failure to perform the duties or the functions for which the watan or inam was granted. In the case when new areas were added to the kingdom, the actual cultivators working on the land were never disturbed. Even, the king used to order the village officers to employ new cultivators in case the old cultivators had fled the village due to fear. The king ordered the village officers for doing every thing possible to get every piece of land cultivated.

### **Duties and responsibilities of a Watandars :**

The grant of watans continued as long as the services were rendered efficiently and till the watandars remained loyal to the king and the village. Sometime, the watandar was paid in cash and kind for the services he rendered to the village. The watandar referred to such payment as his privileges and dues. These privileges and dues were recognized by the state and were specifically noted in the watan deeds of the watandar. The watandar being the permanent officer of the state and the village no change in the Government affected his position at any level. Therefore, several watandars who were working under the Mughals were continued by Chhatrapati Shivaji as watandars when annexed the Muslim territory to his kingdom . The watandar was to perform the following duties and responsibilities under the Marathas.

- 1) The main duty of the watandar was to collect the assessed revenue of the villages which were under his jurisdiction.
- 2) The watandar was to undertake the systematic policy of colonisation and bring more and more barren land under cultivation.
- 3) The another duty of the watandar was to settle petty local disputes in the village with the help of community council, which was called Gotsabha.

- 4) The watandar was to take initiative in social, religious and cultural programmes.

### **Importance of watan**

Watan had much more importance during the period of Marathas. That can be summarised as under-

- 1) The watan was the most important means for livelihood. It was main source of income.
- 2) It was sign of dignity and prestige. It was a coveted institution and became a root cause of disputes in the society.
- 3) Watan invited several claims and counter claims and generated lengthy and excessive litigations against each other. It gave birth to severe feuds, conspiracies, violence and ultimately led murder in the watan area.
- 4) Watan was considered as a matter of great honour and it was held in such a high esteem that they preferred to remain as watandars rather than to be promoted to a higher position in the government.

### **Control on watandars**

Ramchandrapant Amatya, a well-known diplomat in Maratha administration, discussed in detail about the watan system functioning during the period of Marathas. Ramchandrapant Amatya, therefore, warned the king about such watandars and suggested to undertake the following steps to avoid danger and control the watandars.

- 1) Amatya suggests that the king that he should avoid the policy of any extreme end as withholding the watan of an in disciplined watandar or another hand. He should not give any watandar excessive freedom of action and movement by which the natural spirit of the watandars would manifest. The king, therefore, avoid two extreme ends in formulating the state policy.
- 2) In such situation, the king should follow the policy of conciliation and punishment. The king should see that the watandars, while exercising their duties, they should not increase their power over the people and get undue advantages. The king should not allow the watandars to enjoy the powers which were not included in their watan deeds.
- 3) The king should make them to obey all orders issued by the king and the central government at any cost and execute them properly and sincerely.
- 4) The king should not allow watandars to build strong houses and construct forts in their watan to avoid the watandars from reaping undue advantages.
- 5) In case of disobedient, overbearing and unrestrained watandars, Amatya, suggests that the king should entrust them with a difficult task, if they succeed in performing the task it would add to the king glory and

strength and other than if they fail, the king should punish them and bring them under severe restrictions.

6) The king should never allow the watandars to quarrel among themselves. They should be motivated and encouraged to undertake various assignments of the government to benefit both the cultivators and the king. If they found transgressing traditional limits or provisions recorded in their watan deeds, such watandars should be put down with heavy hands.

7) Amatya further advises the king that he should recover regularly the tribute from his watandars and habituate them to be punctual in all matters.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Give an account of development of Watan System.
- 2) Describe the types and importance of Watan system.

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### **3.5 SUMMARY**

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The mansabdari system existed during the sultanate period. However, Mughals perfected it. The appointment, promotion, suspension or dismissal of the mansabdars rested entirely with the emperor. No portion of the mansabdars dignity was hereditary. There was one imperial service for both military and civilian officers. The watandary system was practiced in the medieval period before the advent of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The grant of watans continued as long as the services were rendered efficiently and till the watandars remained loyal to the king and the village. Sometime, the watandar was paid in cash and kind for the services he rendered to the village. The watandar was to perform the many civic and military responsibilities under the Marathas.

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### **3.6 QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Explain the Mansabdari system and its features.
- 2) Assess the contribution of Mansabdari system with its merits and demerits.
- 3) Explain the watandari system with duties of watandar.
- 4) Trace the nature of Watandari system during the Maratha period.

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### 3.7 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 1) Satish Chandra, Medieval India: From Sultanat to The Mughals, Har Anand Publication.
- 2) Ishwari Prasad, History of Mediaeval India, the Indian press (publications) Allahabad.
- 3) J. N. Sarkar, Shivaji and his times, Orient Blackswan Private Limited - New Delhi.
- 4) M. G. Ranade, Rise of Maratha Power, Panalekar co, Mumbai, 1901.
- 5) K.N. Chitnis, Socio-Economic History of Medieval India, Atalantic Publisher, New Delhi, 2017.



# Unit - 4

## ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS: AL-BERUNI AND AL- HUIJWIRI

### Unit Structure:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Al-Beruni:
- 4.3 Al-Hujwiri:
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Questions
- 4.6 Additional Readings

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the concepts and theories of Islamic intellectual traditions.
- To explain the contribution of Al-Beruni in Indian history.
- To understand and discuss the role of Al-Hujwin for spreading sufism in India and to make aware about the Al-Hujwin's literary works.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Islamic intellectual traditions is first of all a tradition that contains theosophical and gnostic elements in addition to its logical and rational elements. Central Asia, it became enriched by the intellectual contributions of a multitude of individuals, communities and culture in regions that eventually the Muslim world. The Islamic world had already become one of the dominant civilizations of the world, characterized by a diversity of literary and intellectual traditions in various fields of learning, while Islam as a religion became elaborated in a plurality of expressions and interpretations.

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### 4.2 AL-BERUNI

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The period of 11<sup>th</sup> century was one of the great intellectual ferment and churning in central Asia and across North India. It also saw great empires collapsing and giving rise to regional polities and alliances. Moreover, we see these two different worlds began to converge and came into close contact with each other during this period. These contacts, though at times violent in the form of the Arab and Turkish invasions,



were also at times deeply cultural and philosophically engaging represented through the writings of the Arab travellers, merchants and observers like Al-Beruni.

Abu'l Rihan Muhammad bin Ahmad Al-Beruni was amongst the leading scholar and scientific minds of Central Asia in the eleventh century. Renowned for his knowledge on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from astronomy to mathematics to history and even astrology, Al-Beruni has been also referred to as 'al-ustadh' in the works of some of the contemporary writers. He has been described by his contemporaries in different words. Abu'l Fazl Baihaqi – a contemporary, described Al-Beruni in these words – “Bu Rihan was beyond comparison, superior to everyman of his time in art of composition, in scholar like accomplishments, and in knowledge of geometry and philosophy. He had however a most rigid regard for truth.”

Al-Beruni first visited India in around 1017 CE along with the armies of Mahmud Ghazni. He travelled the Indian subcontinent, made regular visits to North India for the next decade and interacted with many philosophers as well as learned men thereby attempting to know and understand in detail the customs and traditions of the country. We find that he wrote extensively on the Indian society and culture. His principal work on India was 'Kitab fi Tahqiq ma li'l- Hind' or simply, 'Al-Beruni's India'. It has been pointed out that this work of Al-Beruni marked a departure from the existing historical and narrative traditions prevalent in the country till that time. This work is much more than mere recording the genealogies of tarikh tradition of narrating the political history in chronological manner. Apart from providing information on regional geography and some political narratives, the work is also a survey of the customs and traditions prevalent in especially regions of northern India, social differentiations and customs, religious and philosophical ideas espoused in Sanskrit texts, also on mathematical and scientific knowledge systems that were there in the country during this period i.e. in 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Moreover, he translated many Indian works into Arabic as well as wrote on various aspects of Indian sciences. He wrote his initial treatises on astronomy, geography and mathematics. His abstract on geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and astrology written in 1029 CE was known as *Kitab al-Tafhim li-awa'il Sina'at al-tanjim*. About the other significant work of Al-Beruni, historian Mohammad Habib put forth these words – “For us the great importance of the *Kitab-al-Hind* depends upon its methodology- a fine modification of the dialectical system of Socrates, in which Al-Beruni had trained at Khwarizm, to suit the subject matter of his enquiries. He gave us a unique survey, unsurpassed by anything yet written in its comprehension of general sociological and philosophical principles as well as minute, scientific details of achievements of Hindu thought in ages gone by...”

One finds that Al-Beruni did not discuss his ideas and approaches regarding history and about writing history. Yet some glimpses may be obtained from his introduction to two of his important works: *Kitab al-Athar al-Bakhiya an al kurun al-Khaliya* (the Chronology of ancient nations) where he sees history as the unfolding of God's divine plan through the prophets; and *Kitab fi Tahqiq ma li'l Hind*, where he seems to be adhering to the view that both sciences and recording of history are aimed at finding out the truth. This can be supported from the fact that he prescribed to the scientific principles for acceptance and examination of historical traditions. He tries to be objective and impartial as much as possible in his writings. At times, he acknowledges that he is writing may not conform to the traditional value systems of Islamic teachings and theology.

He criticises the Hindus for the lack of interest in history and chronology in the following words: "Unfortunately the Hindus do not pay much to the historical order of things, they were careless in relating the chronological succession of their kings and when pressed for information are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to story-telling." Further, he constantly compares the various philosophical and scientific systems, as one would find in his methodology, to understand the ideas that were prevalent in India then. Throughout his book on India, one would come across the analogies taken by him from the Greek, Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish and Sufi sources. Al-Beruni approached history with an idea that the aim and object of revelation, history-writing and scientific enquiry is one and the same, that means to know the truth and he considered them equally reliable sources of human knowledge. According to E. Sachau- "Al-Beruni was the only Arabic writer who investigated the antiquities of the East in a true spirit of historical enquiry."

A study of Al-Beruni reveals that India always fascinated him and that he was well-versed with the work done on Indian sciences in Arabic. At certain junctures, he also made attempts of translating some of the works himself into Arabic from Sanskrit or even vice versa in order to obtain a better understanding of the texts. For the same, he also learnt Sanskrit which he found extremely difficult to be mastered. He records in his accounts the difficulty faced in learning Sanskrit and translating Sanskrit texts into Arabic. To quote some of his words: "... the language is of an enormous range, both in words and inflections, something like the Arabic, calling one and the same thing by various names, both original and derived, and using one and the same word for a variety of subjects, which in order to be properly understood, must be distinguished from each other by various qualifying epithets. For nobody could distinguish between various meanings of a word unless he understands the context in which it occurs, and its relation both to the following and preceding part of the sentence...."

Though Al-Beruni's work on India never intended to be a political kind of narrative, it nevertheless contains some valuable information

regarding the political activities and developments during the period he travelled in the country. The hostility between the Muslim Turkish invaders and the Indians has been for the first time attested in the record of Al-Beruni wherein he also laments about the widespread destruction caused as a result of the invasions and migration of the learned men and moving of the seats of Hindu learning to further east. Moreover, he records with a fair degree of accuracy, the date of the conquest of Somnath by Sultan Mahmud, and also noted its exact location and the legend behind building of the temple. He also records the history of the Hindushahis who faced the brunt of Mahmud Ghazni's invasion in India. Though lacking in authenticity with regard to the sources consulted, he was still able to paint a fairly accurate picture of the dynasty with regard to the last seven rulers. His account of the last seven rulers have also been verified by the numismatic data on the contemporary written account of Kashmir, which is Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*.

Al-Beruni also records some anecdotes on Kashmir, which he could not visit. It is surprising that for an outsider who had never visited the region, he seemed to be rather well-informed about the geography as well as the history of the region. He also records a tradition regarding the victory of a ruler of Kashmir, named Muttai, over the Turks. This ruler has been identified as Lalitaditya Muktapida (724 – 760 CE) and the victory that Al-Beruni mentioned, may be in reference to his conquest in the region of Turkistan in the Upper Oxus Valley and in Northern Kashmir. Not just Lalitaditya, but there are several other rulers of the Medieval India who find their mention in Al-Beruni's chronicle. For instance, his reference to Gangeya Vikramaditya of the Kalachuri dynasty of Tripuri, Bhojadeva of the Paramara dynasty, the Malayketu family of Kanauj and so on.

To add to this, he also provides information in depth about the regions which were under the control of Arab and Ghaznavid domination in Indian subcontinent. His accounts of the conquest of Sindh and Punjab are amongst the earliest extant records of the events, yet these accounts do suffer from some glaring inaccuracies. He informs wrongly about the route taken by the early Arab armies in Sindh. He also talks about the rule of Carmathians in Multan but does not refer to Mahmud Ghazni's attack on Multan as well as about the general massacre that followed after the attack.

Apart from the political conditions mentioned, one finds some very interesting and telling observations made on the social conditions that prevailed in India at the time, especially on the caste system and general inequality. Al-Beruni also seems well-informed about the four-fold division of the varna order, and the social status and duties assigned to each varna or caste as it later turned into. He further speaks of the existence of the eight classes of people outside the varna order, who were segregated in accordance to their occupation and guilds. For instance, shoemaker, juggler, basket and shield maker, sailor, fishermen, hunter, weaver and so on. He also mentions or rather, elaborates on the manners

of eating and various customs associated with each of the castes and how such a separation and segregation is provided a divine sanction, quoting extensively from the Gita. But one realises that in keeping with the general approach of just recording and not criticising, Al-Beruni seems to have maintained distance from the society he had been so keenly observed. The detachment of a scientific observation comes out very clearly in his study on Indian society. He believed that the caste system and the associated segregation of men is one of the main obstacles for any rapprochement between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Al-Beruni provides useful glimpses into the geography of the eleventh century India. His account has generally proven useful in identifying the exact location of the cities long forgotten or names of the places which had undergone much corruption over the years. To cite an example here, there has been considerable difference of opinions among the historians with regards to the correct location of the city of Vallabhi in Gujarat. Al-Beruni's statement that the town was located at a distance of 30 yojans south of Anhilwara, had greatly enabled in identifying the town of Vala in Saurashtra with the ancient capital city of Vallabhi. His knowledge on Indian geography could be divided into two categories.

- Ancient Indian geographical concepts and information
- His own concepts and information

But the most significant contribution of Al-Beruni to the physical geography was his concept of seas, and especially his theory about the sea route between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic, south of the mountain of the moon, the traditional source of the Nile in Africa, a concept which was later adopted by the European travellers and adventurers who desired to find a route between India and Europe. Also, he provided elaborate account of the climate, physical features, rivers and mountains of India, especially of the northern parts.

Regarding Al-Beruni's views on Indian sciences, he considered Indians to be well-versed in astronomy and mathematics. He gave detailed account on the numerical systems used in India. He speaks about the Indian numerical systems in his account on India as well as in his works on astronomy and in his chronology of nations. With regard to the Indian system, Al-Beruni writes that the numerical signs have different shapes and styles in different regions of India. He also quotes that the decimal system and the symbol for zero were known to the Indians. Al-Beruni also mentions that the Indian astronomers had the knowledge about the real cause behind the solar and lunar eclipses and that their calculations have been scientific. He expresses surprise that they should mix up science with popular religious beliefs.

Thus, one finds Al-Beruni representing an altogether different line of scholastic achievements, i.e. of pure science and reason. However, for all his achievement in various scholarly fields, Al-Beruni continued to crave for recognition and fame his whole life. This comes out to the fore

in various pages of his work through his lament that scholarship and merit is not appreciated as much as it used to be.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe in brief about Al-Beruni's book on 'Tarikh-i-Hind.'

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**4.3 AL-HUJWIRI:**

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Sufism, as a liberal form of Islamic philosophy, was not an isolated phenomenon in the world. During eighth century to fifteenth century, the same mysticism, laying emphasis on the spirit rather than the form, on the relationship of life here with the reality rather than on the forms and outward observances of a religion was given expression to in India by the Vedantists and by the mystics in Europe.

Prof. Arberry describes Sufism as "the attempt of individual Muslims to realise in their personal experience the living presence of Allah." The difference between the orthodox Islam and Sufism is mainly that the latter stresses more on the internal purification as necessary for the one to have the realisation of God. Good deeds done out of fear and dictation are useless to the Sufi, whereas the orthodox teachings lay them down as necessary as well as useful acts of virtue, even if the heart were impure.

It is believed that the Arab sea traders operating between the Malabar Coast and Ceylon first introduced Islam to that region of the sub-continent. With the advent of the Muslims in India, Sufism entered this country. Though it cannot be said with certainty who was the first Sufi to come to India, but it may be said that as early as the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. the Sufis came to India and found this land favourable for preaching their tenets. According to Athar Abbas Rizvi, "the annexation of Punjab by Mahmud of Ghazni and its incorporation into his empire prompted many Sufis to settle in the area." Among the Sufis of the earliest times who had visited India, tradition mentions the name of Mansur Hallaj. But the first important Sufi who made India his home was Usman bin Ali Hujwiri (400- 465 A.H). He was born near Ghazni, Afghanistan, during the Ghaznavid Empire and died in Lahore (in present-day Punjab, Pakistan) in 1077 CE.

So, one understands here that it was after the Ghaznavid conquest of Punjab that a large number of Sufi saints appeared in India. Some believe that Shaikh Ismail of Lahore was the first among them. He was followed by Shaikh Ali bin Usman Al-Hujwiri, better known by his title as 'Daata Ganj Baksh'.

Al-Hujwiri was an Islamic scholar as well as a sufi saint and a writer of eleventh century. His contribution in spreading of Islam in South Asia is huge. He might be described as the ‘founder of the Sufi cult in India’ that gained immense popularity among the Muslim masses and profoundly influenced their entire moral and religious outlook.

Regarding his title – *Daata Ganj Baksh*, some are of the opinion that this title was given to him five centuries after his demise, that is in the ninth century. As per the content of his book ‘Kashf al - Asrar’, the title of *Daata Ganj Baksh* became popular during his lifetime. With his arrival in Lahore, he was already well-known and acquainted with the title of Daata Ganj Baksh and this remains true till this very day, centuries after his passing away from this mortal world.

The words of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti (1141 CE -1230 CE) which is known throughout the world professes to this title –

“Ganjbaksh faiz e aalam mazhar e noor e khuda  
Naaqisan ra peer e kamil kamilan rehnuma”

(‘The treasure of forgiveness’ whose blessing is all over the world, is a manifestation of the Light of Allah. He is the perfect master for the spiritual destitute; the guide of the perfect!)

Al-Hujwiri spent most of his life journeying in pursuit of knowledge and spiritual enhancement. He travelled extensively and his journey is mentioned in his classic ‘Kashf al - Mahjub’ (Unveiling the Veiled) which was the first Persian language treatise on Sufism. This work debates Sufi doctrines of the past. Hujwiri said that individuals should not claim to have attained “marifat” or gnosis because then it meant that one was being prideful. True understanding of God should be a silent understanding.

Hazrat Daata Ganj Baksh was a great writer and poet. *Kashful Mahjub* is methodical, comprehensive and thorough in its approach to the issues at hand. The list of his famous works includes:

- Kashful Mahjub
- Diwan-e-She’r
- KitabFanaWaBaqa
- Israrul Kharq Wal-Mauniyat
- Birri’ayat Be-Huqooq-Ullah
- Al-Bayan Lahal-Al-Ayan Behrul Quloob
- Minhaj al - Din
- Sharah-e-Kalam
- Kashf al - Asrar

The elders of the Chisti silsilah in the Indian subcontinent consult and refer to Kashfal Mahjub and Awarif al ma’arif for the teachings and

guidance with the former having more significance and importance. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya gave it the title ‘Murshid barrhaq’ – meaning, a guide by right. Al-Hujwiri, who passed away in 1088, is also viewed as an important intercessor for many Sufis.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Comment on Al-Hujwiri’s book Kashf al-Mahjub.
- 2) Define the concept of ‘Data Ganj Baksh.’

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## **4.4 SUMMARY**

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Both Al-Biruni and al-Hujwiri contributed a lot in Islamic intellectual tradition in India. Al-Biruni was the first prominent muslim indologist was one of the greatest intellectual of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. His book Kijab al-Hind in dealing with Indian society, it is fair to say Al - Biruni deserve recognition as a great Muslim critical thinker, philosopher and historian. His thinking was based upon his bounteous knowledge as well as his religious personality and education.

Al-Hujwiri was medieval sufi intellectual and theoreticians wrote a major theoretical work entitled “Kashf al - Mahjub (Revealing the hidden) which enumerated twelve theoretical schools of Sufism. He saught to establish balance among all dimensions of Islamic thought and practice with Sufism as the animating spirit of the whole. He significantly contributed to the spreading of Islam in South Asia.

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## **4.5 QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Describe the contribution of Al-Biruni in the Islamic tradition in India?
- 2) Give an account of the role of Al-Hujwiri in establishing Sufismin India through his literary.
- 3) Write a detailed note on Al-Biruni and Al-Hujwiri’s contribution in Islamic intellectual tradition.

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## **4.6 ADDITIONAL READINGS**

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- 1) Qeyamuddin Ahmod (Ed.), India by Al-Biruni, National Book. Trust, India, 2004.
- 2) R.A. Nicholson, (Translator), Kashf Al-Mahjub (Al-Hujwiri Apex Books Concern 1985.



# Unit - 5

## CLASS COMPOSITION OF MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

### Unit Structure :

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Social Structure during Medieval Period
  - 5.2.1 Urban Society
  - 5.2.2 Rural Society
- 5.3 Village Communities under Akbar
- 5.4 Points of Common Interest in the Urban Population
- 5.5 Class Composition of Medieval Society.
  - 5.5.1 Emperor
  - 5.5.2 Mughal Nobility
  - 5.5.3 The Ulema
  - 5.5.4 Mansabdars
  - 5.5.5 The Middle Class
  - 5.5.6 The Masses
- 5.6 Additional Readings
- 5.7 Questions for Self Study

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To study the social structure during medieval period.
- To understand the composition of urban society.
- To make student aware about the Rural India during medieval period.
- To throw light on village communities during Akbar period.
- To make students aware of the class composition of medieval society.
- To analyse the role of Emperor and Nobles in medieval social life.
- To understand the position and importance of ulema in medieval society.
- To focus on prominent position of Mansabdars in mughal India.
- To bring into light the life of middle class and the masses in medieval society.



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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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Society is the largest distinguishable unit composed individuals connected by interaction. These individuals share a pattern of social organization that regulates the interaction between them. A complete picture of a society would emerge if all individuals were taken as a group, through their interactions & their relationships. These interactions crystalize into different forms such as the family, clan, tribe, nation etc. Every society has a structure and continuity. Social order is a basic need of social life. This need is fulfilled by customs, laws, different patterns and the rules of behaviours and a system of authority which controls the violations of these codes of conduct. The variation in the social structures of the Indian society was more prominent during Medieval period. This period witnessed the rise and fall of several kingdoms and empires. Many historians had put special emphasis on an analytical study of the Delhi sultanate, the Vijaynagara Empire and the Bahamani kingdom, which dominated the history of early Medieval India. The rise of the Mughals and the Marathas has been also traced in an in depth manner by many. Though the fortunes of the various powers defined the impact of their rule on the social, cultural and economic life of the country has been more lasting, it is observed that comparatively less studied.

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## 5.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE DURING MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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History is no longer a study of only the kings, the various battles they had fought and the detailed provision of the subsequent peace treaties, instead an attempt is made, as far as possible, the social structure, economic life, trade and commerce of the concerned period of history. The socio-economic approach to the study of the study of history envisages a complete picture of a given society in a particular period. Since we are studying the socio-cultural history of Medieval India (A.P. 1200 - A.P.1757), it is necessary for us to know the social structure of the medieval period, the various classes in the Medieval society, the nature of caste system, the position of women in the society and slavery as an institution.

### 5.2.1 URBAN SOCIETY

The Social economic, political and cultural life of the medieval period was in general dominated by the village communities however, there were political centres usually capitals, head quarters of important officials like subhedars, the citadels of Jagirdars and Mansabdars *were* hubs of great activities. Likewise the trading centres and port-towns on the west coast and the pilgrim places were centres of large populations. During medieval period many cities and towns were prospered due to increase in land and foreign and local trade while numerous villages continued to care on their self sufficient village economy. The most important cities of the empire were located in north India and some of them were Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur, Sikri, Ajmer, Multan, Benaras, Jaunpur,

Allahabad, Patna, Hoogly, Dacca and Chitagong. These cities were very prosperous and very wealthy traders and nobles lived in these cities. Even the artisan class in these cities was economically well off while the working class in general was not in a bad condition.

In the Deccan, Ahmednagar and Bijapur were quite prosperous cities of regional kingdom vijaynagar had declined but some towns were emerging prosperous in the south of the Deccan. In Central India Ujjain and Burhanpur and in Western India Ahmedabad were very prosperous cities. According to Abul Fazal Ahmedabad was 'a noble city in a high state of prosperity'. Besides some sea ports were emerging as important Urban centres on the western coast. The population of the political centres and capitals showed a considerable number of craftsmen, artists and wealthy merchants and aristocrats. The population of pilgrim towns, were the meeting places of devotees from different walk of life from different places in India. The population in the trading centres was heterogeneous. At surat the local sailors mixed up with the local traders as well as the Habshi merchants and sailors who commanded the naval operation. At places of political importance the Nizamshahi and Adilshahi, Jagirdars, Hindus and Muslims held sway over the eco-political activities.

### **5.2.2 RURAL SOCIETY**

The rural India showed innate strength to survive the floods of foreign invasions. The life continued with a quiet confidence in the village. During medieval period the varied political conditions in India had overstrained the governmental machinery at higher level but the village administration went on smoothly. The village communities were allowed to administer their own affairs under the supervision of government officers. In the rural areas of India, villages continued their self sufficient economic structures but they showed some signs of progress owing to Akbar's better deal to the people in the villages and growth of numerous bazars in their vicinity. In south India the villages continued their self sufficient economic structure and those near temples received considerable prosperity.

India can be seen only in villages, as an overwhelming majority of people live in village communities. The village communities during medieval period were little republics. The social, economic and cultural life of the village was regulated by the village panchayat. The Panchayats were highly respected and in fact, were regarded as next only to God. There were two types of panchayats, namely caste panchayat and village panchayat. The head of a village was known as 'Patil' in Maharashtra, 'Patel' in Gujrat and 'Pradhan' or 'Mukhia' or 'Bhojaka' in North India. He enjoyed certain additional rights and obligations. He was the chief spokesman of the villagers. At the same time, while dealing with the villagers, he acted as a spokesman of the government.

Each village community, constituted a basic unit of existing administration and was a centre of socio-economic & religious life. The village accountant maintained the land records and kept the land revenue

account of the village. He was known by different names in different parts of the country, such as Patwari, Shanbag, Menon etc. The basic feature of Medieval Indian society was the self-sufficiency of village communities. The self-sufficient village, as the basic economic unit, had existed for centuries in India. Mountstuart Elphinstone is full of praise for the village communities. He says, these communities contain, in miniatures, all the materials of a state within themselves and are almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other governments were withdrawn'. It is heartening to note that when most of the urban medieval India was distracted by selfish wars and court intrigues, the small villages in India not only furnish us with instance of republican institution but also give evidence of existences of democratic principles to a great extent.

The rural society might be classified into three categories namely peasants, artisans and craftsmen and a class of manuals.

**a) Peasants** - From ages agriculture is the main source of income for India. Hence the village population was mainly composed of peasants. The farmers produced crops for the need of the village. Except a share of agricultural produce, which the village community had to surrender to the representative of the ruler the entire agricultural produce was meant for local consumption by the peasant and non-peasant village population.

**b) Artisans and Craftsman** - They rendered their services in return for a share of grain every year. The village artisans and craftsmen secured locally the raw materials such as wood, clay and hide required for their craft. These artisans and craftsmen such as a carpenter, a potter, a cobbler, a weaver, a goldsmith, an oilman, a barber and others worked almost exclusively for the satisfaction of the needs of the village population

**c) A Class of Menials** - A very important category of people in a village was a class of menials, the outcastes or chandals. They did the work of scavenging, disposing of dead bodies of animals and such other menial types of work. They rendered their services to the villages and sometime in returns they got their share of grain.

Thus rural societies were completely cut off from the rest of the world and remained totally unaffected by any political earthquakes, religious upheavals and foreign invasions. Kingdom rose and collapsed, revolutions were followed by countes revolutions but the village communities remained essentially the same. As village communities were self - sufficient, isolated and unaffected by changes they naturally became self centred and narrow minded. They were primitive, ignorant and superstitious. Hence they made very little progress.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the rural and an urban society structure in Medieval India.

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**5.3 VILLAGE COMMUNITIES UNDER AKBAR**

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The village communities were an ancient system of village self-rule or village government in *India* which continued to exist undisturbed by changing dynasties. Sher shah surf tried to streamline the village communities by some closer contacts with their traditional officers. Akbar went a step further in this direction by making the village panchayat a legalised court of justice and thereby added to its prestige without interfering with village life and village administration. The ancient division of village panchayat had been into six committees like Annual Committee, Tank Committee, Gold Committee, Committee of Justice and Panchvara Committee. These committees continued during Akbar's reign too.

Early village community had a council consisting of head of the families in the village and council was responsible for the administration of the village, this administration being generally the management of civic affairs including dispensation of justice regarding minor cases, civil and criminals. Besides, there were caste panchayats to decide caste and family disputes. The functionaries of the village community were one or two watchmen, a priest, a school masters, an astrologer, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a potter, a washerman, a barber, a physicians and a patwari.

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**5.4 POINTS OF COMMON INTEREST IN THE URBAN POPULATION**

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In the rural communities the points of common interest were the traditional occupation and primary of land and agriculture. In the urban population the traditional occupations were changing to suit the needs of trade and military compulsions. In villages Jati Panchayats and Gram Panchayats were active. In the towns and cities the population was not homogeneous as men of different countries came together. The merchant guilds and government rules were more important. The progress of the urban population depended upon the state of law and order. Secondly and importantly trade and financial transactions were more important than possession of land and its cultivation.

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## 5.5 CLASS COMPOSITION OF MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

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### Although caste -

System set a pattern for social gradation, there were groups engaged in political and economic activities cutting across caste consideration. The means of livelihood and the type of services rendered to the government and the recognition of the same by the grant of 'watans' was an important factor in the slowly changing society. In modern times class denotes the economic status of an individual or a group of individuals. The common division in Medieval India was king, nobility Mansabdars, Middle class and the masses. At the apex of the social order was the Emperor closely followed by the nobility which despite hard times led a life of luxury and extravagance with great weakness for wine and music. In the middle came the 'small and frugal' middle class comprising small merchants, lower cadre of employees, lawn artists etc. At the lowest rung of ladder was the majority of the poor agriculturist and artisan in the village.

### 5.5.1 EMPEROR

The Islamic theory of state had gradually developed and undergone radical changes long before the establishment of the sultanate of Delhi. The monarchical form of government the basic feature of the sultanate, was itself an extra - Quranic growth which had evolved and entered the fold of Islam on the Persian soil. The emperor, as the absolute ruler, was the head of the social system. According the traditional Islamic theory of state, the sultan usually professed to administer *the* Islamic law though the political institutions set up by them did not always conform to the orthodox Islamic principles. These were deeply influenced by the Indian traditions and customs and incorporated many elements of the Rajput polity with or without modifications. The real strength or weakness of the sultanate depended on the personality and character of the sultan. Emperor claimed divide status and powers for the crown and asserted proprietary rights over the entire land is his capacity as the lord paramount of the country Members of the royal family, their blood relations, friends and favourites of the king enjoyed a privileged position in the society. The royal court acted as trend setter in social and cultural affairs. These trends were faithfully imitated by provincial courts of governors of the Mughal nobility and the aristocracy all over the Mughal empire.

### 5.5.2 MUGHAL NOBILITY

Society looked like a feudal organisation with the king at its apex. Next to the king were the official nobles, who enjoyed special honours and privileges, which never tell to the lot of common people. This naturally produced a difference in their standard of living. The nobles originally possessed qualities which made them efficient servants of the state so long as it retained its vigour. During the sultanate the nobility consisted of men of Turkish and non - Turkish origin. The latter was foreigners whether prison or Afghans who had come from central. Asia and West Asia to India in search of a better life of the two streams of nobles, the Turks were

more powerful, the upper class of society and occupied important offices in the state. As time passed the number of Turks and non-Turks migrating to India began to decline. The Islamic population was composed by intermingling of different races. Native converts and even non-Muslims were subsequently appointed as nobles.

According to the historian Barani, Itutmish had forty powerful Turkish slaves who got the upper hand after his death. 'None of them would bow or submit to another and in the distribution of territories, forces offices and honours, they sought equality with each other.' It is not quite certain that they numbered exactly forty or that they formed an organized and well-masked group fighting collectively against the firm exercise of royal power. Throughout the period of sultanate the relation between the crown and the nobility varied according to the character and personal ability of the sultan. No general principle or pattern was evolved in course of three centuries secondly the nobility was not a single, united political order : loyalty to racial feeling and clan sentiments, as also pure adventurism in pursuit of personal interest, determined activities of powerful individuals and groups.

During Mughal period also Nobility remain as one of the important institution of Mughal rule. A small group of fifty one nobles who returned to India with Humayun were all foreign born Muslims. Twenty Seven of them were from central Asia. They were high status chiefs from chaghtai Turkish or Uzbeak Central Asian lineage. A second group consisted of sixteen Persian Shia nobles, including Bairam Khan. Akbar recruited new nobles to serve the needs of his expanding empire. During twenty five years the imperial elite had grown to 222 amirs. Akbar's aim was to reduce the relative numbers and increase influence of his central Asian nobles. Akbar recruited new men from India, rather than foreign, racial and religious background. More significant was Akbar's recruitment of Rajput leaders into the Mughal nobility. By 1580 there were 43 % Rajput members of the nobility. Each Rajput raja was awarded high rank, pay and perquisites. His adult sons and other male relatives and kinsmen were given lesser mansabdari rank in return for imperial rank and prevails, the Rajas conceded tight Mughal domination over Rajasthan.

It must be noted that the Mughal nobility was a heterogeneous body. It was comprised of the Turks, Tartars, Persians, Indians, Muslims and Hindus. The Akbar was able to command the services of a body of warrior aristocrats consisting of royal princes, several hundred amirs and highest ranking mansabdars. They served as provincial governors, high administrative officers, military commanders for armies in the field or as a part of the central military. They also served as commanders of strategic forts reporting directly to Emperor. The mughal nobility became and remained a heterogeneous body of free men, who rose as their talents and the emperor's favours permitted. The flow of new recruits helped to prevent the growth of dissident cliques and factions within the nobility. No single ethnic or sectarian group was large enough to challenge Emperor. The check on royal power, which groups of nobles or individual nobles

exercised from time to time was never sought to be given an institutional form. No one thought of establishing baronial assembly or of demanding a charter which would provide some definition of the position of the nobility in the state. There was a continuous struggle for power between the crown and the nobility as also among different groups of nobles but it devoid of any long-time constitutional interest.

During Medieval period the nobles were generally the heads of central depostment and provincial administration. They enjoyed titles like Amir, Malik, Khan, Ulugh Khan. The nobility comprised of officers of all these three ranks. The nobles used to change with the change of dynasty and even with the change of a king. It was not a hereditary class and did not became the right of a few families. In most of the cases when a new king came to power, the older nobility lost their power totally as their loyalty was suspected. Many were even put to death by the new sultan. A capable Turkish noble could usurp the throne or become extremely powerful when the sultan was weak or a minor or when he was favourite of the sultan. But generally the rise and fall of the Mughal was due to their mutual jealousies and differences. Their rebellions, court intrigues and palace revolutions were important factors contributing to the decline of the Mughal Empire and sultanate.

The emperor and his nobles enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle. Their standard of living was comparable to the high and lavish standards set by the aristocracy in the Islamic world. It was said that sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq used to gift two robes of honour annually to each noble. Some 200,000 robes were gifted every year. Numerous other gifts were given to the nobles on the sultan's birthday or the coronation ceremony one of the prominent reason of extravagance and waste by noble was the Akbar's 'law of escheat' in accordance with which the whole property of a noble assured to the state after his death and his son did not succeed to it, with the result that he had often to start life a fresh. He had to build his fortune gradually.

This showed that ability was the passport of progress. But the dark side of this law was that it encouraged a luxurious mode of life because it is a matter of human nature that when a man is not sure that his earning will belong to his sons and successors he cannot have any intensive to save and leave for the government. Sir J. N. Sarkar calls the result of the system of escheat as most harmful. A famous historian observes, The nobles led extravagant lives and squandered away all their money in unproductive luxury during their life time. It also prevented India from having one of the strongest safeguard of public liberty and checks on royal autocracy namely, an independent hereditary peerage, whose position and wealth did not depend on the king's favours in every generation and who could therefore, afford to be bold in their criticism of the royal caprice and their opposition to the royal tyranny.

The noble possessed great wealth and power and consequently they were highly visible public figures. This personalities, habits and

movement were the topic of endless rumour and speculations. They attracted empire-wide attention wherever they were posted, whether at court or in the provinces the nobles were a focal point of aristocratic life and culture. To the extent his resources permitted each noble emulated the style etiquette and opulence of the emperor. In the cities like Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Burhampur the settlement patterns of the Mughal nobility determined the nature of urban life. The origin of many new towns and villages throughout north India can be traced to investments by mughal nobles in the facilities for local markets, which also served the needs of each nobles entourage and increased his earnings from his jagir lands. Most enterprising nobles invested their money in commercial ventures.

The role of nobles in the disintegration of the empire cannot be ignored. The nobles were divided among themselves. The Mughal nobility had degenerated and it contributed, immensely to the disintegration of Mughal Empire. Men like Bairam Khan, Munim Khan, Mahabat Khan, Abdul Rahim were possessed of great ability and strength of character. Wealth and leisure fostered luxury and sloth among the nobles. They were thus spot by luxury, personal ambition, envy of fellow nobles. The result was their physical, moral and intellectual degeneration. Sir J. N. Sarkar observes 'No Mughal family could retain its official importance for more than one or two generations. If a nobleness achievements were mentioned in three pays, his sons occupied nearly one page and the grandson was dismissed in few lines such as 'he did nothing worth of being recorded'.

### **5.5.3 THE ULEMA**

The ruling aristocracy could be divided into two categories

- 1) the able saif or the umara
- 2) Ahle Qalam or the Ulema

The ahlesaif or the ahle - shamshir - 'men of the sword' belonged to the warrior class of immigrants who had fought the Rajputs. Their military rank determined their social status in the aristocracy. They enjoyed titles like khan, Malik, Sipahsalar and Sar-i-chail collectively known as Umara. They formed the backbone of the sultanate. They commanded armies and contributed towards the expansion of the Empire. From among them the sultan appointed his ministers, official and iqtadars. In case of the rule of weak sultan they aspired to the throne.

After the nobles, the ulema (ahi-l-qalam) the muslim intellectuals and theologians exercised a great influence on the policies and functions of the state. They constituted the brain of the sultanate while Umara can be referred to as the sword-arm of the Turkish rule in India. The ulama were mostly non-Turkish origin; the Arabic and Persian theologians and intellectuals occupied a predominant position among them. They held a firm hold over the missionary organs of Islam and controlled the mosques, Khanquhs, educational institutions and holy shrines. Most of them belonged to the orthodox sunni school of thought.

They were trained in muslim law and the religious literature of Islam and wore turban as a mark on completion of the prescribed course.



Being the recognized interpreters of the shariat they exercised two very important functions first, they were the crown's advisers in matters of policy affecting religious issues. Second they held a virtual monopoly of the judicial office in the state. They interpreted the Islamic law and regarded themselves as the spiritual guardians of the Islamic state. They enjoyed respect and prestige among muslim masses and because of their popular appeal, demanded attention of the sultan and the nobility alike. The sultan always felt obliged to treat them with due respect. Under the weak or orthodox sultans, the ulema asserted their influence in state politics. The *sadr-us-sadur* and *qazi-ul-quzat* were usually their high priests. Despite their close affiliation to religion and law, the ulama as a class were hardly less self seeking than the nobles. Amir Khusaru says that ulama were ignorant of the principles of the shariat, acted from hypocrisy and vanity, disregarded the injunctions of Islam in their private lives and were always prepared to support a monarch who was a tyrant. Muhammad-bin Tughluq thought that the ulama of his times were singularly irreligious and greedy. Anxious of worldly gains ulama frequently involved themselves in political affairs. During the entire period of Turko-Afghan rule the ulama formed a section of the governing class, although they were not classed as *umaras* and their role was less important than that of the nobility. They could not play the role of king-makers, nor could they claim the higher political offices, they were turban-bearer incapable of rendering the most essential of all services which the military state required. But their turban vested them with an undefined authority in religious, legal and social matters which were inextricably mixed up with state policy. In theocratic state they hold a key position which no rules could ignore.

#### **5.5.4 MANSABDARS**

From Babur to the early years of Akbar's reign the Mughal army consisted of generally the Mongols, Turks, Uzbeks, Persians and Afghans each with commanders of the same race. They were granted large assignments of land in lieu of their salaries. The system generated not only irregularities and fraudulent practices by the commanders but also rebellion generally by Mughal and Uzbek officers. Akbar was therefore, obliged to reorganize the Mughal army on a new pattern which created what is known as the mansabdari system means the system of ranks and mansabdari means the holder of rank in the imperial army.

The Mansabdari System was closely connected with the introduction of a graded list of officers (mansabdars). The mansabdari system was of central Asian origin. According to one view, Babur brought it to North India. But some features of the system were known in Alauddin Khalji's time and the system was of long standing in Sher Shah's reign probably the Mongol invention of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries familiarised the sultans of Delhi with Mongol principles of recruitment and organisation of the army and these were gradually adopted by them. It was Akbar who restored the vitality of the system and made it the basis of Mughal military organization and civil administration.

Literally the word 'mansab' means rank, dignity or office. It is derived from the Persian word 'Nasabkardan' which means a fixing a particular person at a particular place. The mansab of a Mughal noble fixed (i) his horses (ii) his status (iii) his number of horses, soldiers and elephants he was required to maintain. It should be remembered that mansab was not granted to military officers alone. But all the Mughal officers in the revenue and judicial services and even the scholars of the court were holders of mansab. It is, therefore, that Irvin says, 'mansab-dari meant nothing beyond the fact that the holder of mansab was the employee of the state'. Mr. R. P. Khosla in a way reiterates the same when he remarks'. In the Mughal state the army the peerage and the civil administration were all rolled into one.

Akbar's system was an innovation in two respects. First he required the mansabdars class to maintain a fixed number of horsemen, horses, elephants, camels and carts appropriate to their respective ranks, to bring their contingents to periodical musters and to get their horses branded. Secondly it was his intention that mansabdars should begin at the bottom and earn promotion by merit. The mansabdars had two ranks: zat and sawar. One view is that the zat rank indicated the nominal number of troops which a mansabdar was expected to maintain, while sawar rank meant the number of troops which a mansabdar was expected to maintain, while the sawar rank meant the numbers of troops which he actually maintained. A second view is that the sawar rank implied an additional honour, but it imposed no obligation on the mansabdar to maintain the number of troops indicated by it. According to a third view the zat rank imposed an obligation on the mansabdar to maintain a fixed number of elephants, horses, beasts of burden and carts, but no troops, while the sawar rank indicated the actual number of troops that he had to maintain.

Recruitment, promotion and Dismissals of mansabdars were in the hand of the Emperor. A person desirous of joining the Mughal service first contacted a mansabdar who recommended him to Mir Bakshi. The latter presented the candidate before the Emperor, impressing upon him the qualifications of the candidate and his utility to the state. The candidate was then granted a mansab by the Emperor. His whole record known as 'Haqiqat' was prepared. Promotions of the mansabdars were also in the hands of the Emperor and were made generally on such occasions as (i) before and after an expedition (ii) on some auspicious occasions of festivity (iii) at the time of vacancy. A mansabdar could be dismissed at any time by the Emperor if the latter felt that the former was dishonest or disloyal to him or had lost his utility for the state.

The mansabdars were paid high salaries, sometimes in cash but generally in the form of assignment of land. In Aurangzeb's reign about fifty persons of them were jagirdars and others were nagdi (paid in cash). According to Abul Fazl there were 66 grades of mansabdars but in practice there were not more than 33 grades. The lowest grade in the beginning was that of 20 and the highest was that of 10,000. According to Badauni the highest mansab in the latter part of Akbar's regime was

12,000. The highest mansab were reserved for princes and ministers. Mansabdars were paid very fat salaries. For example a mansabdar of 5000 got from Rs. 28,000 to 30,000 out of which he would spend Rs. 16,000 to maintain the soldiers and other obligation. He had to maintain 340 horses, 100 elephants, 100 camels or mules and 160 carts. Out of these salaries they had to maintain horses, elephant and carts for the use of the state and the balance was intended for the maintenance of their households. The mansabdars recruited their troops and were permitted to keep for themselves five percent of the salaries of their troops to meet various expenses incurred for those troops.

The mansabdari system was a definite improvement upon the system of military organization prevailing during the period of the sultanate. The great mughals managed to maintain a very big army without a big organization for its recruitment and upkeep. A minimum standard of efficiency and discipline was maintained by competition among the mansabdars, all of whom aspired to gain imperial favour. But the system had serious defects. There was widespread corruption which Akbar sought vainly to check by introducing the zat and sawar ranks and by issuing elaborate regulations on branding of horses and muster of troops. The practice of payment of the troops through their commanders was bound to lead to abuses. The mansabdars, as a class were divided into groups seeking selfish ends and ignoring the general interest of the state. The mansabdars were involved in civil administration and drawn into problems which had little or no bearing upon military issues. They were not interested in training troops and in thinking about improvements in the art of war. The mughal empire never had a civil service separate from army. A mansabdar might be entrusted at any time with any duty, there was no room for specialization. Those mansabdars who were paid by assignment of lands even those who served actually as commanders of troops - collected the land-revenue from their jagirs.

During the rule of later Mughals the mansabdars did not bring with them even the required numbers of troops he expected to. The mughals neglected the defence of their frontier regions. When Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah invaded India there was no strong garrison to obstruct their progress into India. For their navy also the Mughal depended on foreigners for help. The muslim pilgrims secured protection from foreign ships. The decline of military might of the empire contributed to the decline of their power later on.

### **5.5.5 THE MIDDLE CLASS**

Next to the two privileged classes there was a middle class drawing modest incomes from small holding of land, or from services in lower holding of land, or from services in lower posts under the state, or from work under the nobles. As the Muslim society had for greater mobility than the Hindu Society, the energetic and ambitious men of the middle class found opportunities of rising to the highest class i.e. the nobility. The middle class in mughal society was heterogeneous, consisting of junior mansabdars, civil servants, judicial officers, landlords, merchants, bankers professional men, priests, men of letters and artists.

The feudal lords constituted a dominant material group. Possession of land was a positive source of status in the society. Among the Hindus social stratification was based on hereditary caste system, consequently only the prosperous and influential Hindus could become a part of the middle class. Muslims tended to determine social status on the basis of birth and racial considerations.

In general, the middle class was very well off, but not extravagant, they did not indulge in high or luxurious living. But the petty Mansabdars tried to copy the big Mansabdars in their extravagance and pomp and show. They maintained a high standards of living. They did not hesitate to borrow to maintain outward show. In order to maintain their position, they resorted to all kinds of malpractices such as bribery and extortion. The businessmen and bankers most of whom were Hindus, concealed their wealth and pretended not to be rich as they were afraid of being exploited by corrupt and unscrupulous bureaucrats.

#### **5.5.6 THE MASSES**

The nobility and the middle class constituted about ten to fifteen percent of the Indian population during Mughal Period. The rest were masses or lower classes. The masses comprised of the cultivators, artisans, small traders, shop-keepers, household servants, slaves etc. Most of them were condemned to live a hard and unattractive life. Their clothing was scanty. They did not use woollen clothes at all. Very few of them could afford to use shoes. Masses on the whole were poor. The masses had to depend on agriculture for their maintenance. It was very heavily taxed under Alauddin Khilji - 50% of the production was charged as a state share. The people could not even get two meals.

Financially, the petty shop-keepers were better off. The servants attached to the officers were arrogant in their dealing with the public on account of the backing of their masters. They demanded tips as a right. The lives of the artisans were hard. They had to work in different villages to maintain themselves as there was not enough work in one village. Their general standard of living was very poor and their wants were very few. There was no scarcity of food except in times of draught or famines deaths by starvation under normal circumstances were not known. The condition of the farmers in the time of Akbar was not bad. The officers and government also took into consideration their welfare. However, things became bad when the officials became corrupt later on.

#### **Check your Progress :**

1) Explain the ruling aristocracy (the Umara and the Ulema) in Medieval India.

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## 5.6 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 2) B. N. Luniya - Life and culture, in Medieval India, Indore, Kamal Prakashan 1978.
- 3) J. L. Mehta - Advance History of Medieval India vol I & II, New Delhi, Sterling, 1983.
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- 5) A. B. Pande - Society and Government in Medieval India, Central Book Depot, 1965.
- 6) Chitnis K. N. - Glimpses Medieval Indian Ideas and institutions, Pune, 1981.
- 7) Chitins K. N. - Socio - Economic History of Medieval India, Atlantic publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1990.
- 8) Mohomad Yasin - Asocial History of Islamic India 1605 - 1748, Munshi Ram, New Delhi, 1974.
- 9) A. L. Shrivastav - The Mughal Empire 1526 -1803, Shivlal Agrawal, Agra, 1972.

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## 5.7 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- Q.1 Give an account of the class composition of the society in medieval India.
- Q.2 Discuss the position of nobles in the Mughal Society.
- Q.3 What role did the Ulema Play in the medieval society and administration?
- Q.4 Write a note on Mansabdari system during Mughal period.
- Q.5 Give a brief description of the social structure during the Mughal period.
- Q.6 Bring out the main features of the rural society during medieval period.
- Q.7 Explain the main features of the urban society during medieval period.
- Q.8 Comment on
  - A) Village Community
  - B) Rural Society
  - C) Urban Society
  - D) The middle class
  - E) The masses
  - F) Position of Emperor in medieval period



# Unit - 6

## CASTE SYSTEM, UNTOUCHABILITY AND FORCED LABOUR

### Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Muslim Society
- 6.3 Hindu Society
- 6.4 Untouchability
- 6.5 Slavery in Medieval India
- 6.6 Forced Labour
- 6.7 Summary
- 6.8 Additional Readings
- 6.9 Questions for Self Study

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To look into the caste system during medieval period.
- To study the Mughal society and its structure of medieval age.
- To make students aware of the caste system among Hindus and its impact on society.
- To analyse the evil practice of untouchability.
- To understand the institute of slavery during medieval period.
- To understand concept of forced labour during medieval period.

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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The real history of the people in medieval India, that is of their social life, is of greater interest and importance for us today than more catalogues of political events and military campaigns. The sources of studying it are indeed meagre, but the valuable information can be gleaned from the accounts of contemporary European travellers and records of the European factories. Incidental references are available in contemporary historical works in Persian as well as vernacular literature of the period. The two phases of Muslim rule in India - the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal Empire led to the extensive settlements of foreigners. Their number was increased by constant migration from the Islamic lands as well as by occasional mass conversions of the indigenous people. This led to the existence of two distinct social groups in India based on religious differences the Hindus and the Muslims. The impact of the militant Islam

had little effect upon the age-old social life of Hindus. The society and culture during sultanate and Mughal period was not entirely new or radically different from the society and culture of the preceding or succeeding age. The Hindu society in all ages has been fundamentally same.

The Hindu and Muslim society was organized on the basis of the caste system. The caste system in India is the paradigmatic ethnographic example of caste. It has origins in ancient India it continued to be the basis of the social set up in the Mughal period. However, it had become less rigorous because of the contacts with Muslims who believed in the principles of equality and brotherhood of man. The Hindu attitudes of exclusiveness prevailing during the sultanate period slowly died out because of better treatment and more economic facilities provided to them by the Mughal rulers. During the Mughal period Hindus had given up their earlier attitude of keeping aloof from the Muslims. They began to consider the Muslims and their descendants as Indians. In turn Muslims during the Mughal period began to feel a great attachment to the new land.

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## **6.2 MUSLIM SOCIETY**

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Despite of professed object of Islam to promote social equality and brotherhood, there were clear-cut division of Muslim society. The caste system of Hindus had some influence on the Muslim society as well. Similarly among the Muslims also numerous distinctions had arisen on the basis of birth, sect and race. The concept of a common brotherhood was honoured only in principle. Contemporary historians speak of persons of high birth and low birth, with a pronounced contempt for the latter. There were two privileged classes : the umaras or the nobility and the Ulema or the theologians together with other religious groups.

In the early centuries of Islam the first distinction among muslim was based on the division among Arabs and non-Arabs. Arabs regarded themselves superior to Muslims of non-Arab origin. They claimed a higher status in society and monopolised all the higher posts. They were proud to have belonged to the land of the birth of prophet Mohammed. Even among the Arabs the Qurashi to which prophet belonged were considered superior to other Arabs. The Sayyids, who claimed descent from Fatima, daughter of the prophet are esteemed the highest among the Muslims. The Sayyids claimed the status among the muslims which the Brahmans did among the Hindus.

At par with central Asian Arabs, there were Persian muslims who had come to India for employment in the Mughal service or for trade with Arabia and Persia. The persian influence became dominant during the Abbasid caliphate. Most of the Persians were shia. They took pride in their ancient culture and considered it much superior to that of Arabs. With the acquisition of political power the persians began to assert their superiority over the Arabs. In the same way when political power passed into the

hands of the Turks they claimed supremacy over all others. Thus, with the passage of time the Muslims got themselves divided into Sayyids, Sheikhs, Mughals, Pathans and Indo-Muslim racial groups.

Indian Muslims who were converts from the Hindu population or were descendants of early converts were much larger in numbers than the foreign muslims. Sectarian differences further subdivided these larger racial groups. Hindu converts to Islam retained some of their characteristic social customs. The central Asian Muslims and some persians who had caw: for services were found mostly in northern India and small numbers of them at the court of Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golkunda. Foreign Muslims dominated the muslim courts. Besides the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols and Uzbegs there were Abyssinians and Armenians. In some areas of north India Afghans were also in considerable number. Thus there was a marked influence of Hinduistan on Islam in social sphere, in the creation of caste distinctions. They indicate social status as clearly as they do in the Hindu society. The existence of caste system among the muslims had been acknowledged by Prof. Mohammed Lobel. According to him 'Religious adventures set up different sectors and fraternities ever quarrelling withone another and these are castes and sub-castes like the Hindus. Surely we have out-Hirldued the Hindu himself, we are suffering from double caste system, which we have either learned or inherited from Hindus.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the structure of muslim society in medieval India.

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## **6.3 HINDU SOCIETY**

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The social structure of the Hindu society in India during our period of study was basically same as in most part of India with slight variations necessitated by geographical conditions. The invasions in the northern India by the followers of Islam from central Asia, the Turks, Mughals, Afghans and others had posed a threat to survival of the native powers. Thus one can see a severe religious orthodoxy among Hindus. As a result the traditional fourfold division of the Aryan society as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisha and Shudra had multiplied and developed into myriad sood units or caste. The failure of the Rajputs and the other traditional military castes forced the people to seek refuge in religion. The power of the priest increased as the military by weak could not protect their homes and heartn and they stubbornly stucked to the traditional form of society. Education and learning was confined to the higher castes in the hierachy. The mass of the people was ignorant, illiterate and superstitious. The



puranas or the myths about divine activities to save the devotees found favourable response.

The similar reaction we could see in the writing of Al-Biruni, who was associated with the court of Sultan Mohammed of Ghazni. He says that as a result of sultan Mohammed's invasion the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all direction' and 'their scattered remains cherish the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims'. The primary reaction of the Hindu society to the advent of Islam was the adoption of a protective armour in the form of a more rigid pattern of religious and social laws. The principal of untouchability, applied initially to the lowest class, was held to be applicable to the Muslims. Those who could not be absorbed in the Hindus society were to be kept at a distance from it by raising a high social wall so that it could ensure its own immunity from pollution.

However, the population of Hindus in India was not homogeneous. The Hindus constituted the great majority though divided into a number of castes and sub-castes including untouchable with their own sub-castes. The social structure in the smritis consists of four primary castes - the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Shudras with diminishing rank and status. In north India, the upper classes of Hindus belonged mostly to the Rajput (Kshatriya Caste), Brahmin, Kayastha and the Vaishya caste but they did not inter-dine and intermarry among themselves. The caste system was more vigorous due to the presences of the powerful Muslim Community which was very much interested in the concession of the Hindus to Islam. The Rajputs were military men and their class leaders were high-ranking mansabdars in the imperial service. The Brahmins were generally engaged in priestly profession and teaching. Vaishya or Banias were engaged in the mercantile profession - shop - keeping, local trade and also in inland trade. Kayastha were engaged largely as clerks, secretaries and revenue officers. A middle caste Hindus were engaged in the agricultural profession as tillers of land as well as landless labourers.

The establishment of the Muslim rule over India during medieval age materially affected the traditional position of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. With the elimination of the Hindu Kingdoms, the Brahmanas could no longer play any important part in the administration or obtain royal patronage for their literary work and teaching academies. The Kshatriyas lost their political power to the Turks and the Mughals. Besides many of them lost an opportunity of easing their livelihood as soldiers. The changes in the politico-economic life had their impact on caste grouping. Many old caste rank led and new ones arose or came into prominence, both in north and south. Among the *innam arable* sub-caste in Northern India, the kayasthas came into prominence as government servants. The Khattris who came from Punjab were astute financiers and successful administrators and their influence spread over the whole northern India. They exercised much political and social influence in Agar and Malwa. The Konkan and chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra produced great administrators. In south India the Brahmanas retained their

social leadership. They continued to be the custodians of the Hindu religion.

The Medieval period in India has witnessed multiplicity of religious sects. Sri Shankaracharya of shrigeri in a bid to stem the spread of Buddhism and Janism had strengthened the Hindu beliefs and tried to shape the Hindu society according to his vision. His influence spread all over India. However from the 12th Century onwards the impact of Islam on Hindu society produced many religious sects each competing with others for general acceptance. The most important religious sects of the period were Nathpantha, Bhaktipantha, Bhairawa, Sahayavad Shakta. As for as the religious climate was concerned the influence of Buddhism and Jainism receded and Bhakti cult found acceptance all round. The devotees of Vitthal prayed hard for their deliverance from the atrocities perpetrated on them by intolerant and oppressive rulers. The saint pact had prepared the people to wait patiently for the coming of the saviours. Their belief in the social structure in fact.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write an essay on Hindu society in Medieval India.

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## **6.4 UNTOUCHABILITY**

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Various historians, sociologist, Anthropologist have opinions differently about the origin of untouchability. As many scholars from Karvelravati to Morton Llass have pointed out that basic group of caste system is not actually jati or caste but rather the sub-caste or potjati. Untouchability goes back into far dimmers of the Hindu's past. This system for elevating and debasing human being in rigidity separated comportments developed as the actuality of Hindu life while Hindu Philosophy was holding itself to be the most open and all inclusive of all ways of thought, the Hindu religion, the most tolerant of any on earth.

There are many theories about the originality of this system. The most commonly repeated version is that it all dates back to prehistoric times, perhaps four to five thousand years ago when otherwise unidentified 'Aryans' invaders made themselves masters of the indigenous population they found in the land now known as India. Obviously, these nomad Aryans proved themselves superior by all the means because of their exposure to the different cultures, societies than local innocent Indians. The word 'Vasna' actually means colour and Aryan said to be fair and 'dasa' or 'dasyus' the local people were 'dark'. To prove the superiority

in social, political and economic sphere of life further theories of Varna might have established by Aryan themselves.

The evils of Hindu Social order had always kept the Hindus Society divided and backward. As the 'chatusvarnya' system was considered as divinely ordained any protest against that system was unimaginable. Untouchability was the most objectionable part of the traditional caste system which originated from 'Chatusvasnya' system. The idea that man can touch any-animal but not man born in a particular caste or a section of the same society was shocking. The shock might have been intensely felt by the early 'shudras' termed as low born by the Aryans. The idea of purity is found to have been a factor in the genesis of caste is the very soul of the idea and practice of untouchability. The untouchables were set apart outside and below a four main division of Hindu society. There was a clear distinction between top three varnas and the forth, the shudras. The top three are entitled to wear the 'sacred thread' which identified V 3 is as 'twice born' meaning that in symbolic second birth they have been admitted to the study of the vedas or in effect recognized as more or less fully privileged.

The ancient 'Chaturvarna' or four-fold division of the Hindu society survived in its degenerated form in medieval period. The four division of the society were named as Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisha and Shudra. The political scenario during medieval period had not change social structure of Hindu society. According to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar untouchability is an integral part of Hindu Philosophy. Even if untouchability was banned it could not be ousted from the mind of Hindus. The Hindu society was tradition bound and it was also divided into number of caste and sub-caste. It firmly believed in the dictum that if you protect religion it will protect you. It was but natural that in such a rigidity caste bound society untouchability gained wide acceptance.

Alberuni list eight 'antyaja' caste during medieval period below the status of the shudras. They were the weaver, the shoemaker, the juggler, the basket-makers, the sailor, the fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and the blacksmith. All those who did not fit into any of the traditional castes were simply classed as the outcasts or the 'chandals'. The high caste people exploited the low castes and treated them in inhuman manner heaping on them insults and indignities. Even the state discriminated between the citizens on the basis of castes. The sudras continued to render menial services to the higher castes though many of them had adopted agricultural tenancy and artisans craft. The untouchables lived outside the town and villages. Most of the people were poor, backward and ignorant of education and learning. Having been neglected by the higher caste since ages, they felt demoralised and dejected. They suffered many social and economic disabilities which made their lives miserable. During muslim rule the upper caste Hindus made their caste structure more rigid so as to prevent their entry into the higher social structure. Even the artisan's profession came to be treated as separate sub-caste of lower denominations, like the weaver, iron-smiths and oilmen.

The nature of untouchability throughout India was relative in most cases. The Ramoshis, Mahars, Mangs, Dhors, Majahbis, Ravidasias, Malas, Madigas, Parihas, pulayas were some of the lowest and the most neglected caste-group. They were called atishudras or antyajas i.e. most despicable ones. A certain was regarded as untouchables by some but not always co-terminus with untouchability. Certain caste were regarded as ritually impure in relation with some other castes with whom members of the caste did not practice commensality or inter-marriage. Yet they did not regard them as untouchables. Distinction was also made in relation to the degree of pollution caused by untouchables. Brahmins regarded the bodily touch of certain lower caste as polluting, but they were allowed to do specific jobs in their houses like cutting vegetables, cleaning utensils etc., while in some other cases they were regarded as extremely untouchable and even their shadow was held to be polluting. The most objectionable aspect of the pollution belief was that certain castes came to be regarded as extremely untouchable. Untouchability in their respect was not relative, it was absolute.

Even during medieval period untouchables were not permitted even to live within the outskirts of the village, they were obliged to reside outside the village wall. They were required to carry an earthen pot tied round their neck into which they had to spit, for their spittle was regarded as defiling. Contemporary records show that Mahars in Maharashtra were not allowed to enter into the city of poona between 3 pm. to 9 am., because their long shadow cast in the streets should defile the persons of high castes. Even wood and metal were believed to be defiled if touched by an atishudra. They were denied many civil rights on the ground that their touch was defiling. Village priest, Barbars all denied to give services to them. They were not permitted to enter Brahminical shrines and temples. They could worship or offer their prayers to the temple deity from the outer precincts of the temple. Thus the caste system was so deeply rooted that it could not be shaken to any considerable extent by the liberal teachings of the medieval religious reformers.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Assess the nature of untouchability in Medieval India.

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## **6.5 SLAVERY, DURING MEDIEVAL PERIOD**

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During the medieval period Indian society suffered from two serious evils - slavery and untouchability. While untouchability was mainly confined to Hindus slavery was more popular with Muslims. The Mughal household was a world of domestic slavery. Many male and

female slaver were maintained. Their status and tasks varied from the most ordinary to those which required skill, tact and intelligence. Younger slaves of both sexes were available for discreet sexual services to their masters. Slaves acted as guards, servants or business agents and personal assistants. The illustrious dynasty of slave king of in the thirteenth century bring out a peculiar dimension of slavery as it was practiced in India.

### **ORIGIN OF SLAVERY IN INDIA**

Slavery was a regular feature of the social system of the Muslim period as it was of many contemporary social systems all over the world. Slavery was an important characteristic feature of ancient Greece and Roman Empire as well. The institution of slavery was prevalent in India even before the establishment of Muslim rule over the country. Institution of slavery must have existed in India from ancient times, but its origin is involved in considerable obscurity. Vedic literature refers to the class of *dasas* i.e. slaves. The institution of slavery had been fairly well established during the Buddhist period, if a number of references to it in the Pali Literature are to be believed. The Hindu *smritis* speak of fifteen classes of slaves, chief among whom were born of the domestic slave-girl : secured by purchase, obtained as a gift or charity, saved from starvation during famine, insolvent debtor, was prisoner, a recluse returning to the life of a house-holder and taking employment with somebody; one who self himself. With the advent of the Turkish rule, slavery got a new dimension. The Mamluk sultan and their Turkish nobility themselves happened to be the products of a highly commercialised institution of slavery. In fact from 1206 to 1290 the rulers of the Delhi sultanate belonged to the slave Dynasty.

### **SLAVERY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

The system of slavery was prevalent in India before the advent of Islam. But it was mamluk sultan and their turkish nobility, who themselves happened to be the product of a highly commercialised institution of slavery gave a new dimension to this social evil. Almost all the manual and menial services were rendered by the slaves. *albusgeaesemies* of slaves were put to work for the construction of roads and public buildings in state-owned *kaskhanas* and other public-utility services. During sultanate period slaves constituted a familiar feature of K. M. Ashraf, The life of a muslim nobleman was so much divided between war and pleasure that he hardly found anytime to attend his personal and domestic work. In course of time, the code of social behaviour began to view domestic work as unworthy of a gentleman's dignity and honour. The most important section of these domestic was comprised of male and female slaves.

The Turkish sultans as well as nobility strove hard to multiply their slaves by all means. They allowed their slaves to marry and bring up families because the off springs of the slaves also became automatically the property of their masters. Both Muslim and Hindu communities maintained slaves. Almost all the manual and menial services were rendered by the slaves. Slave markets for men and women existed in West

Asia as well as India. We have it on the testimony of Yule and Barbosa the a flourishing trade was carried out in Bengal in the thirteenth century. Skilled slaves, handsome boys and beautiful girls commanded higher price in the slave market. Skilled slaves were much in demand among the aristocratic classes. Firoz Tughlaq maintained a separate department of slaves and collected about 180,000 of them. Many of them were employed in the royal karkhanas, imperial household and as a sultan's personal bodyguards.

There was a great demand for female slaves. Female slaves were of two kinds, one was employed for domestic and menial work and other who were brought for company and pleasure. Those who were employed for domestic and menial work lacked education and skills. They were brought exclusively for rough domestic work. Hence they were often subjected to all kinds of indignities. The other who were brought for company and pleasure were more honourable, might be beautiful and skilled in performing art. They sometime even had dominating position in the household.

There are different opinion of historians about the treatment given to the slaves during medieval period in muslim community. One thought is that, since a slave was usually a convert to Islam, he possessed the same right as any other members of the muslim society with a feeling of brotherhood and equality. Thus his moral claims, though they might not be fully recognised could never be denied. K. M. Ashraf, on basis of his intensive researches, throws interesting light on the institution of slavery during muslim rule in India, he writes," In practice, the position of a slave was very different. He was usually a prisoners of war and according to the military usage of the age, his life was at the mere of his captor, who had full power of killing him or of otherwise disposing of him. This was clearly understood on both sides king before a military engagement commenced. So when a conqueror (now the master of slave) chose to spare the life of a slave and employ him for menial work, it was an act of favour and of a special benevolence on the part of former. Similarly, when the prisoner of war had been sold in the market and brought by a purchaser, he was a much the property of the buyer as any other commodity and as such, could be given away as a gift or disposed of in any other way.

As compare to the slaves among the Hindus, the condition of Muslim slaves was better. It was considered to be a great honour to be the slaves of eminent person. Among the Hindus under no circumstances slavery could be considered as a matter of pride. Among the Muslims, slave of king or a nobleman commanded greater respect as they were looked upon as their follower. With better training and sometime with good look many of the slaves won the confidence and affection of their masters. Aibak, Qabacha, Yaldoz were favourite slaves of Muhammad Ghori. He treated them as his own sons. As a result after his death Aibak sat on the throne of Delhi. Illtutmish and Balban, before they assume the position of the sultan were slaves. Thus among Muslims there were many

slaves who not only commanded more respect than freeman but had a number of freemen serving under him.

The above-mentioned examples were few in number but in general the slaves had a numbers of restrictions. In both communities a slave could not do anything without the permission of his master. He had no right of free movement neither he could receive any guests of his own. He could not arrange marriages for himself or for his dependents without the permission of his master. If at all slaves acquired some property master claimed as his own. Under certain conditions if master got pleased with the conduct of his slave, a slave can be set free. Among Hindus, a master was supposed to some ceremony to set a slave free. Among the muslim a slave was liberated by granting a letters of manumission. These The sultan usually liberated their slaves after some time and some of the slaves rose to political and social eminence by dint of merit and ability.

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Explain the origin of slavery system in Medieval India.

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## **6.6 FORCED LABOUR**

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**Begar** generally implies unpaid forced labour, extracted either by landlords. or the state. In the agrarian **system** of North India ' dominated as it was. by peasant proprietors, **begar** meant forcible extraction by the state of labour and / or produce without any payment, or with nominal wages.

Veth (or Vethi or Vetti-chakiri, from Sanskrit visti), also known as Begar (from Persian), was a system of forced labour practised during ancient, medieval and pre-independence India, in which members of populace were compelled to perform unpaid work for the government. Refusal to perform veth could mean imprisonment or fines.

The wide spread land-grant system during the post-Gupta period had created a separate group of landlords in the rural areas. From seventh century onwards the donce was given pastures, trees, water resources etc. in addition to agricultural land. The land lords collect regular and irregular taxes from the peasants. The regular taxes such as 'bhaga', 'bhoga' etc continued and in addition to these regular taxes, the landlords collected several other taxes from the peasants. The peasants were under obligation to pay all taxes imposed upon them. The landlords were free to evict the peasants at the will of the farmers and replace them with new peasants. The collection of irregular taxes strengthened the power and position of

the landlords, while it deteriorated the position of the peasantry. 'Vishti' or forced labour became a common practice in north India during 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Several of the land grants of this period ordered the peasants to carry out the orders of the landlords. Though agrarian expansion was on the positive move, the condition of the peasantry was on deterioration process.

Land revenue was the main source of income of the state during this period. A regular revenue department functioned for the proper survey and measurement of the extent of land as well as for the collections of land revenue. The land tax collected from the peasants normally varied from 1/6 to 1/4 of the total produce. Whenever the army marched through the villages, it was the responsibility of the villages to provide food and shelter to the army. The rulers used to impose forced labour known as 'vishti' upon the peasants, thereby the peasants were subjected to work in the fields of the ruler for several days, for no wages. In the post-Gupta period, it is assumed that the position of 'Shudras' in the society had come up to the status of peasants from their earlier position of servants and domestic slaves. Huen-Tsang, in his accounts characterises 'Shudras' as agriculturists.

By c.1600 slave labour formed a small component of the labour force, being restricted largely to domestic service (where free servants normally predominated) and concubinage. Emperor Akbar made notable attempts to forbid the trade in slaves and forcible enslavement. He freed all the imperial slaves, who "exceeded hundreds and thousands". But domestic slaves and concubines remained an essential feature not only of the aristocratic household but also of the homes of lower officials and even ordinary people.

The practice of forced labour (begar) was generally considered unethical, though it was widely prevalent in relation to certain occasional tasks, such as baggage conveyance, imposed on specific lowly rural castes or communities. Akbar in 1597 and Shahjahan in 1641 issued orders abolishing the practice of begar (forced labour) extracted for various tasks in Kashmir, such as picking and cleaning saffron flowers and carrying timber and firewood. It is interesting that an inscription at the gate of Akbar's Fort at Nagar in Srinagar (Kashmir), built in 1598, explicitly proclaims that no unpaid labour was used there, and 11,000,000 dams (copper coins) from the imperial treasury were spent on wages for labour.

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## 6.7 SUMMARY

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Caste system in India is composite structure of different social classes in the Hindu religion. Caste panchayat had become very strong instruments for regulating the behaviour of its members. Caste system in India is complex system of several distinctions, which have divided the society into high and low strata. Caste system became rigid and hereditary in Medieval period. Thus caste system was so deeply rooted that it could



not be shaken to any considerable extent by the liberal teachings of the medieval religious reformers.

Untouchability was most objectionable part of the traditional caste system which originated from 'chatusvarnya' system. The most objectionable aspect of the pollution belief was that certain castes came to be regarded as extremely untouchable. Untouchability in their respect was not relative, it was absolute.

Slavery was a drag on Medieval society the slaves in Medieval India no doubt received generally better treatment at hands of their Master's than Negro's slaves of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But economically slavery was a source of cheap supply of labour, politically it helped to autocracy, morally it proved unjust. Slaves did not enjoy any such rights as privilege, on the other hand slaves were property of master.

But, forced labourer condition were very stiff and miserable. This was a system of forced labour, which was brought into practice by money lenders and Zamindars. By land lords, money lenders, forced labour (Begar) Meant forcible extraction by the state of labour and produce without any payment. But during Maratha period, the people in power availed service of poor people. Without paying anything for the same. Thus, forced labourer conditions were very deteriorated and miserable during Medieval period. Practice of forced labour was generally considered unethical, though it was widely prevalent in relation to certain occasional tasks, such as baggage conveyance, imposed on specific lowly rural castes.

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## 6.8 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 1) Dr. Iswari Prasad - The Mughal Empire, Allahabad, 1974.
- 2) Dr. R. Tripathi - Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire, Allahabad, 1981.
- 3) A. L. Shrivastev - The Mughal Empire, 1526 - 1803 Shiv Lal Agrawal, Agra, 1970.
- 4) S. A. A. Rizvi - The wonder that was India Vol. II Sidwick and Jackson London - 1987.
- 5) S. R. Sharma - Studies in Medieval Indian Society, Solapur.

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## 6.9 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- Q. 1 Explain the difficulties of the untouchables during Medieval period.
- Q. 2 On what grounds was untouchability continued in the Middle Ages.
- Q. 3 Discuss the main features of the social order of the muslim society during medieval period.
- Q.4 Write a detailed note on the Forced labour (Vethabegar)



# Unit - 7

## EDUCATION DURING MEDIEVAL INDIA

### Unit Structure :

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 The Sultanate Period
  - 7.2.1 Hindu System of Education
  - 7.2.2 Hindu Institute of Higher Education
  - 7.2.3 Muslim System of Higher Education
  - 7.2.4 Muslim Institute of Higher Education
- 7.3 The Mughal Period
  - 7.3.1 Hindu System of Education
  - 7.3.2 Muslim System of Education
  - 7.3.3 Educational Development under Mughal Emperor
  - 7.3.4 Women Education
- 7.4 Additional Readings
- 7.5 Questions for self study

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To study the system of education during medieval India.
- To understand the Hindu system of education under sultanate rule.
- To know about Muslim system of education under sultanate rule.
- To analyse the Hindu system of education during mughal period.
- To estimate the contribution of Mughal emperor towards muslim system of education.
- To understand to the Women Education System in Medieval India.

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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Education is a part of culture serving two purposes - conservation and modification or renewal of culture. It is a systematic effort to maintain, transmit its cultural heritage from one generation to the other. Education is also an effective instrument to shape the society's future. The basic pattern of culture of any society is formed by the kind of education it promotes for its younger generation. If society aims at progress; its educational system must be so oriented as to promote modification and renewal which are the ways of cultural enrichment. During ancient period India was indeed famous for its centres of education. With the advent of Islam, ancient centres of Hindu learning were destroyed. Eminent centres of education like Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramshila closed down and their

collection of manuscripts in the ancient system of education. However Hindu rulers in Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Deccan continued to patronise to ancient system of education.

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## **7.2 THE SULTANATE PERIOD**

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Before the advent of turko - Afghan conqueror the Hindus had a mature and highly advanced system of education. It constituted the backbone of the ancient Indian culture and civilisation. The brahmanic and jain temples and Buddhist monasteries were the primary centres of ancient Indian education. The higher seats of indigenous learning at Thatta, Multan, Mathura, Varanasi, Nalanda and Vikramasila fell victims to the armies of muslim. At many places educational institutions and libraries set on fire. But the part of the country remained free from Turkish domination, the ancient or Hindu system of education remained intact and continued to flourish as ever before, with new ruler, there emerged a new system of education for muslims in India. Like Hindus, the muslims also attached great importance to education as a vehicle of change and progress.

### **7.2.1 HINDU SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

Education was not regarded as state responsibility. It was nourished and maintained by the Hindu society through its own resources. It was a private affair of the people, managed entirely by the Brahmin, Buddhist monk and jain priests. The primary school called pathshalas were usually attached to or housed in the premises of the brahman or jain temples. Either the priests themselves acted as teacher or appointed pandits or jai scholars to impart education to the minor children of the locality free of charge. The institutions rarely received state grants or were maintained entirely by the public endowments and charity. Education led more emphasis on the three Rs. viz; reading,- writing and arithmetic besides the knowledge of holy scriptures to their young wards. Apart from the temples and shrines, big villages and town, which contained a substantial population of the caste Hindus, maintained their own Patbshalas. They were set up by the local inhabitants-through corporate activity and run on public charity. The brahmin scholar and priest, with the resources at their command continued the tradition of education. Sometimes the schools were run in their homes however education was denied to the lower caste. Buddhist monks imparted education to all those who wanted to learn as they did not believe in social hierarchy and the caste system.

The Hindu population of the sultanate period did not allow their institutions of elementary education or primary schools to die out of existence. Through deprived of the state patronage, the pathshalas were maintained by the Brahmin scholars and priests with what ever merge resource at their command. Sometimes a teacher would conduct his classes within his family quarters. Education in brahmainic pathshalas was free and accessible to all except to sudras. The Buddhist had no caste, so they imparted education to all without any restriction or discrimination.

Broadly speaking the preservation of ancient heritage and culture and its enrichment was the primacy aim of education. The specified objectives of Hindu education during sultanate period were - the formation of character, building up of all-round personality and the training of rising generation in performance of social and religious duties. The Hindu system of education stood for the moral and spiritual progress of students. Purity in thought and life formed the key stone. The educational system laid particular stress upon civic and social duties and responsibilities. It 'helped the development of personality cultivating self-respect, self-reliance and self-restraint.

The child was usually sent to the Pathshala at the age of five when a formal initiation ceremony 'upanayana' was performed at an auspicious time. The period of study and the duration of courses were not fixed. Normally it lasted till an individual attained the age of twenty-five according to the Manusmriti. The teacher treated the students like their own sons while the latter performed all sorts of domestic services for them, including scavenging, washing of cloths and looking after the cattle. The teacher also fulfilled his obligation towards his pupils as their spiritual father, he provided food and clothing for them out of provision received at the institution through public charity or collective efforts of the pupils themselves and looked after their spiritual physical and moral health. Sanskrit was the medium of instruction from the elementary school level. The method of teaching was oral because of the fact that printing was unknown in those days and the handwritten manuscripts were rare.

Seats of higher learning were known by different names in different parts of the country. These seats were known as *gurukuls* or *chopparis*. Formation of character, building a personality, preservation of ancient culture and the training of rising generation in the performance of social and religious duties were some of the aims of higher education. Along with this yoga, logic, philosophy, medicine and military science were taught. Self reliance was given importance. Like modern days there were no formal examination, throughout the year student was on test during his stay at the guru's ashram. Student and teacher were the best judge of his performance. Here during those days formal degree was not awarded but they were given the titles like 'Upadhyaya', Mahaupadhyaya. The title of 'Saryantri' was given to the scholar who was questioned on different topics by the learned men and the public specially held meeting once the student education was complete, which took about ten to twelve years. The fees of the teacher could be a cow, fruits and eatables, grain, horse, garments or anything which student could obtain easily. According to RK Mukherjee, the *gurudakshina* was 'enjoying more as religious act formally bringing two clothes the period of studentship and marking the fulfillment of a sacred vow then ask any kind of material remuneration' for the education imparted to him by the teacher.

### **7.2.2 HINDU INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The curriculum of the institutions of higher education was fairly expensive and diversified. Besides the specialised study of Sanskrit

language and literature and the religious scriptures of the brahmanic, Buddhist and jain cults, it comprised a large number of secular subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, astrology, yoga, logic, Philosophy, biology, geography, medicine and military science. Caste and professional requirement were taken into consideration in granting admission to the students for various courses of study.

Usually a period of ten to twelve years was needed for graduation in a subject. Student was put to various types of tests by the teacher from time to time and promoted next higher standard. The teacher himself was the sole judge of his pupil's standard of attainment at a given stage. No formal degrees or diplomas were awarded. Only some of the outstanding student did receive the honorific titles of Sarvabhuma, Upadhyaya, Mahaupadhyaya, Veda, Dwivedi, Trivedi, Chaturvedi etc., either from their teacher or the group of scholars on the basis of their academic merit.

The Hindu centre of higher learning where usually attach to temples or where situated at center of pilgrimage as devotees made generous grant at this places. Renowned scholars lived here and could pursue their profession from the endowments and charity these centers received. Some of the institutions became famous due to the presence of scholars from The Muslim occupied areas and the generous patronage of Rajput rulers.

As a matter of fact most of the Hindu institution of higher learning were destroyed by Arab and Turko-Afgan invaders. Some of the these educational institutions were revived by the brahmin and buddhist scholars after the establishment of sultanate. Having been deprived of the state patronage, social status and religious freedom, the Hindu system of higher education did not attract many students or teachers. At places like Thatta, Multan, Sirhind, Mathura, Vrindavan, Prayag, Ayodhya and Varanasi, Hindu institute of higher learning were re-established by some individuals but none of them regain the past glory and prestige of pre-muslim days. On the other hand, those parts of the country which remained beyond the pale of the muslim rule were studded with numerous institutions of higher learning of national and international fame as ever before. University of Mithila, University of Nadia, University Ramavati (Bengal), centers at Kashmir valley were some of the prominent centres of higher education for Hindus during easily medieval period.

Rajput rulers where patrons of education. In Malwa, Dhar and Ujjain where famous seats of learning. The Parmar Raja Bhoj or Dhar was a scholar in his own right. Science, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, medicine etc. where taught at his center of learning. Sirhind what's famous for it's scholarship in the Ayurvedic system of medicine. Thatta was the Center for study of Theology, Philosophy and Politics. In the deccan, in medieval, Madurai was an important center of learning. Thus in spite of Muslim invasions and establishment of Muslim rule Hindu centres of education retain their identity and continue to flourish.

### **7.2.3 MUSLIM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

The muslim system of education in India was planted and patronised by the sultans of Delhi and other muslim rulers of early medieval India. The minister in charge of the ecclesiastical department and religious endowments was the head of educational department as well. He was the chief representative or spokesman of the Ulama who shared power of the state in association with the umara. The muslim system of education, like its Hindu counterpart was religious in nature, its primary object was to propagate Islam. The state provided finance to muslim education and exercised general supervision and control over it. The Ulema determined the educational policy and managed the educational institutions. The centres of higher learning, called the madarsa were almost exclusively financed by the state while the primary schools, called maktabas, formed a part of the masjids, khangahs, dargah and other holy shrines or places of worship. These were run by liberal financial and from the state and its official and public charities.

The duty of Islamic state and its sultan was to spread Islam. Elementary education was given in the maktabas which was attached to a mosque or masjid. It was like a Hindu pathshalas. A mulla or maulvi was incharge of a masjid. In each muslim locality maktab was run by a single teacher. According to an Islamic tradition, a child should be sent to the school when he was four years, four month, and four days old. A bismillah ceremony, similar to the upanayana of the Hindus was performed at an appropriate time, fixed in consultation with an astrologer. A wealthy child might receive elementary lesson in education from tutor at his parental house. These tutors were paid handsomely by their patrons. Otherwise education was free and open to all without discrimination primary education was based on the study of the Islamic scripture.

The elementary knowledge of three Rs was imparted through the Persian language while the oral instruction, accompanied by memorisation of the religious texts, was given in Arabic. Thus a child was made familiar with the Arabic and Persian languages almost simultaneously. He was taught elementary rules of grammar and asked to study small books containing short stories, poems or lessons in Hadis written in simple language.

### **7.2.4 MUSLIM INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The institute of higher learning for muslim were called madarsas or jamias. These were established by the sultans and their provincial governors at central or provincial headquarters and other important towns. Like the Hindu gurukuls, there were also residential institutions. A madrasa had invariably to be a state enterprise because its cost of establishment and maintenance was very high. Unlike Hindu teachers, the muslim scholars, particularly the subject specialist of repute were paid handsomely and were well provided for their families. The number of Muslims in India being very small, the state had to undertake responsibility for the promotion of higher learning.

The contemporary literature gives us the information about the curriculum adopted by the various madarsa. About from advanced study in the languages and literature of Persian and Arabic, many more subject were taught. Theology, exposition of scriptures, traditions of the prophet, jurisprudence, mathematics, scholasticism astronomy, ethics, philosophy, mysticism, logic history and rational sciences were the part of syllabus. Even the elementary knowledge of modern biology, physics and chemistry was included in highest studies. Numbers of popular text-books on various subjects written by Indian and foreign scholars were made available to the students of higher education. Each madrasa had a library of its own with valuable collection of popular text-books and rare-manuscripts. The art of calligraphy was taught to every scholars. On the whole the madarsa laid stress on religious studies, linguistics and abstract subjects which were not conducive to the development of scientific outlook among the scholars. The Quran was related everyday by those who had memorised its text by heart. The teachers lectured in the class rooms while religious discourses and seminars were also a common feature.

During sultanate period we find many evidences to prove that rulers made worthy contribution towards promotion of learning. The Arabs first established 'maqtabs' attached to masjid for religious studies in passion and Arabic in the province of sind. Qutub-in-Aibak, the first Muslim governor of Delhi under Muhammad Ghori built the first masjid and attached to it was an institution of higher learning known as 'madrasa-i-Muizzi. Aibak established many mosque which become centres of learning. Illtumush established the Naisiri Madrasa' in Delhi. During the reign of sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud two 'madrasas' known as 'Munnizzi' and 'Nasiri' flourished at Delhi. Al auddin khilji tried to separate religions from politics and was not literate himself, encouraged centres of learning. He patronised learned men and granted them stipends from the treasury. Firoz Tughlaq built as many as thirty 'madrasas' in his kingdom.

Thus during sultanate period muslims were encouraged to take education. But education of girls and the poorer section of society was mostly neglected. The state did not consider it to be its duty to impart education to all its subject. There was no concept of universal education. The state did not take the responsibility of promoting public education. In order to get jobs some sections of Hindus also started learning Persian.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the Hindu education system during sultanate period.
- 2) Discuss the Muslim Education system in sultanate period.

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## **7.3 THE MUGHAL PERIOD**

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The mughal period witnessed almost a renaissance in the fields of ancient and medieval learning the scholars of all races, religious communities and linguistic groups were given royal patronage without discrimination. The imperial mughals were highly educated and cultural princes of their times who extended liberal patronage to education. Their appreciation for educational and cultural values and the policy of religious tolerance was highly conducive to the advancement of education and learning.

### **7.3.1 HINDU SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

The Hindu system of education continued as it from sultanate period with few changes. Primary education was imparted at Pathshalas from their Brahmin guru or teachers. The pathshalas were attached to the temples. The Higher education was imparted through gurukul system where the pupil stayed with the guru. The Guru imparted instructions in sanskrit and the student in return rendered all kinds of service to his teacher. Along with studies in religion, subjects like astronomy logic, mathmaties were also taught. The development of regional languages got boost up due to Bhakti movement. Centers of higher learning for the Hindus were Benaras, Nadia, Mathura, Tirhut, Paithan, Kashad, Thatta, Multan and Sirhind. In 1680 at Nadia in Bengal there were 4000 students and 600 teachers. Mithila continued to be an important centre of learning. Thatta was famous for study of theology, philosophy and political. Multan was a centre of study of astronomy, astrology, medicine and mathematics. Hindu population in general were more interested in the study of grammar, logic, philosophy, mathematics, science any medicine.

### **7.3.2 MUSLIM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION**

Modern education as we see today, is highly organised system and it is mostly run by the government itself. During Mughal period, it was controlled and run by theologians, Muslims and Hindus. Rich families made special arrangements for their kids and middle class use to send their wards either to mosques. Muslim boys use to start their education after Muktab ceremony. The muslim students received the primary education in the maktab attached to the mosque. For higher education in the madaras sufi saints established khanqahs in different places. Instructions were free sacred scriptures were taught. Student could read the Quran. Education was mainly religious oriented. Along with Arabic and Persian languages subjects like medicine, astronomy and public administration were also introduced. The Ani-i-Akbari mentions the change in educational curricularn and instructions. Akbar encouraged the Hindus to join the madrasas and study persian. Akbar patronised Hindu institutions as well.

### **7.3.3 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER MUGHAL EMPERORS**

However, during mughal period, primary and secondary education was not ignored. Free grants of land were made in favours of mosques,



monasteries. All sorts of encouragement was given to teachers to take delightful interest in the work of advancing the cause of learning and culture. Practically all mosques maintained maktabas where primary education was imparted. Most of the mughals gave financial assistance both to pathshalas and maktabas. The mughal emperors greatly patronised the cultural activities. Humayun was greatly devoted to learning and education and was specially interested in Geography and Astronomy. He possessed a rich library of his own. He established Madarsa at Delhi and Purana-Qila was converted into a library.

Akbar started a new era in the art of imparting sound education. A number of colleges were established at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. He wished to reform the Muslim system of education and introduced several changes of far reaching importance in its curriculum. Muslim scholars were encouraged to study Sanskrit and Hindi. He had a translation department where works of Sanskrit were translated into Persian and Arabic. Delhi, Agra Fatehpur Sikri were centres of learning. Akbar had a magnificent library at Agra containing 24,000 book. Akbar encouraged the study of rational sciences and promoted technical education. Mir Fathullah Shiraz, a Persian scholar and scientists was invited to take the office of chief Sadr. Akbar used to have a fruitful discussions with him on varied subjects ranging from weapon of war, artillery and researches in sciences.

Jahangir himself was the master in Persian and Turkey languages. He ordered that money realized from the operation of the law of escheat should be utilized in the building of a Madrasa and other places, where education was imparted. Thus he devoted his time and attention for the spread and encouragement of education.

During the reign of Shah Jahan the property of heirless Hindus was to be handed over to the madrasa. He also encouraged education by giving handsome rewards and scholarships to students and men of real learning. His son Dara Shiko was a great scholar. He had mastered languages like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. He translated upanishads, Bhagwat Gita, Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal Emperor, was also educated and had love for education. However, he spent most of the funds for the education of the Muslim subjects. There he tried to extend his orthodoxy to the field of education and neglected Hindus. He gave liberal grants to poor children belonging to Muslim Families. Aurangzeb gave liberal help to Muslim scholars. He also carried out amendments in the curriculum to make the education more practical and useful.

During mughal period along with Sindh, Lahor, Delhi, Multan other centers of muslim education came up. They were Agra, Gujarat, Jaunpur, Kashmir, Fatepur Sikri, Gwalior, Sialkot, Ambala, Narnaul etc.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write a note on education system in Mughal period.

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#### **7.3.4 WOMEN EDUCATION**

There was a definite improvement in women education in Mughal period. Unfortunately, we could see this change only for the education of women in royal families. Since the Muslims were staunch observers of Pardah, their girls did not attend Madrasa in their ordinary way Prof Aatulnanda Sen says 'The education of women, Hindu and Muslim, was mostly confined to the rich and the well-to-do sections of the society. The growing curtailment of their freedom caused by pardah system, child marriage and other social evils and practices was chiefly responsible for the prevailing mass illiteracy among them during Mughal age. Thus during Mughal age, the royalty and aristocracy paid much attention to the education of their womenfolk. Gulbadan Begum wrote the famous Humayun Nama, Jahan Ara produced outstand poetry, Zebunnisa wrote poetry of high order. Salama sultana, Maham Angah, Nur Jahan, Chand Sultana, Mumtaz Mahal were all educated women.

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#### **7.4 SUMMARY**

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The system of education which had been gradually developed in the earlier period continued during this period without much change. There was no idea of mass education at that time. People learnt what they felt was needed for their livelihood. Reading and writing was confined to a small section, mostly Brahmans and some sections of the upper classes, specially Kayasthas. Sometimes temples made arrangements for education at a higher level as well. The responsibility for giving craft and profession education was generally left to the guilds or to individual families.

During the medieval period, the education system was influenced by the muslim system. Primary education was imparted in maktals, and higher education was imparted in the madrasas. There was initiation of modern and innovative methods and strategies in the teaching and learning processes. Main objectives of education focused upon religious extension of knowledge and propagation of Islam. There were not any satisfactory provisions made to promote girls, belonging to community. Education was limited to women, only belonging to upper and royal, wealthy families. Gradually, the system of education turned out to be more methodical and systematic, due to introduction of policies and strategies.

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## 7.5 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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## 7.6 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- Q 1. Write a critical note on Muslim Education.
- Q 2. Describe the salient features of Hindu education during the period of your study.
- Q 3. What were the prominent centres of Hindu and Muslim learning? Explain briefly the courses taught at various centres in Mughal India.
- Q4. Make a comparative susvery of educational development during sultanate period and during Mughal period.
- Q 5. Outline the development of female education in India between 1526 to 1707 A.D.



# Unit - 8

## BHAKTI MOVEMENT - ITS ORIGIN AND IMPACT

### Unit Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Origin of Bhakti Movement
- 8.3 Bhakti cult as a Reformatory Movement
- 8.4 Factors responsible for the rise of Bhakti Movement
  - 8.4.1 Degeneration of Hinduism
  - 8.4.2 A threat from Islam
  - 8.4.3 Selection of Bhakti Marg
- 8.5 Nature of Bhakti Movement
- 8.6 Impact of Bhakti Movement
- 8.7 Additional Readings
- 8.8 Questions for self study

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES :

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- To study the Bhakti Movement in India.
- To look into the origin of Bhakti Movement.
- To trace the major factors responsible for emergence of Bhakti Movement.
- To analyse the impact of Bhakti Movement on masses and religious conditions in India.

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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Bhakti movement in India became a powerful movement in the medieval period. In the medieval age some great reformers of India started in various parts of India a religious movement known as Bhakti Movement. The Upanishad, Philosophy and the shadadarshanas' or six systems of Philosophy were beyond the understanding of common man. The object of the movement was to reform Hinduism which at time was suffering from many serious ills. The reformers strongly denounced the evils in Hinduism including superstitious practices, formalism and caste system etc. As their chief emphasis was upon Bhakti i.e. true devotion to God, the movement began to be known as bhakti Movement and its advocates Bhakts i.e. devotter. According to R. G. Bhandarkar, this

movement was first known as 'Advaita Dharma' for its emphasis on the worship of the one God with singular devotion. These reformers did not at all try to expound a new religion but what they wanted was that our existing evils should be wiped out from our society. The chief advocates of the movement were Ramanuj, Namdev, jaidev, Chaitanya, Ramanand, Kabir and Nanak.

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## **8.2 ORIGIN OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

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The Bhakti cult became the dominant feature of Hinduism in fourteen and fifteenth centuries, but it was not a medieval contribution to religious thoughts. The devotional workshop of God with the ultimate object of attaining moksha or salvation is called 'bhakti'. The cult of bhakti is as old as the Indian religious traditions going back to the pre-historic times of the Indus valley civil lization and culture. The latter provides us with the earliest evidences of workshop of Shiva Pashupatis eated in the Vedas, Upanishadas, the Epics and the puranas. Its origin also has been traced to vedic literature, it is recognized in the Mahabharata, in the Gita as also in the Vishnu Purana.

The relationship between soul and God is like the one which exists between a part and the whole, between a drop of water and the ocean. Man is mortal but the soul is immortal, being a part and parcel of God, its ultimate object is to seek reunion with the latter and become one to God. This is what is meant by salvation variously termed as mukti, moksha or nirvana or liberation from the cycle of births and rebirths. The vedanta suggests three ways for the attainment of salvation, referred to as gyan-marg, karma-marg, and bhakti-marg respectively. The gyanmarg stress on the acquisition of True knowledge or Enlightenment as a means to the attainment of mukti. The karmamang, as recommended by Lord Krishna to his disciple Arjuna in the Bhagwatgita, calls for selfless or disinterested action for this purpose, whereas, the bhakti marg suggests the devotional of God to be the earliest method to win. His favours and seek reunion with him after his death. It is recommended by Ramanuja (eleventh century). It was propagated in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in south India by great Vaishnava teachers like Nimbarka, Mahava Pillai, Lokcharya and Vedantadesika.

Although the Bhakti cult developed within the polytheistic framework of the Brahminical religion, it had monotheistic care from its early stages. In its scriptural form of Bhakti cult was meant primarily for the spiritual emancipation of man, not for his liberation from social bondage. Bhagvatgita and the puranas offered an easy solution to the frustrated souls. It was the devotion to God, a complete surrender of soul and body in the workshop of God. The scholarly thoughts on the ultimate goal of life put forward by Dnyeshwar were blended with the boundless flow of devotional songs of Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram to produce on all-pervasive emotional force in the form of Bhakti Movement.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Explain the origin of Bhakti Movement in medieval period.

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## **8.3 BHAKTI CULT AS A REFORMATIVE MOVEMENT**

Different kinds of movements were launched in India by various stalwarts. It is very much necessary to understand conceptual meaning of the term movement. A social movement is a form of response to the needs and development or a reaction against imbalance in development representing social currents in the collective life of the society. The English word 'movement' derives from the old French word 'mouvoir' which means to move stir or impel. The general English usage of 'Movement' to designate a series of actions and endeavours of a body of persons for a social object. In term of general usage social movement - as a series of action and endeavour of a body of persons for special object. The main criterion of social movement is to bring about fundamental changes in the social order. Thus a social movement is socially shared activities and beliefs directed towards the demand for changes in some aspect of social order. It is a collective action to achieve certain specific need. There are two basic features of social movements namely collective mobilization and charge orientation.

Reformative movement grows out of general social movement. Their goals are quite well defined. These movements be of a reformatory or revolutionary nature, headed by generally acknowledge leaders and having an overall organization with division of roles and possessing strong 'we consciousness'. The cult of bhakti assumed the form of a reformative movement in the medieval period when a number of holy men and scholar saints took up the cause of socio religious reforms among the people in various parts of the country.

Indeed bhakti cult is a Reformative Movement. Here we can discuss through following argument that it is a reformative movement.

a) As Religion played the premier role in all walks of life, the supremacy of Brahmins in socio-cultural, political and even economic field was complete. Their hold over the Hindu society was further strengthened during the Rajput period. it was Brahmin priest who gave sanction or recognition to Rajput chiefs and nobility as kshatriyas. Subsequently the defeat of the rajputs at the hands of the Turkish invaders and the decline of their power in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, actually left the Brahmins as the only saviours of the ancient Indian religion and culture. The caste system was made still more rigid and the evil of untouchability

practised with a vengeance. Needless to say the high-caste people exploited the low castes and heaped all sort of insults upon them. Even the state discriminated between the citizens on the basis of caste. The social atmosphere was so sickening that it depressed and demoralised even the most intelligent and well-to-do householders. It so appeared that the whole society had been held to ransom by the self-seeking and fanatical priests. Slowly and steadily, the lower castes began to show signs of discontent against exploitative tendencies of the higher castes. It acted as an eye-opener to some educated persons, religious minded saints and critics belonging to various sections of the society. They raised their voice of protest against the falsehood that prevailed in the name of Hindu religion, denounced caste system. They boldly demanded reform in the society and at the same time set an example through their own high moral character and ideal way of living emulation by their followers. Through their untiring efforts, the cult of bhakti was transformed into a forceful reform movement which spread into the whole of the country.

b) Secondly the argument which gave an impetus to the Bhakti Movement was the advent of Islam and establishment of Muslim rule in India. Islam was opposed to Hinduism in more respect than one. It posed a serious danger to the ancient Indian socio-cultural traditions. Religious-minded leaders, belonging to all caste and social strata of the Hindus, realised that unless radical reforms were brought about in their religious and social set up they would be knocked out by Islam. This apprehension added an element of urgency to the reform movement. Hence, one of the objective of the bhakti reformers was to halt conversion to Islam by setting their own religion in order. They thus used the bhakti movement as a defensive weapon to the rising tide of Islam.

c) There is a another view about the bhakti cult is that, the bhakti movement was based on an attitude of escapism from the bitter realities of life. With the establishment of the muslim rule, the Hindus not only lost their political independence but also suffered from numerous political, religious and economic disabilities. Hence, they sought solace in bhakti preaching and teaching.

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Enumerate Bhakti cult as reformative movement.

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## **8.4 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

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The Bhakti Movement assumed the characteristic of reform movement in the medieval period. The numbers of factors contributed to the development of Bhakti movement during medieval period. The primary cause was the degeneration of Hindu religion and social structure of Hindu society. This and some other factor that gave rise to Bhakti movement.

### **8.4.1 DEGENERATION OF HINDUISM**

During medieval period Hinduism had greatly degenerated. It had lost its ancient purity and appear superstitions, caste system, false and frivolous practices had taken place of substantial fundamental principles of Hindu religion. Hindu religion had been reduced to mere farce. At this time some bold reformers came forward and they strongly denounced the will practices of Hinduism and launched a Bhakti movement to reform the society.

### **8.4.2 A THREAT FROM ISLAM**

Another important factor that gave rise to Bhakti movement was the advent of Islam on the political scene of India and its danger to Hinduism. The muslim preachers as well as their rulers were equally pledged to convert the Hindus into Islam by all means. And secondly, Islam had already earned a worldwide reputation for its cardinal principles regarding its religious philosophy and social organisation. Its bold and direct approach to the concept of one God, opposition to idol-worship, equality of all were bound to attack the oppressed and downtrodden Hindu masses.

### **8.4.3 SELECTION OF BHAKTI MARG**

In order to combat the Islamic danger successfully the religious reformer of medieval ages laid stress on the third way i.e. bhakti marg in order to combat the Islamic danger and to make Hinduism popular and a live force among the masses.

#### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) What were the factors responsible for the rise of Bhakti movement?

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## **8.5 NATURE OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

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Each of bhakti reformers carried on his missionary work in his own original and individualistic style. The teachings of bhakti reformers sometimes



showed differences in contents. Views and methods of approach adopted by them for eradication of socio-religious evils varied from region to region. Hence it is difficult to draw a fairly comprehensive list of their general teaching. The teachings of the bhakti reformers revolved round the two cardinal principles (a) unflinching faith in the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient one God and (b) devotional worship of God for the attainment of salvation.

The bhakti saints did not observe any rituals or ceremonies, nor followed any dogma. Most of them severely denounced idolatry. They condemned polytheism, believed in one God and realised the unity of God invoked by various religious sects under different names such as Krishna, Rama, Siva, Allah etc. The bhakti cutt-cut across distinctions of high and low birth, the learned and unlettered and opened the gateway of spiritual realisation to one and all. Being a revolutionary reformers, most of the Bhakti saints campaigned vigorously against the deep rooted socio-religious evils. They refused to accept the supremacy of the Brahmin priests who considered themselves as the custodians of all religious knowledge and institutions. Some of the saints challenged the sanctity of ancient Indian scriptures and Sanskrit language which had become unintelligible to the masses. As a rule Bhakti saints preached through vernacular languages and in local dialects of the people which could be easily understood by them. The bhakti reformers laid stress on the importance a guru or spiritual guide who could help the devotees in the attainment of their objectives.

Moral education was an essential part of the teachings of Bhakti saints. High moral character and virtuous living were an integral part of the Bhakti movement. Complete self surrender or total dedication to God was considered essential for the attainment of spiritual knowledge. Every devotee was required to suppress his ego. Personal desires, pleasures and other worldly temptations. He had to devote himself to the worship of God in thoughts, words and deeds. He believed a bhakti as the only means of salvation. Bhakti meant single minded, uninterrupted and extreme devotion to God without any ultimate motive growing gradually into an intense love.

**Check your Progress :**

1) Explain the nature of Bhakti movement.

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## **8.6 IMPACT OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

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The Bhakti movement though originated in south assumed the form of a widespread mass movement, which embraced practically the whole of country. Perhaps, after the decline of Buddhism, there had never been a more widespread and popular movement in India than Bhakti movement. It achieved to a considerable extent the objectives it set forth.

The following are the some of the important impart of the Bhakti movement.

**a) Rejuvenated Hinduism** - Bhakti movement rejuvenated Hinduism by striking a serious blow at the predominance of the Brahmin priesthood in the society. The ground lost by the Brahmins in the field of Hindu religion could never be regained by them thereafter.

**b) Widespread mass movement** - The cult of bhakti assumed the form of a widespread mass movement towards the close of fourteen century when the sultanate of Delhi was on the way out. Bhakhi movement was essentially an indigenous movement which involved all sections and castes of the Hindus.

**c) Restored the confidence** - Bhakti movement restored the confidence of the masses in their religious and socio-cultural heritage and stopped concession to Islam on a large scale.

**d) Minimise evil effects of caste** - Bhakhi movement did not break evil effects of caste system but defenately it was minimised by the development of harmonious relationships and free social intercourse between the high caste and low-caste Hindus.

**e) Improved General Moral Tone of the Society** - The numerous Social evils from which the Hindus suffered could not be eradicated altogether nevertheless when thoroughly exposed they tended to subside and take the back seat in the moral conscience of the people. The Bhakti movement laid stress on the fines valves of the life and thereby improved the general moral tone of the society as a whole. The Bhakti movement marked the end of an era oppression of the Hindus under the Muslim rulers because it gave them moral courage to face the hardships with contentment and cheefulness.

**e) Brotherhood and Fellow-feelings** - The bhakti reformers and safi saints, individually as well as collectively, helped in the creation of an atmosphere of brotheshood and fellow-feelings between Hindus and Muslims and strengthened the hands of 'Muslim rule to a national government under Akbar the Great. The movement gave an impetus to the forces of national integration and synthesis between Hindu and Muslim culture.

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Assess the impact of Bhakti movement.

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## 8.7 SUMMARY

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The spirit of Bhakti pervaded the whole of India and found vivid and beautiful expression in the religious poetry of the medieval saints and mystics, no matter what religious faith they believed in. Their literary compositions, rendered into geet, Abhangas, quawali, etc. united people, as nothing could have done. It also stimulated development of regional language. The heirs to the Bhakti tradition are not religious in the sense of emphasizing worship and devotion. Their concerns, indeed devotion, is to the cause of economic justice and a more egalitarian world.

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## 8.8 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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## 8.9 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- Q.1 Critically examine the origin of Bhakti Movement in India.
- Q.2 Trace the major factors responsible for emergence of Bhakti Movement.
- Q.3 Analyse the impact of Bhakti Movement on masses & religious conditions in India.
- Q.4 'Bhakti movement was a reformatory movement'. Comment.



# Unit - 9

## PROMINENT BHAKTI REFORMERS

### Unit structure :

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Sankaracharya - the Pioneer
- 9.3 Ramanuj
- 9.4 Ramanand
- 9.5 Kabir
- 9.6 Guru Nanak
- 9.7 Chaitnya Mahaprabhu
- 9.8 Tulsidas
- 9.9 Saint Tradition in Maharashtra
  - 9.9.1 Dnyaneshwar
  - 9.9.2 Namdeo
  - 9.9.3 Eknath
  - 9.9.4 Tukaram
  - 9.9.5 Ramdas
- 9.10 Additional Readings
- 9.11 Questions for self study

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### 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To study the Bhakti Movement in India.
- To analyse the impact of Bhakti Movement on masses and religious conditions in India.
- To look into the teachings of prominent bhakti reformers.

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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One of the greatest characteristics of medieval India was the birth and progress of a movement for religious reform known as Bhakti movement. This movement got to be spread to the whole of India. The Bhakti movement, though originated in south assumed the form of a widespread mass movement, which embraced practically the whole of the country. Each of the bhakti saint carried on his missionary work in his own original or individualistic style. Thus, the teachings of the bhakti saints sometimes showed differences in contents and the methods of their approach to eradicate the socio-religious evils. Being revolutionary reformers most of the Bhakti saints campaigned vigorously against the

deep rooted socio-religious evils. High moral character and virtuous living were integral part of the Bhakti movement. Complete self-surrender or total dedication to god was considered essential for the attainment of spiritual knowledge. Bhakti meant single minded, uninterrupted and extreme devotion to God without any ultimate motive, growing gradually in to an intense love. A large number of the Bhakti saints belonged to the traditional 'saguna' school which believed that god has many forms and attributes that. He manifests himself in in carnations and that his spirit is to be found in idols and worshipped at home and in temples. Other belonged to the 'nirguna' school which believed in a God without form or attributes.

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## **9.2 SANKARACHARYA -THE PIONEER**

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The pioneer of the Bhakti movement in South India was Guru Shankaracharya. Born in a Brahmin family at Kaladi (Malabar) in 788 A.D. Shankaracharya from his very childhood passed wonderful talent and had considerable spiritual learning. As he grew up he became a great advocate of monastic philosophy. By boldly preaching the unity of Godhead, he varily brought about a revolution in Hinduism and became a great fore-runner of Bhakti cult. He died at the age of 32 in 820 A.D.

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## **9.3 RAMANUJ (1017 -1137)**

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With some differences in detail, all the reformers were exponents of liberal bhakti cult, the message of which they sought to carry before the unlettered masses. According to Dr. Iswari Prasad, the first great exponent of Bhakti movement was Ramanuj. Some of the writers assign him the first position as the founding father of the movement because strictly speaking, it was he who showed preference to bhakti over gyan as the principal means of attaining salvation. He was born in 1017 A. D. at perubhadur near (kanchipuram). A vaishnava by faith, Ramanuja received training in the vedanta from his teacher Yadav Prakasa of Kanchipuram who belonged to the school of Sankaracharya. Ramanuja differed with some of the Philosophic aspects of Shankaracharya's theory such as the concepts of universe being an illusion and absolute monism, as deduced by him from upanishadas.

Ramanuja was great 'vaishnava' teacher. He popularised the cult of devotion to a personal God and emphasised that salvation can be achieved through the 'Bhakti marg' alone. He redefined the vedanta philosophy by laying greater stress on devotional worship to a personal God who constituted the supreme reality. He was great vaishnava who preached the worship of Narayan and Lakshmi. He was of the view that the sincere worship of Narayan and Lakshmi can liberate the soul from the circle of life and death. He emphasised that God was the supreme creator, Destroyer and Preserver of the Universe and the soul, though a part and parcel of same divine force, was yet distinct from it Ramanuja suggested the existence of dualism within the monastic philosophy of the vedanta. His message had a wide appeal and soon he came to have as many as

10,000 followers. Ramanuja travelled widely to popularise his teaching. A great scholar and widely travelled man, Ramanuja wrote a number of books and treatises on the bhakti cult, including Vedanta Sanghama and the commentaries on Brahmasutra and Bhagwatgita. Ramanuja was very liberal in his social outlook and he broke the caste barriers in his teachings. He attained national fame as a bhakti reformer in his lifetime. Thus it was he who actually gave birth to Bhakti movement in Southern India. He died at the age of 120 in 1137 A.D.

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Write a note on the role of Shankaracharya and Ramanuj in Bhakti movement.

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## **9.4 RAMANAND**

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Ramanand was the great reformer in Northern India, who flourished in 15th Century. It should be noted that there are difference of opinion regarding the dates of his birth and death. He was born at Allahabad in a kanyakubja Brahmin family. Ramanand received his higher education in Hindu religious Philosophy at varanasi and joined the school of Ramanuja as a preacher. He travelled widely and visited various religious places in North India. He also came in contact with learned scholars of all faiths including muslims. He set up his own independent set based on the doctrine of devotional worship of Rama and Sita in place of Vishnu. He believed in 'vishistadvaita' philosophy of Ramanuja. He preached through Hindi, the language of the common people in the Ganges valley.

Philosophy and preaching of Ramananda was different from the Ramanuja sect in three respects. First he substituted Rama and Sita for Vishnu and Lakshmi as object of Bhakti. Second He put his teachings in the common people's tongue. Thirdly he adopted liberal views on social issues. He made considerable relaxation of caste rules in respect of religious and social matters. He threw his spiritual door wide open, admitted disciples of all castes and allowed them to eat and drink together irrespective of birth. Religion was thus brought to the level of common people. Thus his twelve principal disciples one was barber, another a cobbler and the third a Muhammadan weaver. From the social point of view it assumed a distinctly liberal character under the leadership of Ramanuja. He has been described as 'the bridge between the Bhakti movement of the south India' Ramananda even admitted women as his disciples, two of them were Padmavati and Sursari. His liberalism in respect of practices which the Hindus associated with caste, such as inter-

dining and inter-marriage, appeared as a formidable threat to the orthodox Hindu community.

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## 9.5 KABIR (1440 -1510)

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The most popular of all the disciples of Ramananda, occupies a place of pride in the annals of the Bhakti Movement in northern India. Kabir made the most earnest efforts to foster a spirit of harmony between Hinduism and Islam. His life is shrouded in a good deal of obscurity and the dates of his birth and death are uncertain. He was initiated into the bhakti cult by Ramananda. With a filial attachment to both the religious communities, kabir was free from religious prejudice against either. He rubbed shoulders with bhakti reformers as well as the sufi saints. He was not bias of either Hinduism or Islam. He was a man of absolutely independent thoughts and boldly criticized the evils of both the religions Kabir used to addressed mixed gathering, consisting of Hindus and Muslims and made disciples from both. He refused to accept the sanctity of vedas as well as quran to be the revealed scriptures'.

Kabir's cosmopolitanism was probably due in large measure to the variety of his religious experience. He speaks of himself a sudra, but he was most probably brought up in the family of Muslim weaves at Banaras and he took up weaving as his profession. He lived in a predominantly Hindu environment, but his association with Muslim saints is indicated in his composition. He preached a religion of love, which would promote unity amongst all classes and creeds. To him, 'Hindu and Turk were pots of same clay : Allah and Rama were but different names'. He wrote 'It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs'. Kabir did not believe in the efficacy of ritual or external formalities, either Hinduism or Islam. To him the true means of salvation was Bhajan or devotional worship, together with the freedom of the soul from all shame, insincerity, hypocrisy and cruelty. Kabir's teaching exercised considerable influence on later generation. He was gifted with considerable poetical genius. His dohas (couplets) could be easily understood by the common people. After his death, the followers of kabir, both Hindus and Muslims, became known as kabirpanthis. The devotees as well as the priesthood of the kabirpanth retain their distinct identity up till this day.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Explain the philosophy and preaching of Ramanauda.
- 2) Define the Kabir's cosmopolitanism policy.

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## 9.6 GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

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Another great reformer of the period was Guru Nanak, the founder of sikhism and the reviver of the pure monotheistic doctrine of the upanishadas. He was born in a Khatri family of Talwandi (modern Nanakana) about thirty five miles to the south-west of the city of Lahor in A.D. 1469. From his childhood he evinced spiritual learning and paid no attention to his studies. He then adopted various professions for his livelihood but could not succeed in either because of his real interest lay in the spiritual affairs and in the worship of God. From 1495 to 1530 A.D. he travelled not only in various parts of India but also in foreign countries like Ceylon, Mecca, Medina, Tibet etc. He was a contemporary of Kabir who took up the cause of social-religious reforms in Punjab. He proved to be the most celebrated of all the bhakti reformers of medieval India. Nanak's universe of thoughts revolves round the idea of the unity of God. There is one indivisible Supreme Being whose power, majesty and eternity cannot be shared by any other deity. Naturally

Nanak rejects the Hindu doctrine of sikhism, was mystic of the 'nirguna' school. His followers branched off from Hinduism and founded a separate religious system. He however, believed in the doctrine of 'karma' and the transmigration of soul. He had both Hindu and Muslim disciple. His teachings are included in the 'Adi Granth' compiled by the fifth guru, Arjun Das. One of these, the Japji is one of the greatest religious poems in the literature of the world. Nanak's conception of God is expressed in brief in Mul Mantras which is a part of the Japji. The goal of man, as prescribed by Nanak, is union of with God. The end of man's journey through life is not conceived in terms of the Semitic pattern of heaven and hell. One who fails to reach the required level of spiritual excellence remains subject to the cycle of birth and death. Instead of advocating the traditional Indian way of escape from 'domestic entanglements' through renunciation of worldly life, Nanak asks man to 'abide pure among the impurities of the world' Nanak's conception of world society is based on the ideal of universal brotherhood. This is evident from his first significant utterance at sultanpur : 'There is no Hindu and no Mussalman. Every individual is primarily a man, he becomes a Hindu or a Muslim by the accident of birth'. He died in 1539 at kustarpur. But his name is still a household affair in the whole of Punjab. His message in due course of time led to the foundation of sikhism.

### Check your Progress :

1) Comment on the Gurunank and Shikism.

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## 9.7 CHAITANY MAHAPRABHU (1486-1534)

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The saint who played the most outstanding role in the progress of Bhakti movement in the East was Chaitany Mahaprabhu. The greatest saint of the Bhakti movement was Chaitanya, who was born in a learned Brahmin family of Nodia in Bengal in 1486. He showed great promise as student and mastered all branches of Sanskrit learning. He renounced the world at the early age of 25 and became a sanyasi. He adopted the Krishna cult. He stayed at Mathura and Vrindavana for many years and attracted lakhs of devotees. He travelled from place to place preaching his ideas about oneness of God and condemning unnecessary rituals. Chaitanya displayed a wonderful literary acumen in his early life and his soul aspired to rise above the fetters of this world.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is regarded by his followers as an incarnation of Vishnu. He laid the foundation of Vaishnavism in Bengal and preached the doctrine of love for and worship of Krishna. He laid stress also on piety and humanity as essential traits of one's character. Chaitanya was strong in condemning the caste system and preached universal brotherhood. Chaitanya left no written account of his views and teachings. The general view is that these are explained in the works of his disciples - Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Das. The work of biographers, particularly the Chaitanya - Charitamrita should be used as supplementary sources for elucidation of the Master's views.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recognized no caste limits in the practice of Bhakti. He brought religion within the reach of the masses by laying great stress on the emotional approach to God as a lover of his beloved. He insisted that simple recitation of the Nam or Hari or Krishna can give a man a salvation. He did not discard the worship of images as utterly useless, but he did not lay stress on rituals. Whoever took the Nam of the lord became purified by that one single act and was qualified to worship him. His liberal outlook brought all men within the fold of his religion of love, brotherhood and charity. Chaitanya and his associates simplified the ancient laws and customs regarding important socio-religious ceremonies such as marriage and sradh. He died in 1534, but his name is still a household word in Bengal and there are millions of men and women who still worship him as an incarnation of Shri Krishna or Vishnu.

### Check your Progress :

- 1) Examine the role played by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the progress of Bhakti movement in West Bengal.

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## **9.8 TULSIDAS**

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Bhakti movement led to the reform of Hinduism. The Bhakti movement affected the social life of the people. It gave a blow to caste system was strongly denounced by the bhakta. As regard the 'saguna' school of Hindu mystics in North India. Tulsidas, Surdas, Mirabai and Chaitanya were the most important. Among the writers of the Rama cult, the most illustrious was Tulsidas, who lived in Banaras. He was not merely a poet of high order but also a spiritual teacher of the people of Hindustan. Tulsidas, the famous author of 'Ramcharit Manas' was a great poet and a devotee of Rama. He has depicted Rama as the incarnation of God and believed that man could reach him only through bhakti or devotion. This work of Tulsidas has justly described by Sir George Grierson as the one bible of a hundred million people of Hindustan. Its verses are still recited with reverence by million of people all over India.

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## **9.9 SAINT TRADITION IN MAHARASHTRIA**

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The credit for bringing about socio-religious revolution in Maharashtra goes to saints in Maharashtra. Even when Maharashtra was being conquered and subjugated by the Muslim conquerors, there was a new intellectual and spiritual awakening in Maharashtra. Dnyaneshwar can be said to have begun this movement. He lived under the patronage of Ramdeorao Yadav of Deogiri and died soon after the first invasion of Alauddin Khalji. The saint tradition was carried forward by saints like Namdeo, Eknath, Tukaram, and Ramdas. Each one of them preached different type of mysticism. Whatever the category to which these saint belonged the total effect of their teachings was a propagation of Maharashtra Dharma. Apart from these more prominent there were many more from all strata of society, male and female, high and low, literate and illiterates.

### **9.9.1 DNYANESHWAR**

The state of Maharashtra when dnyaneshwar appeared on the scene was extremely depressing. A handful of Brahmin pandits enjoyed the monopoly of exploiting the superstitious beliefs of the people. Dnyaneshwar preached the virtues of fearlessness, purity, steadfastness, sacrifice and selfless duty. He stimulated clear thinking and more than anything else, filled the people with pure faith and hope in redemption. Confidence in God was beginning of Bhakti. By doing this he purified and simplified religion and made it very popular. His teachings proclaimed a revolt against the traditional ideas and practices. He chose to interpret Bhagavat Gita in the language of the people of Maharashtra - marathi. By doing so he rendered a great service to the cause of Maratha freedom. From purely linguistic point of view he made marathi very popular. He wrote his commentary on the Bhagvat - Gita in marathi so what the most ordinary people in Maharashtra could understand it.

### **9.9.2 NAMDEO**

Namdeo, a tailor by profession and caste, became the first prominent bhakti reformer in Maharashtra. He represented the emotional aspect of the Bhakti movement. He declared that a stone God and his mock devotee can not satisfy each other. He would ask only one favour of God, that we should always feel him (in heart) utter his name only with our tongue, see him alone with our eyes. The emotional import of his ecstatic appeal on the people could only be imagine. This like other reformers of his age, Namdeo protested his faith in the unity of God and was opposed to image worship and caste system. He boldly challenged the supremacy of Brahmin priests in Hindu religion. His followers belonged to all castes and classes, including few Muslim converts to Hinduism. Namdeo promoted worship of God by the name of Hari. Some of the abhangs of Namdeo are included in 'Guru Grantha Sahib'.

### **9.9.3 EKNATH**

Eknath believed in Bhakti as way of salvation but it must be sincere and true love for God. Although he believed in the caste system he held that God was to be found in all men, Brahmins and shudras as well. He was the grandson of the well known Maharashtrian saint Bhanudas. He composed many abhangas and 'kirtans'. He also wrote the Bhavartha Ramayan and edited the text of Dnyaneshwari. The style of Eknath is reckoned to be superior to that of Dnyaneshwar himself. His Bhagvat covers every conceivable subject connected with vedantic philosophy with religion and with morality. He believed that knowledge would lead to salvation, but the knowledge must be without hypocrisy.

### **9.9.4 TUKARAM**

Tukaram is most popular saint of Maharashtra. He has denounced caste system and helped the people in building a homogenous society in Maharashtra. By caste vani he ran a small grocery shop in little village, but he was not interested in worldly affairs. His poetic inspiration came to him unexpectedly. He thought and spoke only in his abhangas. His words flowed out of a heart full of love of God and goodwill to men. He took up life of asceticism and service. He rejected rituals, ceremonies, vedio sacrifices visit to holy places, fast and other austerities. Tukaram also promoted Hindu-muslim unity. His writing is full of overpowering emotion and reassuring philosophy' in which he used the daily speech of the masses. The abhangas (verses) of Tukaram continue to be popular even today of all the Marathi saint, he is the greatest in popular estimation and the widest in the extent of his influence.

### **9.9.5 SWAMI RAMDAS (1608 -1691)**

Ramdas was the revered teacher of shivaji who provided a moral and spiritual background to the rising power of the Marathas in seventeenth century. He inculcated the spirit of nationalism among them. After years of wandering in search of spiritual light and attaining realisation, saint Ramdas settled down at chafal in satara district on the banks of krishna. He was indeed a different in his ways of preaching. He sought to combine spiritual and preaching life. He showed great interest in

politics. Shivaji as well as his mother Jijabai were both disciples of Swami Ramdas. He was the great devotee of Hanuman and Shri Ramchandra. More than any saint Ramdas called people's mind to the performance of duty. Apart from his abhangas, saint Ramdas wrote his monumental work 'Dasabodha', which gives advice on all aspects of life.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the role of various saints of Maharashtra in Bhakti Movement.

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**9.10 ADDITIONAL READINGS**

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6. Chopra P. N. - Society and culture during Mughal Age, 1963.

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**9.11 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY**

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- Q 1 Analyse the impact of the teachings of Bhakti movement on masses.
- Q 2 Describe the work of saint poet before the rise of Maratha period.
- Q 3 Discuss the singificance of the teaching of the Ramanuj, Ramanand and Kabir.
- Q 4 Make an estimate of kabir and Guru Nanak.



# Unit - 10

## SUFI MOVEMENT

### Unit Structure :

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Origin of Sufi Movement
- 10.3 Nature of Sufism
- 10.4 Concepts and Teachings of Sufism
- 10.5 Silsilas or orders in sufism
  - 10.5.1 Chishti Silsilah
  - 10.5.2 Subravardi Silsilah
- 10.6 Bhakti Cult and Sufism
- 10.7 Summary
- 10.8 Additional Readings
- 10.8 Questions for self study

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES :

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- To trace the origin of sufi movement in India.
- To understand the nature of sufi movement in India.
- To make student aware about the concepts and silsilas in sufism.
- To analyse the relation with other religious groups.

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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The most interesting aspect of Islam in its medieval Indian environment is sufism. The medieval period witnessed the rise and development of a large number of Muslim religious movement, mystic organisation, religious cult and attitudes. The Islamic mysticism was known as sufism. As a matter of fact both Hindus and Muslims had mutual admiration for each others culture, since the early days of the advent of Islam into India. Famous Muslim scholars and saints lived and laboured in India during the medieval period. They helped the dissemination of the ideas of Islamic philosophy and mysticism in India. The early sufis traced their ideas to some verses of the Quran and Tradition of the prophet. However they gave a mystic interpretation that they differed from the orthodox Muslims who insisted upon a literal interpretation. They lived as ascetics, wearing gasments of coarse wool (suf) as a badge of poverty. From sufi derived the name sufi.

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## 10.2 ORIGIN OF SUFI MOVEMENT

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**Sufism** is typical mysticism. According to Tarachand, 'sufism is a complex phenomenon, it is like a stream which gather volume by the joining of tributaries from many lands. Its original source is Quran and the life of Muhammad. Christianity and neo-platorism swelled it by a large contribution. Hinduism and Buddhism supplied a number of ideas and the religions of ancient Persia Zoroastrianism etc. brought to it their share are. The Islamic mysticism, known as Tasawwaf or sufism, was as old as Islam itself. It was born in the bosom of Islam. It is said that during the very lifetime of Hazarat Muhammad there were some men of virtue and of retiring nature who embraced Islam with pleasure but showed laity in the observation of its ritualistic or dogmatic aspects. Such liberal minded men of God drew their inspiration from the Quran and the life of the Prophet. But instead of parading about their religious orthodoxy, they laid greatest stress on the purification of one's inner self in order to attain acting spiritual.

Sufism had no creed or dogma other than that of Islam and for a long time, it had no organization or monastic order. It is said that it assumed the form of a regular movement in Persia in the ninth century as a reaction against the rigid formalism of Islam. It received a theosophical basis during the age of Abbasid caliphs of Bagdad and the sufi saints drew freely from the mystic concepts of other peoples and religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The credit for bringing about reconciliation between orthodox Islam and sufism goes to Al Ghazali (1057-1112 A) an Arab Philosopher. He provided a metaphysical basis to mysticism as a part and parcel of the Islamic theology.

Sufism gained a foothold in Punjab before the establishment of Muslim rule there by Sultan Mahumad of Ghazni. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Lahor and Multan attracted many well know sufis from countries outside India. The greatest figure in the history of sufism in India, Khwaja muinuddin Chishti, arrived at Lahor from Ghazni in 1161 and settled at Ajmer during the reign of Prithviraj. There he died in 1235, his tomb continues to attract many pilgrims even now. After the establishment of the muslim rule in northern India, the sufis from the muslim countries of Central Asia, began to migrate to India in large numbers. They moved about in the robber and styles of the Indian sadhus and established their hermitages at a number of places. They set up their abode in the residential quarters or colonies of the low castes on the periphery of the Hindu towns. Their first object was to win their love and confidence and reconcile them to the alien rule. Secondly, they persuaded them to embrace Islam on merit. The sultanate of Delhi was confined to only a part of India most of the time but sufis spread themselves throughout the country and carried on peaceful propagation of Islam.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Give an account of origin of Sufi Movement.

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### **10.3 NATURE OF SUFISM**

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The sufis were men of deep religious feelings. They led ascetic lives and laid emphasis on the practices of self discipline. They sought personal communion with God through self-surrender, meditation and total dedication to the service of mankind. The sufis did not form an organized sect. They neither had a Prophet, nor a sacred book, nor a uniform code of religious doctrines. They accepted Muhammad as their prophet and the Quran as their sacred book According to an observation, the orthodox Muslims depend upon external conduct while the sufis seek inner purity. The orthodox believe in blind obedience to, or observance of religious rituals while the Sufis consider love to be the only means of reaching God. The sufis used singing and dancing, forbidden by the orthodox as means of inducing a state of ecstasy which brought a sufi nearer to his goal of union with God.

There are different opinion about the term 'sufi' derived from. According to some, the term sufi was derived from 'safa' (pure) because of the purity of their thoughts and the nobility of their action. Other derive the term from saff (line, queue) and hold that the sufis were so called because they were in the forefront of the line or queue before God. According to a third definition, the sufi has been derived from the word suffa (a bench) as the virtuous character and qualities of there saints were similar to those of 'Ashab al suff- or 'People of the Bench' who were attached to the prophet. They were called his companions (sahaba).. The term sufi also bears resemblance with the word suf or coarse wool, suggesting thereby that the sufis might have been so called because of their habit of wearing a woollen blanket purpose sheet of cloth.

The sufis migrated to the far-off countries and lived in the midst of the non-muslims called kafirs where they carried on the work of proselytisation through peaceful means. The Sufis were the peaceful emissaries of Islam. They dedicated their lives to the service of making and the spread of the Islamic faith. The propagation of Islam was regarded by them to be the greatest and the most meritorious service to be rendered to the people. Consciously or unconsciously they also played the role similar to the one played by the Christian missionaries in the wake of the establishment of European colonialism in Asia and Africa. More often, they carried on the work of consolidation of the Islamic faith among the conquered people by the application of pacific and humanitarian means.

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## 10.4 CONCEPTS AND TEACHING OF THE SUFISM

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Most of the sufi saints belongs to the liberal school of thought. Their popularity in India was due to their understanding of the Indian conditions and the religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people. They adopted many Hindu customs and ceremonics in the initial stages of the development of their silsilas in India. They laid much emphasis on the service to mankind. The monistic philosophy of sufism was based on the theory of wandat ul wajud or 'the unity of Being' according to which the creator (Haq) and the created (Khalq) were identical. Means God was the Unity behind all plurality and the Reality behind all phenomenal appearance. Sheikh Muhiuddin I bnul Arabi, the author of the theory, explain it in these words, 'There is nothing but God, nothing in existence other than He, there is not even a there', where the essence of all things is one.'

The sufis stood for the establishment of harmonious relationships with God could be attained in this very mortal life (Khaki Jame) through intense love for and total surrender and dedication to the Supreme Power. The sufi saints, in their capacity as pirs were the living teachers or spiritual guides. They showed the path and suggested the means to their followers, called (murids) for the attainment of eternal bliss which was called union (ma'rifat and wasl) by them. According to sufi saints, the presence of the God could be felt by any one who attended to his call with a loving heart. The Sufis held that God was an invisible. Absolute Reality and an Eternal Beauty which they named as Jamal and this universe was not a mere illusion either. It was the visible manifestation of God and it was named as Husn (lovable beauty). They argued that 'self manifestation and desire to be loved was an essential attribute of the Eternal Beauty. Thus the sufi philosophy was based on the principal of 'Love' which was the essence of all the religions.

Sufis felt that purity of heart was far greater than rituals and ceremonies and that it was only way by which truth could be realised. According to one version, a sufi had to pass through ten stages of dedication to God before he could attain communion with him, these were Tauba (Repentance), ware (Abstinence), Zuhd (Piety), Faqr (Poverty), Sabr (Patience), Shukr (Gratitude) and Khauf (fear), Raja (hope), Tawakkul (contentment) and Riza (submission to the Divine will). Some of the sufi saints observed celibacy while other married and lived as ordinary householders. Like the bhakti reformers, most of the sufis renounced the materialistic pursuits of the world. it was called ' Tark Ki Dunya'. They mostly depended on `futuh' or 'unasked fort charity'. Some of them took up to the cultivation of waste land as the means of their livelihood. The sufilived in the hermitages, called 'khangahs' (monasteries) or jamailkhana.



**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe nature and meaning of Sufi movement.
- 2) Comment on the concept and teaching of the Sufism.

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**10.5 SILSILAS OR ORDERS IN SUFISM**

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Just like the bhakti reformers, the sufi also differed with one another in many respects as regards their methods of teaching. That is why, in the final phase of its development sufism came to be organised into a number of silsilas or orders. The founder of each silsila was said to have made some special contribution. They gave an individualistic touch of the mystic philosophy or organisational set up of his disciples. The sufis were divided into number of sects, called silsilahs or orders. According to one estimate, as many as 175 such orders of sufis came into existence in the Muslim world. Abul Fazal lists 14 orders of the suffis which apparently found their way to India. Out of which only two took deep roots in the Indian soil. These were Chisti and the Suhrawardi orders. The Subravardi silsilahs made its presence felt in sind and north-western India. Whereas the Chistis silsilah became most prominent throughout the country.

**10.5.1 CHISTI ORDER**

The chisti silsilah established itself at Ajmer and gradually spread to other parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Utter Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Deccan. The chisti order was founded by khwaja Abdul chisti. It was introduced in India by Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti, a native of Sijistan in Persia. He reached India and settled down at Ajmer which was a place of considerable political and religious importance. He worked amongst the low caste people and spent his life in the service of the helpless and down-trodden. He died in 1236 A.D. Thus, he won over the hearts of the people around him by selfless service to the poor and needy. He made many converts to Islam through peaceful means. Since then Ajmer became an important centre of pilgrimage for Hindus and Muslims alike Sheikh Hamiduddin and Sheikh Farid or Baba Farid, Shaikh Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki, Shaikh Nizmuddin, Auliya, Shaikh Salim Chisti and many other disciple popularized chisti order throughout the India.

The Chishtis favoured asceticism and isolation from public life. Most of the Chisti saints belonged to the liberal school of thought. Their popularity in India was due to their understanding of the Indian conditions and religious attitudes and aspirations of the Indian people. They laid much emphasis on the service to mankind. The Chishti mystics were believers in pantheistic monism, which had its earliest exposition in the

upanishad of Hindus. Many of the Chishti saints lived in utter poverty and refused to accept any grants from the state. They were of the opinion that possession of any kind of private property was an obstacle to spiritual advancement.

### **10.5.2 SUHRAVARDI SILSILAH**

It was the second most popular order of the sufis which flourished in north western India. It was founded by Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (1234), a teacher in Bagdad. Its foundation on Indian soil were laid by Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya of Multan. He carried on his missionary work at Multan for about twenty-five years and rose to be the most prominent muslim divine of his age in north-western India. The Chishtis and Suhrawardis differed in respect of religious practices as also their attitude towards secular activities. Unlike the Chishti saints, the exponents of the suhravardi order did not believe in excessive austerity or self-mortification. Rather they constituted an influential and affluent priesthood of the muslims. They lived comfortable family live's and felt no scruples in accepting expensive presents and patronage from the muslim aristocracy. They took active part in the state politics. Thus Surhrawardi silsilah was confined mostly to upper strata of the Mughal society.

Many other sufi mystic orders also were introduced in India. But they did not make much impact on the people of India. Some others silsilah were limited to certain regions only some of them were:

The QadiriSilsilah - introduced in India by ;'Iyyid Muhammad Gilani (1517), The Firdausi Silsilah Shaikn Badruddin. The Shattari Silsilah - Shaikh Abdullah Shattari. The Nagshahandi Silsilah - Khwaja Baki Billah.

In the fourteen century the influence of the sufis declined. They were weakened by doctrinal differences among themselves as also by the unfriendly attitude of some of the muslim rulers. However, sufis played an important role in spreading the muslim culture among the masses in various parts of the country. Sufism also contributed to a great extent in moulding the character of the medieval Indian society.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Assess the achievements of Chisti Silsila.
- 2) Explain the Suhrawardi Silsilah in Sufism.

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## 10.6 BHAKTI CULT AND SUFISM

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Hinduism particularly Bhakti cult and sufism largely borrowed from each other. They were complementary to each other in several respects. Bhakti cult in medieval times was radically different from old traditions. String similarities between sufism and Bhakti cult were as follows.

Concept of lanai in Sufism was originally a Hindu idea. Approach to God is through love and intelligence or Yogic exercises or 'Karma' are hurdler, is the central idea of Bhakti, which we find reflected in sufism also. Submission to pir or Guru, recitation of sacred names of God is both common in Bhakti and Sufi Cults. Vedent Philosophy of Shankaracharya found in Sufism also. It is due to the simplicity and broad humanism of Sufi Saints, Islam received its largest number of converts. These two parallel movements based upon doctrines of love and self-less devotion, helped a lot in bringing the two communities closer together. The eastern version of Sufism which was in Bengal, Assam and Bihar was an offshoot of Vedanta of the Hindus. These two cults also brought cultural synthesis. Bhakti cult and Sufism emerged and became powerful forces because both Islam and Hinduism became orthodox, rigid. Saints in Bhakti and sufi cult found a personal method of self-expression, a convenient vehicle for intellectual, philosophical and emotional enjoyment for spiritual attainment.

### CHRISTIANITY

Europeans were visiting the courts of Mughal emperors since the establishment of the Mughal rule. Before the advent of the Mughals, the Portuguese come to India and established their colonies in Calicut (1498 A.D.) Jesuit fathers who came along with Portuguese settlers had in touch with Mughal Emperors.

In 1579, Akbar sent envoys to Goa, and invited Jesuit father to Fattepur Sikri for religious discussion in Ibadatkhan Portuguese Christian became overjoyous they conveniently thought that this was a golden opportunity to convert local people. Hinduism and Islam both were inferior religion in the eyes of the Europeans, and they were eager to convert entire subcontinent. Emperor Akbar was interested in the studies of comparative religions, he invited loin muni's parses Hindu Pandits and in the same fashion, he also extended similar invitations to the lesuit fathers. The great seeker of truth - Akbar wanted to know the main tenets of Christian Philosophy.

Abul Fazl described these Jesuit fathers as 'Nazrin' - sager, Rudolf Aquaviva, Antony rvionserrate and Francis Henriquez arrived in Sikri in 1580. The Mughal emperor treated them respectfully. The historians in the Akbar's court have detailed the entire account of the meeting that took place between the emperor and the Jesuit fathers. The church fathers saluted the king according to Portuguese Style and talked to him in a very

friendly Sikri. The Mughal emperor was very much impressed by life style and standard of education of the missionaries.

He employed one of the Jesuit father as tutor of The Prince. Christian missionaries staying at Sikri were given religious freedom.

In 1582, Akbar announced the establishment of Din-i-Ilahi and the christian missionaries at Sikri were shocked. Jesuit Fathers were highly disappointed they were under the impression that Akbar would accept Christianity and after him, the whole country would be converted disillusioned fathers went back to Goa and another set of christian missionaries came to Sikri and continued the religious work.

Akbar had religious discussion in ibadatkhana, he had slightly distanced himself from Islam. His inquisitive mind was searching ideal religion, during the period of this there were rumours search, in the capital. According to some people, Akbar had leanings towards christianity. According to orthodox Muslims Akbar had kept Christian ladies in his harem three princes were baptised said one orthodox Muslim. Mullah and Moulavi were of the opinion that Akbar was patronising Jesuits because he did not like the company of Muslim preachers.

Finally, All these baseless rumours were proved to be wrong. Mughal emperors carved out a mighty empire in India but they did not pay sufficient attention towards navy. During the whole Mughal period, we find a strange phenomenon, that Mughal ships and their Haj - Religious pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina was guaranteed by the Portuguese. Portuguese provided necessary protection to the Mughal Ship, Cargo Ships were also given protection by Portuguese vessels. Portuguese authorities used to issue passport to the traders and pilgrims and quite strangely, they also dictated the vessels, carrying pilgrims to Mecca, to exhibit portraits of Ha, Mary and Infant Jesus at a prominent place, mughals had to accept these humiliating condition Sir Thomas Roe, approached Mughal emperor and promised to give necessary protection to the Mughal ships. It is also noted by the contemporary chroniclers that missionaries in Sikri presented some European paintings to Akbar and the Emperor was so influenced by those paintings that he ordered his painters to make copies of those pieces of art.

In 1632, Shahjahan attacked temples of the infidels and the religious structures which were demolished Shahjahan had some church buildings. He also attacked on the Portuguese factories at Surat, the reason for the sudden attack on the Portuguese possession at Surat was the Portuguese policy of conversions, and their piracy. He also attacked on the portuguese at Hooghly several reasons were advanced by Shahjahan for the persecution of portuguese, one reason was that they did not support him in the war of succession. He was so angry with portuguese that he arrested and kept 4000 women and children into confinement, the emperor wanted the women and children should embrace Islam but most of them refused and Mughal emperor disappointed and disgusted, finally

distributed portuguese women as slaves to different Mughal courtiers. Shahjahan was angry with Christians but finally he allowed them to settle down in Agra.

### **THE SIKH RELIGION**

Sikhism very often, is Characterised as the product of Bhakti-movement. Guru Nanak, the founder of the religion, wanted to build a bridge between Hinduism and Islam and at the same time, intended to remove idolatry and Caste-distinctions in the Indian society. Nanak tried to conquer the hearts of muslims by visiting mosques, emphasising 5 daily prayers. He also won admirations of the majority people - lower castes in Hindus - by sharing meal with them. He also introduced novel institutions like sangat (congregation) and langar (common kitchen and inter-dining).

**Five principles of Nanak** - 'Nam', 'Dan', 'Ashnan', 'Seva', and 'Simran' are well - known. His journey to the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Muslim shrines in East India, South India, West Asia are also recorded in history. His emphasis of Guru-teacher was also quite keeping with the Indian tradition. He condemned sati, Purdah system, he also preached equality between man and women. Thus Nanak tried to unite Hindus and Muslims, higher castes and lower castes, his emphasis on man-woman equality was also unique. His teaching was plain and simple, appealing to the hearts. is religion had no mythology, no traditions, and therefore, no complications of rituals.

Guru Nanak did not condemn Islam and Hinduism but pointed out the defects in the theory and its practice. He was not trying to unsettle any religion, his objective was to reform the old religions and thus, reform social structure.

During the early Mughal period, Sikhism became popular in several parts of the country, especially in Punjab. Renunciation had no place in Sikhism it was a religion of married people and householders. Sikhism had well-laid traditions of Guruship. Guru became the central figure in the Sikh organisation. Gurumukhi was developed as the script of the religious books. Emperor Akbar was generous towards Sikhism, he gave them few villages as grant.

Guru Arjun (1581-1606) compiled 'Adi Granth' or Guru Granthsaheb. it contained hymns of Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Tej Bahadur. Compilation of the 'Guru Granth Saheb' is a turning point in the history of sikhism, the sect transformed into a religion.

Sikhism was not a spiritual force alone, it attained a political and military status during Mughal rule, Guru Nanak was an eye witness to the slaughter ordered by Babur after the invasion of Delhi. There was no clash between Sikhs and Mughals during the regimes of Humayun and Akbar. Johangirs introduced a long bloody struggle between Mughals and Sikhs by executing Guru Arjun. His only offence was that he helped prince Khusro against Emperor. After the death of their Guru, Sikh community in

Punjab resolved to defend their religious rights by resorting to arms. This incident proved turning point and the Sikh religion became more militant day by day. Riding rustling and hunting became part of religious training. They tried to build up a sovereign state within a Mughal state.

During the period of Emperor Aurangzeb, the enmity between Sikhs and Muslims further increased. Mughal emperor converted several Sikh temples into mosques. There was conversions of Gurudwaras in Punjab and Kashmir. Religious atrocities of mughal emperor transformed. In to temperament of Sikh community. In 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was killed along with two followers by Aurangzeb.

"Murders of two Gurus imprisonment of other Sikh saints and wretched condition of Hindus all over India ushered a new note in the Sikh-Mughal relationship." Guru Govindsingh (1675 AD to 1708) appealed sikh community that they must fight against cruelty and tyranny. The creation of 'Khalsa', devoted band of followers who were ready to lay down their lives for freedom and sovereignty, in a distinct phase in the religion and political history of Sikhs. There were series of battles between Sikhs and Mughal forces in the first decade if eighteenth century. Thus persuasion at the hands of mughals transformed entire character of sikh community, "They became lions in war and lambs in peace". Guru Govindisingh died in 1708 AD, at young age, succeeded in dispelling the fear of mughals, and he left behind an army of free, sacrificing soldiers ready to give up their lives for their conscience.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write a note on Bhakti cult and Sufism.

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## **10.7 SUMMARY**

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They early Sufis were known for their asceticism. They thought that it was the world that distrached their attention from God. The Chisti and the Suhravardi order helped the rulers in their own way by creating a climate of opinion in which people belonging to different sects and religious could live in peace and hormony. While Mecca remained the holy of holies, the rise of popular sufi saints provided a useful point of veheration and devotion to the mass of muslims within the country.

In the fourteen century the influence of sufi declined. They were weakened by doctrinal differences among themselves as also by unfriendly attitude of some of the muslim rulers. However, Sufis played

very important role in spreading muslim culture and its brotherhood policy among the masses in various part of country. \

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## 10.9 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- Q1 Discuss the Philosophy of Sufism? To what extent sufusm was influenced by Bhakti Movement?
- Q2. Write a critique on Christianity during Mughal rule?
- Q3. Critically examine the religious policy of sufism in India?
- Q4. An alyze the character of various Silsilahas order in sufism.
- Q5. Discuss the historical context to the rise of socio-religious movements based on Bhakti from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries in India.
- Q6. Describe the contributions of Bhakti saint's to Indian society and culture.



# Unit - 11

## AKBAR'S DIN-I-ILAHİ AND SYNCRETISM

### Unit structure :

- 11.0 Objective
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Syncretism in Medieval India:
- 11.3 Akbar's *Din-i-ilahi*:
- 11.4 Summary
- 11.5 Additional Readings
- 11.5 Questions for Self Study

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### 11.0 OBJECTIVE

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- To understand Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi and its importance.
- To study the concept of syncretism of Akbar's religious policy.
- To understand Akbar's religious rationalism policy and its significance.

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### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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Akbar was born and brought up in comparatively liberal surroundings. His father was a Mughal Sunni, his mother Persian Shia, and he first saw the light and lived for about a month in the house of Hindu Chief. Akbar's most notable teacher, Abdul Latif, who was so liberal in his religious views as to be dubbed a Sunni in the Shia country of Persia and a Shia in the Sunni ridden northern India, taught him the principle of Suleh-i-kul (universal peace) which Akbar never forgot. Thus heredity and environment combined to influence Akbar's religious policy in the direction of liberalism. Then, a true rationalist, Akbar carried on his investigation into the truth scientific spirit.

Dissatisfied with tradition and authority, Akbar prescribed human reason as the sole basis of religion and extended complete religious toleration to every creed in the empire. In his anxiety to do away with religious discord in the empire he made an attempt to bring out a synthesis of all the various religions known to him, and styled it Tawahid-i-Ilahi or Divine monotheism. It was not a religion but a socio-religious order or brotherhood, designed to cement diverse communities in the land.



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## 11.2 SYNCRETISM IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

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To understand the religious scenario in Medieval India which is our period of study, one needs to understand the term 'syncretism'. What is Syncretism? The dictionary meaning of the term Syncretism is – 'the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought'. In order to understand the religious movements and upheavals that took place in the country during the medieval period, one must go beyond this dictionary meaning and attempt to analyse the concept of syncretism.

According to Rasheeduddin Khan, the Indian civilisation has been profoundly affected by two fundamental traditions:

- The Indo-Aryan cultural stream that provided the Vedic philosophy
- The Indo-Muslim strand of culture based on the intertwining of 'bhakti marg' and Islamic Sufism.

Further he quotes in his work, *Composite Culture of India and National Integration* - "It is not surprising, therefore, to realise that the composite culture in India originated in an environment of reconciliation, rather than refutation, co-operation rather than confrontation, co-existence rather than mutual annihilation of the politically dominant Islamic strands". Thus, Khan attempts to strongly refute the history advanced by the orthodox scholars who view the medieval period in India as being marked by religious intolerance and communal wars between the Hindus and Muslims.

According to Gaborieau, the cult of saints has been one of the religious steps which has promoted Hindu-Muslim syncretism in India. The extensive spread of Sufism in fact became one of the important mechanisms of ensuring communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims.

This developed and nurtured syncretic trend continued to thrive even during the Mughal rule. Both Babur and Humayun had broad visions and inclination to support both Islam and Hinduism. This gets revealed in Babur's advice to Humayun on his deathbed – "O son, the kingdom of India is full of different religions. Praised be God who bestowed upon you its sovereignty. It is incumbent upon you to erase all the religious prejudices from the tablet of your heart and to administer justice accordingly to the ways of every religion. By doing so, you can capture the hearts of the people and strengthen the bonds of loyalty. Do not ruin the temples and shrines of any community, which follows the laws of government. The cause of Islam can be promoted by the weapon of beneficence than by the sword of tyranny." Further, one sees that his successor Humayun sincerely followed this advice of his father. However, owing to their short rule, not many positive steps could be initiated to further develop and enhance this religious syncretism.

It was Humayun's son, Akbar who could take decisive steps in this direction. Akbar's most decisive steps in this direction were: removal of the Jizya tax- it was a pilgrim tax only for the Hindus - immediately after assuming power. He had also passed a law treating both Hindus and Muslims in the same manner. Moreover, the Hindu epics like, Ramayan, Mahabharat and the Vedic literature were translated into Persian at the insistence of the Emperor for the convenience of Muslim readers. The religious syncretism that reached at its apex during Akbar's rule continued even during the rule of his successors. To cite a significant example - Shah Jahan's eldest son, Dara Shikoh translated the Hindu theological texts like Upanishads, Bhagwat Gita and Yoga Vashishtha into Persian. He also wrote a book,

Majmaul-Bahrain ('The Meeting Place of Two Oceans') which is actually a comparative study of Hindu and Muslim mystic philosophy.

As mentioned by M. Mohiuddin in his article, *'The Elements of Composite Culture'*, the recent research also helps to dismiss the wrong notions harboured by the common masses about Islam in India, particularly with reference to Aurangzeb. To quote Mohiuddin, "Modern research has revealed a surprising fact that even Aurangzeb granted jagirs to a large number of temples. Again, the wars between Muslim and Hindu rulers have been represented as religious wars, conveniently ignoring that the armies of Muslim rulers contained a large number of Hindu soldiers and vice versa".

In Western India, the syncretic tradition has had not only been wide-spread but also deeply ingrained. The dargah of Khwaja Muinuddin Hasan Chisti of Ajmer in Rajasthan is perhaps the most famous shrine of western India. Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti's main effort had always been to promote harmony between Hindus and Muslims, to combat caste inequalities and fight other social evils. One realises that his preachings had also made a profound impact on the course of bhakti movement in the coming later years. It is upheld that Emperor Akbar was a staunch supporter of Chisti's preachings. In *Studies In Islamic Culture In The Indian Sub-Continent*, Aziz Ahmed points out that the Husaini brahmins represented the most outstanding example of high caste syncretic borrowing from Islam and transforming them at will. He writes that the Husaini brahmins considered Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti as a titular divinity. They honoured Mohammad as one of the Hindu avatars, fasted like Muslims during the Ramzan and also buried their dead. They wore brahminical caste-marks on forehead but accepted alms from the Muslims alone.

Sumita Paul in her article, *'Where Muslims Perform Diwali, Puja'* points out that in some villages close to Ajmer, the Hindu-Muslim divide makes no sense. The Muslims celebrate all the Hindu festivals and the Hindus eat 'halal' meat and bury their dead. In most Muslim homes, Diwali is celebrated with 'a full-fledged Laxmi puja just as Id or Shabe-Barat. People of both the faith equally visit temples and mosques. The

Muslim women also often insist on 'phera' - seven rounds around the fire - like the Hindus, during the marriage. The Khojas reveal a direct syncretic borrowing from Hinduism. The Khojas yet continue to observe Ekadasi, Diwali, Holi, etc. They were not sure to which religion they belonged and it was later the English court which declared them to be Shias of Islamic branch. The Khojas drew many parallel between Hinduism and Islam. The Bohra Muslims also have a number of customs like the Hindus such as the Hindu law of inheritance, the practice of charging interest on loans and the celebration of Diwali as the New Year day in their business lives. Many of the Hindu superstitions have pervaded their households. Many of the taboos for the pregnant women were borrowed from the Hindus, such as fasting during lunar dclipse, and taboo of wearing new clothes or the use of 'henna' to avert the evil eye.

In *Saints, Goddesses And Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900*, Susan Bayly provides Madurai, which has a long association with Sikandar tradition, as an illustration of Hindu-Muslim syncretism. The dargah tradition in south India reveals a close relationship with the Hindu traditions. The dargah of pir Hazarat Hamid Shah Awliya is one such famous syncretic shrine.

However, one needs to know that the Hindu-Muslim intermingling has been more deeply entrenched in North India. Despite the communal strife between the two communities over long periods, ties of friendship and tolerance have never been unknown in this region. The shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi is perhaps the most famous syncretic shrine after the shrine of Muinuddin Chisti in Ajmer. Thus, one realises that Syncretism is a very wide and significant aspect to be studied to draw a true picture of the religious scenario and conditions of the Medieval India.

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Define the syncretism in religion.

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### **11.3 AKBAR'S *DIN-I-ILAH*:**

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When we talk of 'Din-i-ilahi' or 'Tauhid-i-ilahi', as it was also called as, the very name of Akbar – the greatest of the Mughal Emperors, comes up. Akbar was very closely associated with the Din-i-ilahi. In fact, he was the one who propounded it. The period of Akbar's reign (1556 – 1605) is regarded as one of the most significant periods in Indian history especially in terms of mutual religious interaction. History tells us that Akbar was not just a great military conqueror, an efficient administrator

but also a tolerant and liberal ruler. His religious views changed with the passing period of time and owing to the influences of various factors.

Akbar's religious policy of harmony, reconciliation and synthesis among all the religions did not develop all of a sudden. His religious views or policies thus, went through a process of slow evaluation and affected by internal and external factors. Like firstly, there was the influence of heredity. His father, Humayun – the second Mughal Emperor, was a sunni whereas his mother, Hamida Banu Begum was a Persian shia. Akbar was born, as it is well-known in history, in the house of a Hindu ruler, the Rana of Amarkot. Further as we see, his marriage with the Rajput princesses and contact with Hinduism also made an influence on his mind. Meanwhile, the Bhakti movement had created a new atmosphere in India. As a result of this, many great rulers in various parts of the country had adopted a liberal policy and attitude. Also, we see their attempt of setting up communal harmony between the Hindus and Muslims from the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century. So, the ideas and the principles of the Bhakti movement as well as contact with Sufism obviously exercised tremendous influence on Akbar's mindset. So, owing to all such factors, Akbar's religious policies were directed towards liberalism. Some of Akbar's religious policies included the putting an end to the forcible conversion of the prisoners of war in 1562, abolition of Pilgrimage tax in 1563 as well as Jizya tax in 1564.

He built IbadatKhana (House of Worship) in 1575 at Fatehpur Sikri, wherein the religious discussions were held with many distinguished persons of all sects and religions including Christianity. The purpose of conducting these religious discussions as well as debates was for a better understanding and evaluation of the deep truth in religion. He invited the Christian priests from Goa. The first Jesuit mission from Goa arrived at Fatehpur Sikri in February 1580 and consisted of Father Rudolf Aquaviva who was an Italian, Antony Monserrate – a Spaniard, and Francis Henriquez who was a Persian convert. Akbar greatly revered the copy of Bible brought by these priests and held prolonged discussions with them. He adopted many practices of the Zoroastrians such as sun worship, fire worship etc. and introduced the Persian festival of Nauroz. Moreover, he regarded Adi-Granth- the religious book of the Sikhs, as 'worthy of reverence.'

Akbar did not like the interference and the authority of the ulemas. He was against their unrestricted interference in political affairs of the state. Therefore, on Shaikh Mubarak's suggestion, Akbar decided to become the supreme authority over religion as well. A document was drafted in such a manner that Akbar became the supreme arbiter in the civil as well as ecclesiastical matters. This document came to be known as the *Infallibility Decree*. By this decree, the leading ulema transferred to Akbar their authority in spiritual affairs. The Infallibility Decree made Akbar 'Imam-i-adil', which means – the supreme arbiter in the spiritual matters.

Din-i-ilahi is difficult to be defined because no exact definition of this faith and its principles were ever laid. It was really undefined as it was not a new religion but summing up of the old. But we can definitely say that it was the result of Akbar's attempt to establish a national religion that would be common to all, by weaving together the sublime principles of various religions.

Akbar's liberalism gets more highly reflected in his pronouncement of Din-i-ilahi in 1582. It propounded *Sulh-i-kul* (universal brotherhood). Sulh-i-kul meant universal brotherhood or simply religious toleration. Abu'l Fazl describes the ideal of sulh-i-kul as the cornerstone of enlightened rule. In sulh-i-kul, all the religions and schools of thought had freedom of expression. But just like freedom comes with restrictions similarly, this freedom of expression that the principle of sulh-i-kul talks about, comes with the condition that they did not undermine the authority of the state or engage in constant conflicts. This ideal was implemented through the state policies. During this period, we see that the nobility under the Mughals had composite structure. There were Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Rajputs, Deccanis and so on who were a part of the nobility. All of them were given positions and were awarded based on their service, merit and loyalty to the Emperor. Akbar strongly believed in this principle of sulh-i-kul which is reflected through his two acts:

1. Instructing the officers of the state to follow the percept of sulh-i-kul in administration
2. Making this percept one of the basic tenets of Din-i-ilahi

In order to be the member of this new faith of Din-i-ilahi, an initiation ceremony was prescribed. Abul Fazl described the initiation and several ceremonies of Din-i-ilahi in his work *Ain-i-Akbari*. The initiation ceremony took place on Sunday and the novice (or the one desiring to be admitted as the member of Din-i-ilahi) with his turban in his hands, puts his head on the feet of His Majesty (the Emperor) who would then raise him by touch on his shoulders. He would take the turban of the novice back on his head and give him the 'shast' (his own portrait) upon which would be engraved these words /the phrase – "Allah-o-Akbar", meaning, 'God is Great.'

After initiating in Din-i-ilahi as its member, now all these members of the new faith had to follow certain practices. They had to follow the custom of greeting each other with the words – *Allah-o-Akbar* and *Jalle Jalal Hu*. For instance, if one greets the other member by *Allah-o-Akbar* then, the other would respond by saying *Jalle Jalal Hu*. The motive behind this was to keep in mind and remember God in mind at every time and to remind them to evaluate on the origin of their existence. The Emperor also ordered that instead of dinner usually given in the memory of a man after his death, each member should prepare a dinner during his lifetime. It was believed that by this he was accepting the inevitable truth that is death and would thus bring about his liberation from this materialistic world.

The members of Din-i-ilahi had to abstain from meat as far as possible and did not dine with or use the utensils of the butchers, fishermen and bird-catchers. They did not marry old women or minor girls. They had to practice charity. There were four grades of followers of Din-i-ilahi. These four grades were based on their readiness to sacrifice to the Emperor the following four things –

- Property (mas)
- Life (jan)
- Honour (namus)
- Religion (din)

A person who pledged to sacrifice only one of these four things then he possessed one degree, if he sacrifices two of these four things then he would possess two grades or degrees and so on. Thus, these grades or degrees symbolised the degrees of devotion to Akbar who assumed the role of the spiritual guide of the members of Din-i-ilahi.

However, we see that this new faith of Din-i-ilahi did not have large number of followers. Perhaps, as V.D Mahajan points out, this was partly due to the fact that Akbar did not become a missionary to enforce this faith of Din-i-ilahi. He refrained from being fanatic and believed that this faith should be accepted by the people on their own. It was like perhaps Akbar wanted or rather, desired to appeal to the inner feelings of the people. According to J.L Mehta, “Din-i-ilahi was a social, religious association of the like-minded intellectuals who had transcended the barriers of their orthodox religious beliefs and practices.”

Therefore, Akbar never forced anyone to adopt this faith despite the fact that it was not difficult for him to coerce people into adopting Din-i-ilahi. The result was that there were only eighteen members of the Din-i-ilahi among whom the most important were Abul Fazl, his brother Faizee, their father Shaikh Mubarak and Raja Birbal. Unfortunately, Din-i-ilahi did not survive after Akbar’s death. The generally accepted reason behind this is that Akbar tried to establish a new faith or a kind of new religion just like he founded and carved out an empire. But he forgot that religions are never made. Their elements are not borrowed and pieced together. The great founders of the religions followed today had never meant to establish their respective religions. They had sought to impart their own realization and knowledge about truth, God and mysteries of life. Their followers were the ones who formed themselves into distinct groups and thus, the great religions of old were born.

Yet Akbar’s intent in pronouncing the Din-i-ilahi ought to be appreciated for it showcased his intense desire to bring about unity and understanding among people belonging to different religions and cultures. So by doing this, Akbar wanted to establish a truly national, secular and welfare state in the country. In spite of its short duration, Din-i-ilahi stands out for it was a brilliant combination of the fundamental principles of all religions. Akbar had been convinced that all the religions were but different paths leading to the same goal. Din-i-ilahi was different in the

sense, it had neither been inspired by revelation nor was based on any well-defined philosophy. Moreover, it had no priests and no Holy Scriptures. As Jesuit author Bartoli mentions, “Din-i-ilahi was a new religion, compounded out of various elements, taken partly from the Quran of Muhammad, partly from the scriptures of the Brahmins and to a certain extent, as far as suited his purpose, from the Gospel of Christ.”

The tenets enjoined in Din-i-ilahi were nothing else but ethical reforms as well as social reforms. For instance,

- Sparing of animal life
- Permitting re-marriage of widows
- Prohibition of child marriage
- Prohibiting marriage among close relations
- Banning forced sati
- Recommending monogamy
- Enforcing chastity
- Controlling gambling and drinking by restricting the sale of drink.

Many historians and scholars, both Indian and European, have had studied and expressed their opinions regarding the new faith of Din-i-ilahi founded by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. To give certain examples; S.R Sharma, Dr. Ishwari Prasad, S.M Zaffar, Lane Poole, Vincent Smith and so on. Vincent Smith – the famous British historian, criticised this faith, Din-i-ilahi with these words- “The Divine Faith was a monument of Akbar’s folly, not of his wisdom.” It is believed that Vincent Smith and some other European writers have had misunderstood Akbar’s religious policy. They had relied their findings based on the study of the narratives of the contemporary orthodox writers such as Badauni.

Badauni had criticised Akbar and his religious policy. He had described the emperor’s regulations as ‘silly’. He also mentioned Akbar had ceased to be a Muslim. His Infallibility Decree attempted to take away from the theologians their right to persecute others for their religious views. Perhaps his ideas were too advanced in his time. The fact that Din-i-ilahi just had eighteen followers during the lifetime of Akbar testifies to Akbar’s policy of toleration. According to S. R Sharma- “The Din-i-ilahi was the crowning expression of the Emperor’s national idealism.”

### **Check your Progress :**

1) Comment on the Din-i-Ilahi as ethical or social reforms.

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## 11.4 SUMMARY

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Thus, one can conclude that irrespective of its drawbacks as well as advantages, Din-i-ilahi or Tauhid-i-ilahi as it was also known as, had truly set up an example that inspite of social, political and religious differences, people could meet on a common platform and unite for God and the King, that is, symbolising the spiritual and temporal activities.

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## 11.5 ADDITIONAL READINGS

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- 1) A.L. Shrivastava, The Mughal Empire (1526-1803 A.D.), Shiva Lal Agarawala & Company, 1960.
- 2) S.M. Jaffar, The Mughal Empire from Babar to Aurangzeb, S.M. Sadiq Khan (Publisher) Peshawar, 1936.
- 3) Ishwari Prasad, A short history of Muslim Rule in India, The Indian Press Ltd. Allahabad

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## 11.6 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY

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- 1) Write a detailed note on the Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi.
- 2) Explain the Akbar's religious rationalism policy and its significance.
- 3) Comment on Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi and Syncretism.





# Unit - 12

## EXPERIMENTS IN REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

### Unit structure :

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Revenue administration under the Delhi Sultanate
- 12.3 Revenue Administration under Vijayanagar Empire
- 12.4 Revenue Administration under the Mughals
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Additional Readings
- 12.7 Questions for Self Study

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- To explain the various experiments in revenue administration.
- To describe the administration of revenue during medieval period.
- To acquaint to students with the new initiatives taken by rulers in Medieval period and various measures initiated for the transformation of land revenue Administration in the Medieval period.

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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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When we discuss about revenue administration in Medieval India, land revenue was the prime source of income of the both sultanate and Mughal Empire as well as Maratha Empire State used to collect land revenue to express ELS authority over the people, whom it governed and to meet the requirements of the state. In this context, land revenue refers to the revenue levied on land for its use and the produce. Various experiments in revenue administration had been implemented in medieval period in order to increase income of states. Thus, assessment and collection of land revenue were the most important activities of the governments during this period.

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## 12.2 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

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During the Sultanate period, the revenue administration was not much well organised. The fiscal resources of the state were also very limited for the state's authority extended over the limited territory in North and East of India.

Land revenue was the chief source of income for the state as agriculture was the main occupation of the people. However, there was no fixed share which the cultivator had to pay to the state. The share to be paid was determined by the different Sultans and ranged from 1/10 to 1/2.

Alauddin Khilji not just wanted to bring efficiency in the revenue administration but also wanted to make fundamental changes in order to increase his revenue collection to the maximum. Hence, he brought about a lot of measures that resulted in the transformation of the revenue regulations of the Sultanate. He ordered the resumption of all landed grants which the nobles held as Inam (reward) or waqf (gifts) and turned them into crown (khalisa) lands.

All the lands were measured and after ascertaining their produce the state's share was fixed at 53 per cent. The share of the state was rather high and was unprecedented. The peasants had, in addition, to pay certain other taxes and found themselves in dire straits. According to Barani, the Hindus who had the monopoly of agriculture were greatly impoverished to an extent that there was no sign of gold or silver left in their houses and the wives of muqaddams used to seek jobs in the houses of Mussalmans, work there and receive wages. He also withdrew all the privileges enjoyed by the Hindu muqaddams, khuts and chaudharis for generations. Even they had to pay the land revenue, house as well as grazing taxes.

Apart from increasing state's share in land revenue Alauddin Khilji took drastic steps to eradicate corruption prevailing in the revenue department. He increased the salaries of the Patwaris, but inflicted heavy punishment on them if they resorted to corrupt practices.

In the central regions of the empire, the land revenue was assessed on the basis of the measurement and the share of the government had been fixed at half of the total produce. Previously, the land revenue could be paid both in cash and kind. With the introduction of market regulations, Alauddin Khilji chose to prefer the payment of land revenue in kind. Moreover, the peasants had to pay the house tax and the grazing taxes. The hindus had to pay jiziya. As per Barani's accounts, the grazing tax was levied on all cattle heads going to the village commons. Ferishta however, points out that a person having two pairs of oxen, two buffaloes, two cows and ten goats were exempted from the grazing tax. Those who owned more than this minimum number had to pay the grazing tax.

Though the revenue administration organised by Alauddin Khilji continued to prevail under his successors, the stringency of Alauddin's revenue policy and administration got softened during the rule of Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq. As a result, it lost its efficiency. He found the state share of 50 per cent of the land revenue much harsh and inconvenient and so, fixed the state share at one-tenth of the total produce. During his times many barren and ruined lands were also brought under cultivation and much attention was given to the welfare of the peasants.

His successor, Muhammad bin Tughluq also introduced some important reforms in the revenue administration. He was very keen to improve the revenue administration of the Sultanate. As soon as he ascended the throne, he first ordered the compilation of a detailed register of income and expenditure of all the provinces under the Delhi Sultanate. The governors of these provinces were asked to send to the centre all the relevant records for the compilation of the register. This was undertaken with the intent of introducing a uniform standard of land revenue as well as to ensure that no village remained unassessed. To recover the dues and arrears, a separate department called as *diwan-i-mustakhriz* was established.

Though his experiment in revenue reforms that is, increasing the taxation of Doab, failed disastrously, one needs to understand that he had cogent and justified reasons for this. One of the exemplary things done by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was the establishment of the department of agriculture (Diwan-i-Kohi). This department made efforts to bring more and more lands under cultivation and different crops were sown in rotation. Yet we find that this experiment failed greatly. The scheme was abandoned after three years. The reasons cited for the failure in spite of all the efforts were: poor quality of land chosen for the experiment, corruption prevalent among the officials and the indifference of the cultivators etc. also the historians point out that this scheme was given up in haste.

During the year 1329-1330, Muhammad Bin Tughluq introduced the currency reforms. He had embarked on a new experiment in coinage, that is, the issue of token currency. Barani mentions that to meet the demands of the ever-increasing military expenses, the sultan ordered the copper and brass tokens to be treated as legal tender in all monetary transactions just like gold and silver coins. The other reasons behind this novel experiment were that the treasury had been drained due to wars and rebellions and also by costly experiments. The consequences of the experiment in token currency was disastrous. The sultan failed to take precautionary measures against the counterfeit coins with which the market was flooded. According to Barani, the house of every Hindu was turned into an unauthorised mint.

The farmers paid their revenue in token currency. The common people paid their taxes through the token currency and hoarded silver and gold coins. The foreign merchants used the token currency to purchase the

Indian commodities, but refused to accept them while selling their goods. This resulted in economic chaos. Trade was paralysed and government incurred heavy losses.

Firuz Shah Tughlaq, who succeeded Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, found the revenue system in complete chaos and people suffering due to extraction and famine. The new sultan was a true friend of the peasants. Their debts, resulting from the exactions of Muhammad Bin Tughluq were cancelled. Land revenue was fixed after a proper assessment, the land revenue got lowered. He further abolished more than two frivolous, unlawful and unjust taxes, which were collected by his predecessors. He considered them to be not in accordance with the *Sharia*. He made changes in the existing practices and customs in order to bring them into conformity with the sacred law. Therefore, he strictly realised the jiziya tax from the non-Muslims.

As he was a devout Muslim, Firuz Shah charged six taxes. These were Kharaj or land tax from non-Muslims. Its rate varied from one-fifth to one-half of the produce. Ushr – one-tenth of the produce charged from the Muslim cultivators, Khams – one-fifth of the booty that was captured in war, Tarkat- heirless property, Zakat – two percent tax on property realised from the Muslims to be spent for specific religious purpose only and jiziya – a poll tax payable by the non-Muslims. Later, with the approval of the ulema, the sultan imposed the irrigation tax as well on those cultivators who made use of the water supplied by the state canals, the rate being one-tenth of produce of the irrigated area.

The Sultan took special measure to promote trade and commerce. He withdrew the internal duties and artificial barriers on the movement of the commodities from one province to another. He paid great attention to the improvement of the revenue administration. Those who were illegally deprived of their lands, were asked to file their claims in the courts of law. He reduced state's share of land revenue. He provided 'taqavi' loans to the cultivators and provided greater facilities for irrigation. He is credited with having got dug four canals which were source of perennial irrigation. He also increased the salaries of the revenue officers so that they may not exploit the poor peasants.

The result of these steps was steady improvement of agriculture and commerce, general prosperity of the people and increase in the revenue of the state. The necessities of life became cheaper. In the words of Afif –

“The homes of the people were replete with grains, property, horses and furniture; everyone had plenty of gold and silver; no woman was without her ornaments and no house without good beds and diwans. Wealth abounded and comforts were general”.

This revenue system adopted by Firuz Shah Tughlaq continued to operate under the later Sultans of Delhi.

### Check your Progress :

- 1) Explain the revenue experiments during Khilji dynasty.
- 2) Write an essay on revenue administration of Tughala dynasty.

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### 12.3 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION UNDER VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE:

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Under the Vijayanagar Empire, the land revenue was the main source of income for the state. Apart from the land revenue, the other sources of the income of the state included tributes as well as gifts from the vassals and provincial governors especially during the festival of *Mahanavami*, custom duties, taxes on various professions, houses, markets and licenses etc. To add to this, the flourishing seaports brought in huge wealth for the state. This made the trade and commerce (both sea and inland) an important source of income for the state.

Payment of the taxes could be in both cash and kind. The land revenue was collected on the basis of the assessment fixed after carefully surveying the land. Based on the productivity, the land was classified into three categories, which are as follows – wetland, dry land, orchards and woods. Fernao Nuniz – the Portuguese traveller who spent three years in the Vijayanagar Empire, notes that the peasants had to pay nine-tenths of their produce to their lords. They in turn, paid one-half to the king. A special department was established to supervise the administration of the land revenue. It was called as *athavane*. There were lot of taxes imposed but the most unpopular one was the marriage tax imposed throughout the empire. This tax was later abolished at the instance of Saluva Timma.

It has been pointed out that the fiscal system of this empire proved to be unfavourable for the peasantry. As per some clear evidences, the peasants did suffer much and mostly migrated to other places owing to the oppression of the fief-holders and some of the officials. Rulers such as Krishnadevaraya attempted to improve the condition of the peasants. But during the reign of the weak rulers, the exploitation of the nobles and others continued without restraint. As per the records, two treasuries, a smaller one for day-to-day remittances and withdrawals as well as a larger one to deposit huge amounts and valuable gifts received from the vassal kings and mandalesvaras controlled the revenue of the state.

### Check your Progress :

- 1) Comment on the revenue administration under Vijaynagar Empire.

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## 12.4 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MUGHALS:

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The revenue administration under the first two Mughal rulers – Babur and Humayun- continued to operate as it was during the rule of the Delhi Sultans. Babur, being the founder, was very much engrossed in various wars to sustain his dynasty and therefore, could not devote much time to revenue affairs. His successor, Humayun also could not give much attention to revenue matters since he himself faced lot of troubles after succeeding Babur to the throne and spent most of his life in exile.

The credit for introducing the country to excellent land revenue system must go to Sher Shah Sur who sat on the throne of Delhi after Humayun and before Akbar. The revenue reforms have left a lasting impression on the administration of Sher Shah. These reforms became the basis of the future land revenue system in India, especially under Akbar. Having administered his father's jagir for a long time and then as a de facto ruler of Bihar, Sher Shah knew the working of the land revenue system at all levels. With the help of the capable team of administrators, Sher Shah made the entire revenue system more efficient. In introducing the revenue reforms, Sher Shah had two main objectives:

1. To improve the conditions of the peasants.
2. To increase and stabilise the revenue of the state.

Sher Shah insisted measurement of the land as the basis of the assessment throughout the empire. The produce of the land was no longer to be taxed on guesswork or by dividing the crops in the field or threshing floors. After the measurement of the land under cultivation, assessment of the revenue was made and the settlement was made directly with the cultivator. Following the measurement of the land, it was classified into the following three categories – good, middling and bad. The average of these three was taken in order to determine the land produce. The state demand was fixed at one-fourth or one- thirds of the average produce. This meant that the share of the state was fixed at one-fourth or at one-third of the gross produce. The land revenue could be paid by the cultivator both in cash and kind. The rights of the peasants were duly recognised and the liabilities of each one of them were clearly defined in the *kabuliyat*- which was the deed of agreement, which the state used to take from him as well as the *patta* – which meant the title deed, that was

given to the farmer. Each village had a *patwari* (that is, a village accountant) who used to maintain a register of tenant holdings. In the crown land (*Khalsa*), rent was collected by salaried government officials with the assistance of the *patwari* and the *mukadam*.

After sowing the crops, the peasant knew how much he had to pay to the state as land revenue. No revenue official was permitted to charge anything extra to the peasant other than the prescribed land revenue. In order to meet any kind of emergency situation such as famine, or any other natural calamities, a surcharge of two and a half seers of grains per bigha of land was collected from each peasant.

The revenue settlement system that was introduced by Sher Shah in most of his empire was *ryotwari*. Under this system, the state kept direct relations with the peasants for the assessment and collection of the land revenue. However, this system could not be implemented in Multan, Malwa and Rajasthan where the *jagirdari* system continued to exist. The measures introduced by Sher Shah succeeded in improving the condition of the peasants to a great extent. The income of the state also increased to a considerable limit. He took care to see that the welfare of the peasants was promoted. He used to say, “The cultivators are blameless, they submit to those in power and if I oppress them, they will abandon their villages and the country would be ruined and deserted and it will be a long time before it again becomes prosperous”. Sher Shah thus, gave priority to the welfare of the peasants and so during the times of calamity, either reduced or remitted the revenue. Though the revenue officials were ordered to be lenient during the time of assessment, the taxes were to be collected with severity.

So, it would not be wrong to say that Sher Shah was the first ruler of Hindustan who introduced far-reaching revenue reforms, which were beneficial to the state as well as the people. Akbar based his revenue organisation on the principles laid down by Sher Shah and introduced certain innovations to improve on that system. Hence, we find that after securing and consolidating the empire, Akbar (who succeeded Humayun to the Mughal throne) paid attention to the revenue administration. He greatly admired the revenue reforms of Sher Shah and attempted to improvise them. Abul Fazal’s *Ain-i-Akbari* describes in depth the revenue administration of Akbar. On his accession, Akbar had followed Sher Shah’s system by which the cultivated area was measured and a central schedule was drawn up. It fixed crop-wise due of the peasant on the basis of the productivity of the land. Based on this schedule, a central schedule of prices was drawn up. Akbar discovered that this fixing of a central schedule had some limitation. One was that it resulted in delay and also it caused hardships to the farmers. The farmer ended parting with the more produce because the prices fixed were generally prevailing in the imperial court, which were higher than in the countryside.

Akbar introduced several experiments in revenue administration. In this task, he was ably assisted by men like Muzaffar Khan, Itimad Khan

and Raja Todar Mal. He was interested in maintaining direct relations with the cultivators. It was difficult to introduce uniform system throughout the empire due to practical problems such as the nature of crops and the fertility of the land. Therefore, Akbar revised Sher Shah's system. In 1560, Akbar had made the first experiment by appointing Khwaja Abdul Majid Khan as Wazir for improving revenue administration. He decided to collect the revenue in cash and fixed a higher amount, which the farmers were not able to pay, and so were dissatisfied. In 1563, Akbar appointed Itimad Khan as Diwan in charge of khalisa lands. He separated khalisa land from jagir lands. He divided khalisa lands in revenue divisions, each giving a revenue of one crore of daams annually. The officer of each division came to be known as the *krori*.

In 1564, Muzaffar Khan was appointed *Diwan-i-kul* alongwith Raja Todar Mal. He introduced revenue reforms. Qanungos in various areas were asked to send revenue statistics of their respective areas to the Wizarat where revenue rates would be fixed based on the statistics supplied to it. In 1569, he introduced the annual assessment. As the qanungo was familiar with local conditions, he was ordered to report on the actual produce, local prices, sale and the condition of the cultivation. The annual assessment had its own defect as it led to the hardships for both the peasants and the state.

After the conquest of Gujarat in 1573, Akbar chose Raja Todar Mal to introduce revenue reforms in that province. Todar Mal undertook regular survey of land and assessment was made with the reference to the area and the quality of land. The jagirs were converted into crown lands. The whole empire, as it had existed then, was divided into 182 parganas. The yield of each paragana was one crore daams that was equivalent to two and a half lakhs of rupees a year. To put into effect the revenue reforms, Akbar appointed Todar Mal as the Diwan and Khwaja Shah Mansur as his deputy. Todar Mal led down the basis of the land revenue administration for the empire. The three major steps taken by Raja Todar Mal were as follows:

- The measurement of land by which a systematic survey of land was undertaken. Previously, the land was measured with a hempen rope, which used to contract or expand according to the amount of moisture in the air. This hempen rope was replaced by jarib or bamboos joined together by iron rings which remained at constant lengths.
- After measuring the land, the classification of land was done on the basis of the continuity of the cultivation. To determine the state's share of produce, the land was divided into four categories which are as follows: Polaj, Parauti, Chachar and Banjar. Polaj was the land that was always under cultivation. Parauti was the second category of land that had to be left fallow for one or two years to regain its fertility whereas Chachar was the third category of land which was left out of cultivation for three or four years in order to regain its fertility. The fourth category, Banjar, was the barren land. The state's share of



produce was decided on the basis of the fertility of the soil as well as the produce of the last ten years. The polaj and parauti lands were further classified into good, middling and bad. The average of the three were taken and then the assessment was fixed. Cultivation of banjar land was encouraged.

- Only the areas under actual cultivation were measures and then assessed. The state's share was one-third of the average produce, but then it varied as per the productivity of land and method of assessment. Different rates existed for different crops.

Under this revenue system of Raja Todar Mal, the government and the farmers were spared lot of suspense. The farmer got aware of how much he would pay. On payment, the farmer would get a receipt. A record of all collections, holdings and liabilities was kept. Each cultivator was given a patta or a title deed and was required to sign a kabuliyat or a deed of agreement. These documents contained specifications of the plots of land in the possession of the cultivator, area of plots and the revenue that he had to pay. The collector sent a record of collections to the treasury. The accounts were kept in the Persian language.

There were several systems of revenue collection such as Dashala system, Zabti system, Ghallabaksha system and Nasaq system. These have been described as follows:

- The Dashala (ten-year settlement) system was introduced in provinces like Bihar, Malwa, Allahabad, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Awadh and parts of Multan. Under this system, the average produce of different crops and the average prices that prevailed over the last years were calculated and the state's share was fixed at one-thirds of the average produce.
- Under the Zabti system that prevailed in the subahs of Bihar, Multan, Allahabad, Ajmer, Agra, Delhi and parts of Gujarat, the revenue officer called Bitikchi would find out the area of each crop in each holding and then applied the prescribed rates and calculated the revenue due from the cultivators.
- The Ghallabaksha system was the oldest and most common revenue collection system wherein the produce was divided between the state and the cultivator in fixed proportions. It was in force in Kashmir, Qandahar and parts of Sindh and Multan.
- The Nasaq or Kankut System as it was also called, prevailed in Bengal, Gujarat and Kathiawar. Herein, the appraisers first roughly estimated the produce of a field on the basis of the actual inspection on the spot and one third of the estimate was fixed as the state's share.

Akbar's revenue system had been ryotwari. The actual cultivators of the land were made responsible for the annual payment of the fixed revenue. Patwaris as well as Mukadams were not the state officers but the state recognised their services, assessed and collected the revenue and also maintained records with their help. In return, they were paid a part of revenue. The Amil was the revenue collector who was assisted by the bitikchi, the fotahtar and the qanungo. As we observe during the later part of Akbar's rule, qanungos were accepted as the state officials and were paid salaries by the state. Over the amils were the amalguzars. They in turn, worked under the provincial diwans who themselves functioned under the central diwan, that is, the Wazir. Akbar was deeply interested in the improvement and extension of cultivation. He directed the amil to act as the father to the peasants. He was asked to advance money to the peasants by way of loans for purchasing the seeds, implements, animals and so on in times of need and to recover them in easy instalments.

During the reign of Akbar, the peasants were not burdened with heavy taxes. He collected the traditional one-thirds of the produce as land revenue from the peasants. Under the Dashala system, the peasants had to pay fixed revenue for ten years. If they could produce more by their efforts, they were free to get its advantages. Besides, all jagirdari land was also under the control of the state officials. Thus, there were now no middlemen like the jagirdars or the landlords to exploit the peasants. So, the revenue system under Akbar was beneficial for both the state and the peasants. It led to the increased production and that helped in the growth of trade and industry. Because of this reason, though Akbar engaged himself constantly in aggressive warfare, his treasury always remained full. Therefore, Vincent Smith considered Akbar's revenue system as an admirable one.

However, one needs to understand that the state under the Mughal rule did impose other taxes apart from the land revenue. Thus, besides the regular land revenue, the other taxes and fees were levied on the peasants in order to increase the income of the state. These were known as *abwabs*. These included - duties on the sale of produce, fees on the sale of immovable property, perquisites taken by the officers for their own sake as well as fees or commissions taken for the state, licence-tax for carrying out certain trades, forced subscriptions, imposts on Hindus that included taxes on bathing in the Ganges and for carrying the bones of the dead Hindus for immersing in the Ganges; etc. Although Aurangzeb abolished some of the *abwabs*, he added some other *abwabs* for the sake of increasing the income of the state. The jiziya tax – the poll tax which was levied on the non-Muslims, had been abolished by Akbar. This same jiziya tax was revived by Aurangzeb.

The zamindars played an important role in the revenue administration during the Mughal rule. They were responsible for maintaining law and order in their areas. However, they were not the government officers like the amalguzars but were the petty landholders in the village. Some were even the descendants of the old ruling families

holding on to their ancestral land. The zamindars cultivated the lands that they had owned. They also enjoyed the hereditary right of collecting the land revenue from a number of villages. Yet it is upheld that the zamindar did not own all the lands which came under his zamindari, meaning that he cannot as per his will evict any peasant who actually cultivated the land so long he pays the land revenue. In the Bengal province, the zamindars used to pay a fixed amount of revenue to the state. Whatever was left was kept by the zamindar as his income. Where the amount the peasant had to pay to the state was fixed, there the zamindars used to impose a separate cess for the sake of their own benefits. Therefore, the harassment of the peasants done by the zamindars made the latter an 'exploiting class.'

The zamindars used to maintain their own troops as well. They lived in forts or *garhis* which became eventually their status symbol. So long as they remitted revenue regularly to the imperial treasury, they were left free to manage their affairs. These zamindars had considerable local influence as well as power and so, the imperial government could not ignore them.

During the rule of Akbar, cash salary was paid to the government officials, especially the mansabdars. However, this changed after Akbar. This system was modified by Akbar's successors. Now the Mughal officials did receive their salary, not in cash though, but in revenue yielding land that would be assigned to them. This assignment was known as jagir and the assignee was called as jagirdar. A mansabdar used to receive a jagir according to his status and rank. His income was obtained from his jagir. The wizarat made evaluations of all the assignments.

The jagirdars were the state officials and were liable for transfer. They used to be transferred every few years so that they should not try at all to develop vested interests in a particular region. But the jagirdars did not do much for the welfare of the people residing in their jagirs. Besides, the imperial administration had no regular control over the jagirs. During the rule of the later Mughals, this jagirdari system became hereditary which worsened the situation.

During the rule of Jahangir, one finds gradual decline in the agriculture as well as revenue. The jagirdars had freedom in the management of their lands. Usually these jagirdars oppressed the peasantry. Revenue from Khalsa lands also declined progressively. Shah Jahan tried to better this deteriorating condition of his peasants. He attempted to bring more land under cultivation. The system of granting jagirs to mansabdars in lieu of cash salary continued. During the reign of Aurangzeb, the crisis in agriculture became worse. The state could not evict the peasants and had to keep them busy in cultivation. The officers and jagirdars tyrannized the peasants. During the reign of the later Mughals, the revenue administration begun to decline, this affected the revenue collection and the imperial finances were in a deteriorating condition.

At the outset, one must note that the land revenue system that had been adopted by Akbar has been well appreciated by scholars. As per the testimony of Abul Fazl, the land revenue system of Akbar was very efficient and the peasants were quite happy. Since the demand of the state was fixed, there remained little scope for extracting more from the peasants. Moreover, the land revenue was often remitted during droughts or excessive rains. This land revenue system continued throughout the Mughal period with either little or no change.

Apart from the land revenue which was the chief source of income, there were other taxes to supplement the state's income - tolls, customs, mints, presents which the king received from the governors, ministers and jagirdars on very important occasions, indemnities from the defeated rulers. Thus, the revenue administration during the medieval period foresaw many changes. Most of the collected revenue was spent on wars and on personal luxuries of the rulers. The most prominent example that can be given here is of Aurangzeb. He spent huge amounts from the overflowing treasury he had inherited from his father on Deccan wars and at the end, left an almost depleted treasury for his successors.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Explain the concept of Dashala, Zabti, Gallabaksha System of revenue administration during Mughal period.

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## **12.5 SUMMARY**

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As we discussed about revenue administration, land revenue was the prime source of income of the medieval period. The King's share was defined, as one-twelfth / one-eighth / one-fourth of the land revenue. This usually depended on rulers. Apart of the land revenue there were other taxes to supplement the state's income - tolls, customs, mint, presents which the king received from the governors, ministers and Jagirdars on the various important occasions.

Thus, the revenue administration during the medieval period foresaw many changes. Most of the collected revenue spent on wars and personal luxuries of the rulers.

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## **12.6 ADDITIONAL READINGS**

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- 1) A.L. Shrivastava, The Mughal Empire (1526-1803 A.D.) Shiva Lal Agarawala & Company, 1960.

- 2) Satish Chandra, Medieval India (From Sultanate to the Mughals) Part II, Har-Anand Publication,
- 3) Satish Chandra, History of Medieval India (800-1700), Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2007.
- 4) Puri B.N., History of Indian Administration, Vol. II Medieval Period, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
- 5) Habib Irfan, The Agrarian System Mughal India 1556-1707, Oxford University Press, 1944.

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## **12.7 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY**

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- 1) Give an account of the revenue administration during sultanate period.
- 2) Comment on Raja Todarmal's bondobast and system of revenue collection.
- 3) Describe the revenue administration system of Maratha and Vijaynagar Empire.
- 4) Discuss on the various experiments in revenue administration in Medieval India with special reference to land revenue system.



# Unit - 13

## INDUSTRIES, CRAFTS AND URBANISATION: INDIAN OCEAN TRADE NETWORKS

### Unit structure :

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Various industries in Medieval India
  - 13.2.1 Textiles Industry
  - 13.2.2 Woollen Industry
  - 13.2.3 Metal-work Industry
  - 13.2.4 Paper Industry
  - 13.2.5 The Ship building Industry
  - 13.2.6 Leather Industry
  - 13.2.7 Stone and Brick Industry
  - 13.2.8 Other Minor Industries
- 13.3 Crafts and Urbanization
- 13.4 Indian Ocean trade Networks
- 13.5 Trade and Commerce
- 13.6 Additional Readings
- 13.7 Questions for Self Study

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you should be able to explain

- Importance of various industries in the Medieval India.
- Role of crafts and industry in the trade operations.
- Indian Ocean Trade Networks and its importance.
- The principle trade routes and means of communication.

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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When Ibn Battuta arrived in Delhi in fourteenth century, the Indian subcontinent was already a part of the global network of communication stretching from China in the east to north-west Africa as well as Europe in the west. He found the then Indian cities full of exciting opportunities especially for those who had the required skills, determination and resources. He points out how the cities were densely populated and

prosperous, thereby hinting at the level of urbanisation and the conditions of trade and commerce during this period. Ibn Battuta mentions in his account the description of the cities, particularly of Delhi and Daulatabad.

Most of the cities had crowded streets and there were bright and colourful markets (bazaars) that were stacked with a wide range of goods. The Indian subcontinent had well consolidated with inter-Asian networks of trade and commerce, with Indian manufactures being very much in demand both in South-East and West Asia. This fetched huge profits for the artisan and merchants. The articles or commodities that had been in great demand include Indian textiles, particularly the cotton cloth, fine muslin, silk, brocades and satin. We do find evidences of various rulers promoting in different ways to trade and commerce. To encourage the merchants, special measures were undertaken. Almost all the trade routes had been well-supplied with inns and rest-houses. Ibn Battuta's account also reveals about how efficient was the postal system which becomes evident from the fact that the merchants could not only send information and remit credit across long distances, but also to dispatch goods that were required at very short notice.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the rural society was clearly characterised by considerable social and economic differentiation. This meant that at one end were the big zamindars enjoying superior rights and privileges whereas at the other end, there were the 'untouchable' landless labourers. Between these ends, there was the big peasant who made use of the hired labours and involved in the producing the commodities. On the other hand, it was the smaller peasants who could hardly produce for their subsistence. It is believed that during the seventeenth century, about 15% of the population used to reside in towns which was regarded, on average, to be higher than the proportion of urban population in Western Europe during the same period. Regarding the different kinds of towns that existed, Bernier does mention about trading towns, port-towns, sacred centres, manufacturing towns, pilgrimage towns and so on. Their existence is actually an index of the prosperity of merchant communities as well as professional classes. The other urban groups included the professional classes like physicians, teachers, lawyers, painters, architects, musicians, calligraphers etc.

Hindus did occupy an important role not just in domestic as well as foreign trade. Yet one needs to note that the khurasani (foreign Muslim merchants) also had a large share in it. The rulers of certain coastal kingdoms of the Deccan provided the foreign merchants certain extra-territorial rights as well as special concessions in realisation of the heavy taxes that they used to pay to the state treasury.

The imported commodities included mainly the luxurious items for the upper classes and supply of all kinds of horses and mules which were in deficiency in the country. The exports included food-grains, medicinal herbs, spices, sugar and cloth. Cotton cloth and other textiles were the important items of export to Southeast Asia and East Africa. It has been

put forth that during this period, some of the countries around the Persian Gulf depended on the Indian subcontinent for the entire food supply. Textiles, which were the special exported items, were sent particularly to Southeast Asia and East Africa, some had even reached Europe. Arabs carried these articles to the Red Sea and from there to Damascus and Alexandria. From there they were distributed to the Mediterranean countries as well as beyond.

Though the Indian textile industry is very old, the variety of cloth produced was limited. The Muslims introduced fine varieties of textiles. Bengal was the main centre of this industry and later we find the emergence of Gujarat as a competitor to Bengal in this aspect. Next in line were the industries related to metal work, sugar-manufacturing and paper-making, although the latter was a minor industry. These industries were mainly privately-owned. However, the government equipped as well as managed the large-scale *karkhanas* or factories for supplying its requirements. The royal *karkhanas* at Delhi sometimes used to employ around four thousand weavers for silk alone.

India was connected through sea routes to the Europe, China and other countries in the Pacific Ocean. Through land routes, she was connected to Central Asia, Afghanistan, Persia, Tibet and Bhutan. During the Sultanate period, trade was booming and many foreign traders settled in the country, thus giving a cosmopolitan atmosphere to her cities.

Money lending also used to take place and the wealthy bankers were engaged in this sector. Surprisingly, the political conditions were unstable on most accounts, yet the trade with India was regarded as a safe sector owing to the high level of integrity in the country, as recounted by the traders and travellers of the period. India was a significant exporter and the traders from all over the world came to trade gold for a variety of merchandise, which included agricultural goods, textiles, herbs and more. Moreover, India was an important source of food to many countries in the Persian Gulf. Currency started to assume some degree of usage and weightage and coins were being minted as well as issued during the Sultanate period. These coins got circulated throughout the towns in Northern India. Food and goods were generally found cheap in the Doab area, though the prices during this period varied greatly depending upon a variety of factors, such as shortage or instability. As per the records of the foreign travellers, the prices of the commodities were generally low.

The testimonies of different foreign travellers highlight the same fact that Vijayanagar Empire was rich and prosperous. Agriculture was in good and flourishing condition. The rulers took keen interest in the promotion of agriculture through the implementation of various irrigation projects. There were various industries that supplemented the agricultural wealth. Some examples of the most important industries of the time include textile, mining, perfumery and metallurgy. Trade and industry were well-organised by the guilds.



According to AbdurRazaq – the Persian ambassador, the Vijayanagar empire had in possession around three hundred seaports. Some of the chief seaports included Honnavar, Bhatkal, Mangalore, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon, Kaval, Negapatam, St. Thome and Pulicat. Foreign trade was looked by the Portuguese, Indians and Arabs. Most importantly, the Vijayanagar empire had good trade and commercial relations with the Malaya archipelago, islands in the Indian ocean, Burma, Persia, China, Abyssinia, South Africa and Portugal. The empire mainly exported articles such as cloth, rice, iron, sugar, saltpetre and spices. The articles imported in the empire were copper, coral, mercury, China silk, velvet, horses and elephants. Eduardo Barboza – the Portuguese traveller who visited Vijayanagar in the year 1516, supports the information provided by the earlier travellers. He has praised the city of Vijayanagar in the following words wherein we also get information about its commerce: “The city was of a great extent, highly populous and the seat of an active commerce in the country- diamonds, rubies from Pegu, silk of China and Alexandria and cinnabar, camphor, musk, pepper and sandal from Malabar.”

The political tensions between the Vijayanagara kingdom and its neighbours had its impact on trade. Since warfare depended on effective cavalry, the import of horses from Arabia as well as Central Asia became very significant for these rival kingdoms of the medieval Southern India. Vijayanagara was also known for its markets dealing in spices, textiles and precious stones. It has been noted that trade was often regarded as a status symbol for such cities that had wealthy population who greatly demanded high-valued exotic goods, particularly jewellery and precious stones. The revenue derived from state contributed significantly in the prosperity of that state.

When Sher Shah ascended the throne of Delhi after Humayun and before Akbar, he gave great encouragement to trade and commerce. He abolished all the duties charged on the merchandise at different places within his empire and directed his officials to collect the taxes only at two places – one at the frontier when the commodity was being imported, and second, at the place of its sale. Goods that came from West and Central Asia paid the customs at the Indus. It was not just enough to encourage trade and commerce, what is more required is to maintain and later improvise the conditions enabling more flourishing trade and commerce, thereby bringing prosperity to the kingdom. Sher Shah introduced certain measures to improve the trade and commerce such as protection of traders on roads, efficient police system, issue of good coins, construction of roads and sarais, protection to the property of traders, instruction to officers to look after the interests of traders and so on.

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## **13.2 VARIOUS INDUSTRIES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

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The Medieval India had a large self-supporting economy. The Muslim conquests did not much affect the industry, trade and commerce of the country. No large-scale industries were developed during this

period. We find that most of the industries were localised. Some of the important village industries that had flourished during the medieval period are as follows – cotton processing, spinning and weaving, sugar and gur manufacturing, extraction of oil from oil-seeds, manufacture of indigo, pottery and leather-work, production of agricultural implements, war weapons, utensils, bronze, silver and copper statues of gods and goddesses and the smith's craft in gold, silver, bronze, copper as well as many alloys and so on.

### **13.2.1 Textiles Industry :**

Textiles was the largest and also the most popular industry in medieval India. Moreover, it was spread all over the country. The cotton textiles were manufactured in both cottage industries and large-scale industries. The main centres of the cotton textile industry were Bengal, Gujarat, Orissa and Malwa. Surat, Cambay, Patna, Burhanpur, Delhi, Agra, Sonargaon, Benaras, Devgiri, Lahore, Thatta and Multan were some of the towns and cities that were famous for the varieties of clothes. The cotton cloth was of such fine quality that they were in great demand in foreign countries. Besides, there were much finer varieties of cloth that were woven but those were specially for the royalty and the aristocratic class. Bengal and Gujarat occupied a prime position when it came to the manufacture and the export of textile goods. The reasons for this include – availability of cotton in the neighbourhood, seacoast with the harbour facility as well as the traditional commercial relations with the foreign countries. Gujarat's contribution can be best understood from the statements made regarding Cambay. Cambay contributed about half of the total textile exports of India. It had a number of skilled craftsmen. Also, the Cambay cloth had rich and extensive market in Western Europe, South Africa and South Asia.

Travellers of this period give vivid descriptions of the textiles woven in the country. For instance, Amir Khusro describes the muslin as the 'Bengal cloth' with an extremely fine texture; the Chinese traveller Ma Huan found several varieties of cloths in Bengal and mentions about the existence of mulberry trees and silkworms in Bengal; etc. The cotton weaving industry also supported certain subsidiary industries such as dyeing, calico printing in some areas and a variety of cloth-printing technique known as *bandhani* (a speciality of Rajasthan).

Abul Fazal, in his *Ain-i-Akbari* talks about the cotton fabrics of Khandesh. During Akbar's rule, fine cloth of great varieties was produced at places like Varanasi, Agra, Malwa and Gujarat. There were four industrial belts of the manufacture of cotton which were near the outlets to the sea. These industrial belts were:

1. The Indus plain
2. The coastal region along the Gulf of Cambay as far south as Dabhol
3. The Coromandel Coast
4. Bengal

The important centres of silk manufacture were Qasim Bazaar, Malda, Murshidabad, Patna and Benaras. Surprisingly, silk was not produced in Gujarat but still the silk-weaving industry flourished there. The silk of Cambay was very much in demand since the rule of the Delhi Sultans. During the rule of the Mughals, it was the silk of Ahmedabad that enjoyed a high reputation. Silk weaving industry were at Lahore, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Silk was largely used among the members of the aristocratic class.

#### **13.2.2 Woollen Industry :**

The woollen industry had been confined to a small belt of territory that included Rajasthan, Lahore, Kabul, Kashmir, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Amritsar, Patna, Jaunpur and Burhanpur. Different types of blankets, shawls and other woollen garments were manufactured in Kashmir. The shawls of Kashmir known for their softness and their warmth. These shawls were woven from the mountain goats' fleece imported from Ladakh and Tibet. Fatehpur Sikri was famous for its fine carpets. The Carpet weaving industry flourished at Agra and Lahore.

#### **13.2.3 Metal-work Industry :**

Metal-work based industry had made considerable progress in ancient India. The Mehrauli pillar near Delhi, the use of iron beams in the temples in various parts of the country and the iron images indicate that iron industry flourished in the ancient times. During the rule of the Delhi Sultans, the metal work industry continued as before. Iron was used for the manufacture of various types of defensive as well as offensive weapons such as swords, guns, cannons, shields and armours. Iron was also used extensively for building houses, palaces and forts, for making utensils and various types of agricultural and domestic implements. It was one of the main metals used in the manufacture of crucibles, in the building of ships and boats. Lahore, Multan, Mewar, Gujarat and Golconda were chief centers of manufacture of iron and steel articles. Brass and copper were among the large-scale industries. These metals were used for manufacturing utensils, ornaments of lower-class people, manufacturing guns and cannons as well as minting coins. Benaras had been famous for the manufacture of both copper and brass metalwares. Besides, Delhi and Lucknow were also known for their copper and brass metal works. Ornaments made of gold and silver were in wide use especially among the richer classes. Bronze ornaments were also in vogue. Ornaments were also decorated with excellent inlay work. Benaras, Delhi, Gujarat and Agra were famous for their beautiful inlaid ornaments. This industry acquired great height during the reigns of Akbar and Shah Jahan.

#### **13.2.4 Paper Industry :**

Amir Khusro refers to the manufacture of paper called *shamior* Syrian paper in plain and silk varieties. Ma Huan, The Chinese traveller who had visited Bengal, made a reference of the manufacture of white glossy paper from the bark of a tree. Nicolo Conti refers to the use of paper in Gujarat. The various manuscripts and other documents which have come down from the medieval period confirm the existence of paper

industry during the medieval period. Under the Mughals, the paper industry made further progress. It was concentrated in Sialkot, Kashmir, Delhi, Gaya, Ahmedabad, Rajgir, Patna and other places. Special quality of paper was manufactured at Shahzadpur near Allahabad.

#### **13.2.5 The Shipbuilding Industry :**

The Shipbuilding industry was well-developed during the Mughal period. Large sea-going ships were built on an extensive scale both on the eastern and western coasts. Surat was an important centre of ship industry as good type of timber was available in its vicinity. A large number of boats operated by the Mallah caste were constructed throughout the country. The Indian shipbuilding industry was so much advanced that the Portuguese had some of their best ships built in India. The heaviest passenger ships of that period, that is 1000 – 1500 tons were used for Haj traffic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

#### **13.2.6 Leather Industry :**

Talking about the leather industry of this period, it also saw considerable development. There was general demand for various types of leather goods, for example, saddles, scabbards for swords, book-covers, shoes or water containers. In Bengal, sugar was packed in leather parcels for export. In Gujarat, gold and silver embroidered leather mats of such beauty were manufactured that they won admiration of the Italian traveller, Marco Polo.

#### **13.2.7 Stone and Brick Industry :**

The Indian artisans and masons displayed great skill in stone and brick work. They not only constructed some of the outstanding buildings of Hindustan, but also displayed their skill by constructing a number of buildings in Kabul, Ghazni and Samarkand.

The state accorded special patronage to the masons and craftsmen. Ala-ud-Din Khilji is said to have employed 70,000 workers for the construction of the state buildings. Babur also speaks highly of the skill of the Indian workmen and takes pride in claiming that he engaged 680 stonecutters in the construction of his buildings at Agra.

The Dilwara temples at Mount Abu and the buildings of Chittorgarh in Rajasthan are also a testimony of the brilliant skill of the Indian craftsmen in stone brick-work. The period also witnessed the introduction of the use of enameled tiles and bricks, which continued to grow in the subsequent centuries.

#### **13.2.8 Other Minor Industries :**

There were lot of minor industries that had been in existence in medieval India. Besides carpentry and pottery, a large number of minor industries were devoted to the manufacture of decorative articles. For instance, coral work was done in Gujarat and Bengal, ivory carving, gold embroidery and imitation jewellery were carried out in various parts of India. Perfumes and scented oils, stone and wood work, mats and basket

making etc. were some other minor industries that flourished in different parts of the country during the medieval period.

It is important to note down that the industrial production during the medieval period was entirely based on handicrafts. The instruments used for the manufacture of various commodities were simple. The cattle were used as the chief source of power. There is however, no evidence to show that the wind or water power was used as sources of power. However, hydraulic turbines were used to drive grinding mills. Individual craftsmen worked on their products in their own homes. The rural artisans like weavers, oilmen, smiths, carpenters and potters generally bartered their services. In the case of the cities, the artisans generally sold their finished products for cash in the open markets. In such industries as shipbuilding, mining and construction of forts, palaces, bridges etc. large number of skilled and unskilled labourers was employed.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Describe the various industries during medieval period.

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### **13.3 URBANISATION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

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Urbanisation in the medieval period of Indian history was connected with the growth of regional kingdoms and an expansion of Indian Ocean trade. Macro level changes took place which produced new patterns of interaction. Agrahara system of land grants by the royalty created a new class of land holders which was a new socio-economic formation based on land grants. There was a substantial change in the material milieu from the earlier period as a result of these land grants. Expansion of agrarian economy could be perceived along with state formation and expansion of state societies in the periphery. Villages were neither isolates nor undifferentiated, and were connected with the apex or supra-local political centres through administrative tiers at locality levels. Agrarian economy gave fillip to non-agrarian sector thereby leading to a process of urbanisation. Thus early medieval urbanisation could be characterised by changes in the agrarian economy, greater complexities in the political sphere and an expanding Indian Ocean trade network. However to locate the urban centres and then to explain their growth remain a vexed problem and sifting through the vast epigraphic and other types of textual data and looking for a pura, nagara or pattana, different terms denoting urban centres, would be a preliminary way of approaching the problem.

The Arab conquest of Sindh and Punjab (712-13 CE) followed by the Ghazni and the Ghorid invasions, resulting in the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate, drastically modified the traditional institutions. The introduction of new politico-cultural institutions notably shaped and influenced the existing traditional fabric of the subcontinent. At the international scenario by 11th century there began shifts in Arab assaults towards Persia and the Persian Gulf. Thus during 8-12th centuries while Persian Gulf was the dominant route, with Venice being at the centre stage, the Red Sea lagged behind. With the Turkish and the Mongol attacks and unsettling of the Caliphate the Red Sea route through Egypt emerged prominent. Al-Fustat (Cairo) and Alexandria assumed importance, while Egypt and Syria became the core distribution centres. Cairo was now catching up with the eastern ports of Calicut and Aden, a trading link that thus far was primarily confined to the western coast via Persian Gulf. Red Sea added eastcoast link via Malacca, which was soon to occupy the centre stage in China-India eastern trade. These encounters and developments greatly facilitated and accelerated the international trade, further enriching the hinterlands resulting in high degree of monetisation and urbanisation in the subcontinent.

The resurgence of a variety of urban centres visible in the 9-10th centuries continued during the Sultanate period albeit at a much greater pace. Delhi Sultans brought a large part of the subcontinent under their sway. The peace following the establishment of the Turkish power helped traders and craftsmen. The introduction of new techniques and tools led to the emergence of new crafts which got further accelerated by the 'liberation of craftsmen' who were shackled by the caste restrictions. This 'liberation' contributed to craft mobility what Mohammad Habib has termed an 'urban revolution'. New towns emerged and the existing ones were modified. Further, since the new ruling elite was largely city based; the large share of revenue resources from the rural areas were mobilised to the cities to meet the requirements of their armed retainers and large establishments. The luxurious lifestyle of the elites/nobility and their other needs accompanied with an increased demand for various commodities which in turn steered the emergence of new crafts as well as expansion of the existing ones. Moreover, state's insistence on revenue returns in cash further speeded the monetization process that facilitated the spurt in markets across the subcontinent in the fourteenth century.

The Turkish conquest also radically altered the physical cityscape. The sovereigns, the royalty and the nobility belonged to a different faith - Islam. Their requirements for worship were different resulting in mosques and tombs to the cityscape. The new architectural forms, arch and dome and the introduction of good cementing material changed the skylines of the city, thus drastically transforming the cityscape. The Mongol invasions further unsettled the political scenario in Central Asia and Iran resulting in the emigration of the Muslim literati to the Indian subcontinent. Soon north Indian cities acquired a cosmopolitan character. This process continued even after the decline of the Sultanate. The cities flourished across various regions. The new urban centres like Jaunpur, Gaur/Pandua,

Mandu, Bidar, Gulbarga, Ahmadabad emerged in the fifteenth century. In the peninsular India medieval urbanism took a different trajectory. Here temples and ceremonial complexes were 'institutionalised' and townships emerged around them. The awesome fascinating city of Vijayanagara, situated in a dramatic rocky terrain with its splendid ruins and the quintessential Sultanate city Delhi which represented the signet cities of the peninsular India.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write a note on development of urbanisation in medieval period.

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### **13.4 INDIAN OCEAN TRADE NETWORKS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

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Indian Ocean Trade has been a key factor in East–West exchanges throughout history. Long-distance trade in dhows and proas made it a dynamic zone of interaction between peoples, cultures, and civilizations stretching from Southeast to East and South East Africa and East Mediterranean in the West in prehistoric and early historic periods. Cities and states on the Indian Ocean rim focused on both the sea and the land.

During the Muslim period, in which the Muslims had dominated the trade across the Indian Ocean, the Gujaratis were bringing spices from the Moluccas as well as silk from China, in exchange for manufactured items such as textiles, and then selling them to the Egyptians and Arabs. Calicut was the center of Indian pepper exports to the Red Sea and Europe at this time with Egyptian and Arab traders being particularly active.

Arabic missionaries and merchants began to spread Islam along the western shores of the Indian Ocean from the 8th century, if not earlier. A Swahili stone mosque dating to the 8th-15th centuries have been found in Shanga, Kenya. Trade across the Indian Ocean gradually introduced Arabic script and rice as a staple in Eastern Africa. Muslim merchants traded an estimated 1000 African slaves annually between 800 and 1700, a number that grew to c. 4000 during the 18th century, and 3700 during the period 1800-1870. Slave trade also occurred in the eastern Indian Ocean before the Dutch settled there around 1600 but the volume of this trade is unknown.

In Madagascar, merchants and slave traders from the Middle East (Shirazi Persians, Omani Arabs, Arabized Jews, accompanied by Bantus from southeast Africa) and from Asia (Gujaratis, Malays, Javanese, Bugis) were sometimes integrated within the indigenous Malagasy clans New

waves of Austronesian migrants arrived in Madagascar at this time leaving behind a lasting cultural and genetic legacy.

The first half of the sixteenth century was a period of the dominance of gold in the Indian Ocean trade, and the 'river of gold' which flowed through the Red Sea brought to the Indian Ocean markets a multitude of gold coins (ashrafis, sultanis and Yemeni dinars), all modelled on the Venetian ducat which itself came in large quantities. African gold too was brought to Gujarat from both Cairo and the Indian Ocean ports of Malindi and Sofala. In a report of 1525, the Red Sea commander of the Ottoman fleet, Sulaiman Rais, mentioned that fifty to sixty ships from India called at the port of Aden every year and brought revenue to the customs which was estimated at 200, 000 sultanis (a Mamluk gold coin of 3.43 grains) per annum.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Assess the Indian ocean trade in networks in medieval India.

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## **13.5 TRADE AND COMMERCE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

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Regarding the trade and commerce during the Mughal rule, it was well-developed. Though the bulk of marketable commodities, both agricultural and non-agricultural, were absorbed by the local demands, the needs of the town population had to be met largely from the country around them. The sale of the products was well-organised. There were periodical markets also known as 'peth' or 'haat'. In the large towns and the cities, the main business was done through regular shops in the markets or *mandis*. The purchase and sale of all kinds of cattle usually took place in the cattle fairs that were occasionally organised.

There was great volume of internal trade during this period. The foreign travellers like Barboza, Paes, Nicolo Conti and others provided great deal of information regarding the inland trade of India. In the course of his travels within India, Ibn Battuta came across the cities with large markets during the first half of the fourteenth century. The inland trade was facilitated by the system of excellent roads in existence at that time. But the conception of road in the medieval period was very much different than what is perceived today. Most roads seem to have been only in the form of tracks with rows of trees on both the sides. One of the important features of all roads was the existence of sarais at short intervals with wells or small tanks which provided shelter and water for the travellers as well as the animals. There was the great road which extended from Delhi to Daulatabad for a distance of forty days journey. This road continued to



Telangana and onwards to Madura at a distance of six months journey on foot.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, from the inland town of Limodara in Gujarat, carnelian beads were carried in large quantities to the great seaport of Cambay to be exported to Europe and East Africa. Copper imported at the port of Dabhol in large quantities was carried to the interior. The seaport of Rander in Gujarat was the largest centre of trade in that region for the products of Malacca and China.

There were big marts in existence in many towns and cities and this proved to be an important factor in the large-scale commercial business and internal trade. The capital- Delhi and the provinces such as Multan, Lahore, Jaunpur, the pilgrimage centres such as Ajmer, Allahabad, Benaras, Puri as well as the towns on the highways that included Agra, Patna, Ahmedabad, Burhanpur and Thatta, the ports on both the east and the west coasts of India played crucial role as the important centres for trade and commerce.

Having blessed with a lengthy coastline, India foresaw flourishing coastal trade. The important ports on the west coast included Cambay, Diu, Surat, Goa, Calicut, Cochin and Quilon. From the detailed narrative of Ibn Battuta and Barboza, one learns that the western coast of India had large number of seaports with excellent harbours and extensive trade. It was the Malabari merchants who monopolised the trade between Gujarat and Malabar. The coastal trade of the Deccan ports seems to have been shared by both Gujarati and the Malabari merchants. In case of the Coromandel coast, the trade of the South-eastern coastal region and the Vijayanagara kingdom was carried on largely by the Hindu and Muslim merchants from the cities of Malabar. The Muslim ships visited Pulicat in large numbers which was a great market for Burmese rubies and musk.

The internal trade was of three types during the Mughal rule, that is - inland, coastal and riverine trade. However, the merchants gave much preference to coastal trade for it was considered much easier, much safer and far more profitable to trade by sea than by land. In the coastal trade, there was danger and threats from pirates. But this problem had been limited to only certain areas. During the Mughal period, the riverine trade was carried through the four main river systems:

1. The Indus and its tributaries
2. The Ganges and its tributaries
3. Tapi system
4. Bengal Delta system

A number of towns on these rivers acted as commercial and trading centres. A special class of merchants having the necessary capital and enterprise controlled large-scale internal trade. Under the caste system, the mercantile community belonged to the Vaishya caste. The Multanis and the Gujarati banias were the most important business

communities of Northern and Western India. Though the Hindu merchants had dominance over the internal trade, the foreign Muslim merchants known as khurasanis were also engaged in trade all over the country.

In addition to the regular business communities which carried on the entire trade, certain other categories of people were also dependent on the trade, such as the brokers, agents, shahus and the mahajans also dependent on trade for their livelihood. The brokers charged commission from the sellers and the purchasers. They usually tried to raise the prices of the commodities. The shahus and mahajans were moneylenders and acted as native bankers. They advanced loans against hundis and also lent money on high interest rates.

### **Transportation and Communication :**

The contemporary Indian sources and accounts of the foreign travellers give references to the various modes of transport used in the internal trade. The usual means of transport included packed-oxen, bullock carts, horse, mules, camels or elephants. Ships large, medium and small were used for the coastal trade and boats of various types and sizes were in use for the riverine trade. The traders and merchants had to pay transit, dues while commodities were transported from one part of the country to the other. In ports, frontier towns and big trading centres, all goods sent out or in transit had to pay two and a half percent of the value of goods as tax. Aurangzeb raised this duty to five percent for the Hindus. Besides the traders were required to pay the tolls and cesses imposed by different local authorities controlling the routes.

India developed and maintained commercial relations with five important regions – the Red Sea, the east African coast, the Malaya archipelago, China and some countries in Pacific. The direct sea-routes that connected India with the West was chiefly two – the Persian Gulf route and the Red Sea route. Through the Persian Gulf route, the merchandise was carried overland through Iraq to the Mediterranean coast. On the other hand, the merchandise through the Red Sea route was transported through Egypt to the Mediterranean ports. Later the Venetian and Italian merchants distribute these goods all over the Western Europe. Ormuz was the grand emporium of trade through the Persian Gulf route whereas Aden and Jeddah were the two great emporia of trade by the Red Sea route. Ibn Battuta mentions how Ormuz was the entrepot of Hind and Sind. Aden was at that time the port of call for India's great ships arriving there from Cambay, Thana, Quilon, Mangalore, Honnavar, Calicut and others. In India, Malabar was the great clearinghouse of the merchandise from the east and the west across the Indian Ocean.

The travellers like Ibn Battuta, Barboza, Bernier and Abul Fazal mentions in depth about India's foreign trade during this period both through sea and land. Barboza points out that India's trade with East Africa had been fostered by a chain of Arab settlements on the African coast such as those of Zeila, Mogadishu, Mombasa and Kilwa. In the early part of the fourteenth century, the Chinese ships to the three Malabar ports

of Ely, Calicut and Quilon undertook the regular voyages. Malacca grew as a great international port of Southeast Asia in the fifteenth century. Ships visited it from Pegu, Bengal, Pulicat, Coromandel, Malabar and Gujarat. No wonder, Barboza described Malacca as the richest seaport with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and the largest volume of shipping trade in the whole world.

India exported variety of commodities such as food-grains, textiles, spices, oil seeds, sugar, aromatic wood etc. Textiles and spices from India were in greater demand especially in Europe. The muslin was exported to Persia, Arabia and Egypt. Silk that was manufactured mainly at Surat, Benaras, Bengal and Ahmedabad were exported mainly to Europe. Spices were another important commodity of India especially in Europe. Pepper was the most sought-after commodity. Other minor spices that were exported included cardamom, ginger, turmeric and various drugs. Gum-lac, pearls and diamonds were also exported. The travellers make a note that the trade and commerce developed greatly under Akbar and Jahangir.

India during this period also imported certain articles which included gold, silver, mercury, lead and not to forget, good quality horses. In fact, horses were the most important articles of import as they were in much demand amongst the ruling classes of the medieval period. From China, porcelain and silk were also imported. Gold and silver were imported in huge quantities from the foreign countries. As noted by the French traveller Bernier, India used to import commodities like dried and fresh fruits, amber, rough rubies etc. in large quantities from Central Asia and Afghanistan. From the Himalayan states and Tibet, musk, China-wood, jade, fine wool, gold, copper, lead and such articles were imported.

One can make a rough estimate from the available accounts and observations made by the different foreign travellers that the balance of trade on the whole was much favourable to India. Though the volume of trade was considerably small during the period of the Delhi Sultanate, it witnessed a great increase during the Mughal period. The Mughal rulers encouraged trading with the European countries. Moreover, a number of European companies were permitted to establish their factories on the coasts of India.

The Muslim dominance in India's overseas trade got seriously challenged by the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their authority and monopoly in trade was further challenged by the Dutch and English. This makes one realise that during the Mughal period, the Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch and English competed for the control over the sea-borne trade of India.

**Check your Progress :**

- 1) Write an essay on trade and commerce during medieval period.
- 2) Comment on the transportation and communication system during medieval India.

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**13.5 REFERENCE BOOKS**

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- 1) Upinder Singla, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India : From the Stone Age to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, Pearson Education.
- 2) Describe the developments of various industries period.

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**13.6 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY**

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- 1) Discuss in detail about industrial development and Trade in Medieval period.



# Unit - 14

## MONETARY AND BANKING SYSTEM

### Unit structure :

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Monetary System in Medieval India
  - 14.2.1 Monetary system in Sultanate period
  - 14.2.2 Monetary system in Mughal period
  - 14.2.3 Exchange value of coins
  - 14.2.4 Monetary system in Vijay Nagar Empire
- 14.3 Monetary in circulation in Medieval India
- 14.4 Banking System in Medieval India
- 14.5 Summary
- 14.6 Additional Readings
- 14.7 Questions for Self Study

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### 14.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you should be able to explain :

- Various coins and their circulation in Economic activities.
- To describe the coin and monetary system in Medieval India.
- To understand banking system and their activities in Medieval India.
- Understand the classification of currency in Medieval India.

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### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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After the establishment of sultanate of Delhi, there were a series of dynasties who ruled different regions of India. With the changing administrations, currency and coinage of Medieval India also evolved to depict the magnificent art, literature and architecture from this flourishing era : Medieval India coinage saw a phase of experimentation under the regime of Muhammad B.N. Tughalak, who introduced the concept of currency. Exceeding in numbers by a fair margin as compared to his predecessor, he inscribed his character and activities to produce gold coins in abundance.

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### 14.2 MONETARY SYSTEM IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

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The medieval monetary economies, coins were the lifeblood of exchange and commerce. The use of metallic money served to overcome

the restrictions of barter transactions. To ensure continuity in economic exchange, a system of credit was devised in developed market economies by allowing claims to money to be used for making payments. Such a system of credit wherein payments could be deferred or money could be transferred from one sector to another, brought about an expansion in the existing volume of currency and, at the same time, an increase in its velocity of circulation. When the banking instruments like bills of exchange, letters of credit etc. were used in place of currency, the volume of money increased automatically, while the deposits and money-loans facilitated the circulation of currency among the individuals. The close coexistence of metallic money, credit and banking instruments is widely discussed by historians and economists and there is a lively debate over the exact nature of his relationship in the event of a change in money supply. In an argument, credit was considered as a substitute for actual money that was capable of performing specific acts of exchange on its own. However, the monetarists put forth the argument that credit is only a supplementary means of payment for the reason that the medieval transactions were structurally tied to settlement in specie.

To understand the relationship between money, credit and banking instruments in the Mughal Empire, one needs to examine the evolution of a monetized network of exchange. The term 'banking' is used here for any form of a regular, usually recorded, business of accepting deposits and advancing loans (out of the funds made available by those deposits), carried on by individuals or firms.

After a prolonged period of monetary contraction, following a decline in the exchange network and commerce under the phase of 'Indian Feudalism', a gradual reorganisation of the monetary economy took place in the century preceding the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. Although the bureaucracy and soldiery of the early Sultans were paid in revenue assignments (iqta), firm evidence of money payment in taxation only comes with the reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316).<sup>2</sup> The establishment of a multi-metallic currency system (gold, silver, billon and copper) and the reliance of the ruling class on money-lenders (sarrafs), who were paid in drafts (qabz-ha) drawn on the revenues against their loans, also shows signs of the increasing use of money.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, the collection of land revenue in money, growing urbanisation and handicraft production, and a rise in inland and overseas commerce were reflected in enlarged currency output till at least the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> A contraction in precious metal coinage started soon after, which continued with growing severity throughout the fifteenth century. Even though the early Mughals revived the coining of silver in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, albeit on a modest scale and designed much on the Central Asian rather than the Indian standard, billon and copper coins continued to be struck and remained the predominant media of exchange.

The above overview points to a configuration of a set of factors, both internal and external, in shaping the medieval Indian economy. Thus

far, economic historians have placed much more emphasis on the former. The object of the present paper is to provide an evaluation of the flow of precious metals to the Sultanates of Delhi and Gujarat along the major trade routes in order to suggest that changes within their respective circulating media often coincided with external variations in international trade and the pattern of bullion flows from Europe to the Islamic East and the Indian subcontinent.

#### **14.2.1 MONETARY SYSTEM IN SULTANTE PERIOD**

An important source of the supply of precious metals to India was the Levantine trade, which passed eastern commodities to Europe in exchange for gold and silver since Roman times.<sup>5</sup> Egypt, a prominent entire pot in the Levantine circuit, was a major centre for such exchanges. The town of Qus in upper Egypt was described in the twelfth century as a city of fine markets frequented by merchants from Yemen and India.<sup>6</sup> Indian merchandise came from Yemen to the Red Sea port of Ayzab in Indian and Yemeni merchant ships and was brought in caravans to Qus.<sup>7</sup> The traffic was so voluminous that Ibn Jubayr described, as a characteristic feature of this route, loads of spices abandoned by the sickness of camels.<sup>8</sup> Later, with the Karimi merchants of Egypt controlling the mercantile traffic from Yemen, Indian ships mostly called at the port of Aden, though Ayzab still retained its importance for Indian merchandise brought to the African coast.<sup>9</sup> In order to reach the Arab side of the Red Sea, merchants travelled from Cairo both by land and sea and reached Aden either directly by Tor (on the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula) or via Jiddah. The annual pilgrimage caravan from Damascus brought merchants to both Mecca and Aden to run a parallel land trade alongside the maritime route.

When the Delhi Sultanate was established in the thirteenth century, Indian overseas trade with the Red Sea and Levant was already an established feature of the economic life of this region. Significantly, this was also an era of expansion in silver coinage in most of the regions lying to the west with which India was trading. The successive production of silver from the Central European mines which started with Goslar (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Freiberg (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), and ended with Kutna Hora in Bohemia in the late 13th century, precipitated a flow of silver within Europe, both westwards and eastwards.<sup>10</sup> The latter stream, more significant for our investigation, ended up in Italy, which also acquired much of the north-western silver at the fairs of Champagne. <sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that the revival of late Ayyubid and Mamluk silver coinage owed much to the export of silver to Egypt against a reverse remittance of gold caused by a moving bi-metallic ratio (metals flowing to the areas of high price).<sup>12</sup> However, the exchange of precious metals for eastern merchandise still remained an important aspect of international trade conducted through the Levantine entire pots. The Italian merchants who had established factories (fanadiq) at Alexandria and Aleppo exchanged silver, and gold from the late thirteenth century not only for the products of the Levant (Syrian cotton, for example) but also spices and other goods which came from India and further east.

The intermediate region of Il-Khanid Iran obtained much of its silver from Central Asian mines and those of Eastern Anatolia-Greater Armenia. Ashtor, contesting Watson's explanation of precious metal exchange driven by bi-metallic arbitrage, attributed the revival of silver coinage in Syria and Iraq in the thirteenth century to the westward movement of Central Asian silver as a result of the military spending of the Mongols.<sup>15</sup> Besides, European silver was carried to northern Iran by Armenian and Italian merchants who were trading under Mongol overlordship along the caravan highway linking Trebizond with Tabriz.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the dirham struck by the Mongols of the Golden Horde ('asper') found its way to Tabriz in some quantity.<sup>17</sup> The immense increase in the circulation of silver under the Il-Khans can be gauged from a change in the bi-metallic ratio, from 1 :6 in the first half of the thirteenth century to 1:12 under Ghazan Khan.<sup>18</sup> The rise of Tabriz as a political and commercial centre of eminence after the fall of Baghdad, was supported by the prolific mint output of this city.<sup>19</sup> Marco Polo, who was travelling through Iran on his return journey to Europe, described the city as an important centre of trade with India in the late thirteenth century.<sup>20</sup> It is quite likely that Indian and Iranian merchants were active on this route which linked Persian Gulf ports to northern Iran. A key feature of Ghazan Khan's financial restructuring of Iran was his partnership with the Bohra merchants of Qais who handled the trade in bullion and merchandise in the Indian Ocean. Another merchant group at Hurmuz became prominent under the later Il-Khanids, but the Bohras too continued to trade between India and Iran.

The Il-khanid historians, Wassaf, while describing the characteristic features of India (*wasf i hind*) in the early fourteenth century, marvelled at the Indian exports of spices, perfumes, indigo (*nil*) and other products which were traded against gold and silver (*zar o sim*) and other merchandises and rarities.<sup>22</sup> He also added that this stock of precious metals acquired through trade was never exported out of the country.<sup>23</sup> Modern researches, based on the elite consumption of foreign products, have shown that there was an outflow of both gold and silver from India to import horses and Levantine textiles.<sup>24</sup> But there can be little doubt that India's overall trade balances were favourable enough to strike the attention of contemporary observers.

The trade between India and Iran on the land route from Tabriz and via the Persian Gulf had become so prosperous that the Italian merchants decided to establish a direct link with India and China using Tabriz as their headquarters.<sup>25</sup> Venetian documents reveal that, in an attempt to explore opportunities for regular trade, the merchants of Venice travelled to Delhi to sell their goods to Muhammad Tughlaq.<sup>26</sup> The interest shown by the Genoese, with the advantage of having their own ships in the Indian Ocean, in diverting the India trade from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf with the help of the Il-Khans underscores the traditional rivalry between the two Mediterranean republics and shows the extent of competition in this trading zone.



Such evidence, albeit indirect, can be adduced to suggest that the production of precious metal coins in the Delhi Sultanate came to rely sufficiently on bullion supplied through trade with Central Asia, Iran, the Levantine region and Europe. The reference to indigo in the account of Wassaf facilitates the identification of at least one important item of export from the inland markets of Gujarat and possibly Agra, and we have evidence of both indigo and cotton textiles reaching the Ottoman city of Bursa in the late fifteenth century via the Red Sea.<sup>28</sup> Also, a part of the bullion reaching South India and the Deccan was brought to Delhi in raids conducted by Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq. In addition, silver was brought to the core areas of the Sultanate from tribute-paying Bengal, which itself received it from Yunnan.

It may not simply be a coincidence that, with a solitary exception, the dates of all the coins found in the Broach hoard fall between 1260-1382 A. D., a period which we know from textual and numismatic evidence to be the most flourishing in terms of the usage of metallic money. An analysis of the composition of the hoard can also explain, by pointing to the source of gold imports, the relative rise in the gold coinage of the Delhi Sultanate from the late thirteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Even though the Broach hoard has not been catalogued in full, particularly the holdings in silver, it is possible to link the trade, pattern and composition of the precious metals carried to Gujarat with the monetary systems of both the exporting and importing countries. One thing which immediately strikes us is the predominance of gold (in terms of its value) in the total holdings. Altogether 448 gold coins have been reported as against 1200 in silver. Out of these 448 coins, 367 are reported to have belonged to the Bahri Mamluk Sultans of Egypt (more than 70 percent), and a numismatic description of 313 coins is provided by Codrington.

The period subsequent to the interment of the Broach hoard was marked by a fall in the silver currency of the Delhi Sultanate, and gold followed suit very quickly. Successive attempts were made by monetary authorities to reduce the weight of the silver tanka as well as to replace it with a billon coin. The debasement of silver coinage culminated in the much derided policy of Muhammad Tughlaq to establish a fiduciary currency - a copper coin with the legal value of a silver tanka. Billon and copper coins started dominating the market from the reign of Firuz Tughlaq, and by the turn of the fourteenth century precious metal coinage had practically disappeared from northern India. A point was reached under the Lodi Sultans (1451 - 1526) when the streak of silver left in the coin earned it the designation *tanka i siyah* (black tanka), while the pre-existing pure silver coin needed to be qualified as *tanka i nuqra* (silver tanka).

Since the Lodis never struck coins in either silver or gold,<sup>41</sup> all references to the tanka in the literature contemporaneous with to their reign belong to the billon variety which also circulated under the specific names of the Lodi Sultans (*tanka i bahluli* and *tanka i sikandari*). Abul Fazl describes the coinage of Sikandar Lodi as one of copper (*misin naqd*)

blended with silver (nuqra amez), and the assay results of tanka i sikandari point to an average silver content of 7 to 8 grains.

#### **14.2.2 MONETARY SYSTEM IN MUGHAL INDIA**

Under the Mughals, the currency system was very well organised. A high level of purity of metals was also achieved. The Mughal currency system may be termed as trimetallic. Coins were of three metals, viz, copper, silver and gold. However, the silver coin was the base of the Fiscal and Monetary System Currency.

The silver coin has a long pre Mughal history. It was used during Delhi Sultanate for long as tanka. Sher Shah for the first time standardized the silver coin. It was called rupaya and had a weight of 178 grains (troy) (troy weight is a British system of weight used for gold, silver and jewels in which 1 pound = 12 ounces = 5760 grains). For minting purposes, an alloy was added which was kept below 4 percent of the weight of the coin. Akbar continued the rupaya as the basic currency with more or less the same weight. Under Aurangzeb the weight of the rupaya was increased to 180 grains (troy). The silver rupaya was the main coin used for business and revenue transactions.

The Mughals issued a gold coin called ashrafi or mahr. It weighed 169 grains (troy). This coin was not commonly used in commercial transactions. It was mainly used for hoarding purposes and also for giving in gift. The most common coin used for small transactions was the copper dam which weighed around 323 grains. The weight of the copper dam was reduced by one third during Aurangzeb's reign presumably because of the shortage of copper. Further, for very petty transactions Kawadis (see-shells) were used in coastal areas. These were brought mainly from the Maldivian islands. Around 2500 kauris equaled a rupaya.

Apart from the silver rupaya other types of coins were also used. The most important of these were mahmudis, a long standing silver coin of Gujarat. Even after the establishment of the Mughal rule in Gujarat it continued to be minted and used in Gujarat for commercial transaction.

#### **14.2.3 EXCHANGE VALUE OF COINS**

The exchange value of gold, silver and copper coins kept fluctuating depending on the supply of these metals in the market. The silver value of gold kept fluctuating throughout the Mughal period, ranging from 10 to 14 rupaya for one gold coin. As for copper coin, taking 1595 as the base year, Irfan Habib shows that by the early 1660s it rose to 2.5 times, but by 1700 it came down to the double and again by 1750 it reached the level of the 1660s.

For transaction purposes during Akbar's period, 40 copper dams were considered equal to one rupaya. After his death, as the rate of copper appreciated sharply, this ratio could not be maintained. Since all the land revenue assessment and calculations were done in dams, it became

necessary to use it as notional fractional units of rupaya. Silver coins of small fractions called ma were also used. It was one-sixteenth of a rupee.

In the above account, we have not gone into the details of the complexities and the debates among historians about the Mughal currency system. We have only tried to present before you in a simplified manner the basic features of Mughal coinage.

#### **14.2.4 MONETARY SYSTEM IN VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE**

In the Vijaynagar Empire, a gold coin called hun or pagoda was used. After the disintegration of Vijaynagar, its circulation continued in the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkunda. In many Deccan kingdoms, an alloy of copper and silver called tanka was in use. After the expansion of the Mughals in Deccan a number of mints were established in that region to produce Mughal silver coins.

#### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Explain the monetary system in medieval India.

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#### **14.3 MONETARY IN CIRCULATION IN MEDIEVAL INDIA**

Within the monetized sector of the Mughal empire one can identify two broad streams of exchange: one largely local in nature and the other linked to long-distance trade and foreign markets. At the lowest level, the village community obtained its weekly supplies of goods from the nearest qasba, made cash payments to its functionaries which included the money-changers (sarrafs), and to the state in the form of revenue. The money supply of the village was from the sale of its agrarian products in the qasbas and the nearby towns through the rural merchants such as banias and mahajans, as well as through the banjaras or itinerant traders who were responsible for bringing the cash back to the countryside. Villages situated near trade routes developed their own markets for specific commodities.

The other stream of exchange extended from the countryside to the urban entrepôts for the seasonal supplies of export goods. Those major commodities such as textiles, indigo, saltpetre and sugar that generated trade surplus were produced and then processed in villages. Later they were fed into the market chains which led to export. This network of exchange involved peasants and manufacturers at the local level and merchants, brokers, bankers, transporters and a host of other people at multiple intermediate stages. It appears that the specialization which grew in the rural hinterland in response to the export demand and the internal

demand for food and craft products indicated the greater orientation of the village and intermediate economies towards the monetized exchange than that has been acknowledged so far.

The urban centres and entre pots of the Mughal empire were immersed far more deeply in the circuit of monetary exchange. Here, the concentration of the military-bureaucracy, mercantile classes and artisans created a permanent demand for food supplies, craft goods and services. The transformation of foreign gold and silver into Mughal money was done at the mint but it was largely mediated through an organized bullion market dominated by the sarrafs who also acted as bullion merchants, bankers and insurers. The Mughals did have an open coinage system and yet there existed the practice of assigning fixed days to the merchant-suppliers which often clashed with the timetable set up by them to make investments in the hinterland markets and to keep commodities ready for shipment during the right season. Apart from dealing in currency, the sarrafs also organized commercial credit and their position as deposit bankers and discounters of bills of exchange i.e. *hundi*, enabled them not only to provide merchants with cash that they immediately required, but also the facility to transfer funds from one place to another on payment of a small commission.

In the first stage of development of the Mughal monetary system, this monetary system symbolized a continuation of the billion-copper regime of the late Delhi Sultans. Later, we find that the Mughal rulers did adopt the trimetallic currency of Sher Shah but then it lacked the apparatus as well as the resources to bring about a permanent change in the pattern of economic exchange and usage of money. A massive surge in the imports of Spanish-American silver and its distribution by the Portuguese along with the political unification of trade routes that stretched from the Levant to the Indian Ocean, signalled a new era of international commercial exchange. The coastal and caravan cities of the Mughal empire had become the prime beneficiaries of these changes when the political and commercial links between the entre pots and the hinterland were deepening and a new fiscal and monetary structure was evolving.

The monetary structure that emerged after around three decades of intense administrative and market changes had set a benchmark in the entire monetary history of the Mughal empire which meant that a uniform and standardised currency system in place of the old regime of the billion-copper. The domain of petty transactions was dominated by the use of fractional pieces of silver rupee (*anna*) and the copper currencies. At the level of exchange where the prices needed to be expressed in units lower than the copper coin, metallic currency was supplemented by the cowrie shells in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and bitter almonds in Gujarat. Imported respectively from Iran and Maldives, the cowries and the bitter almonds were more abundantly available at the coast but were in greater demand in the hinterland. The movement of goods and the reciprocal flow of money in the reverse direction was supported by an organised system of credit within this Mughal monetary system. The money loans which were given

to the commodity merchants were the most popular form of the finance commerce. A standard way for merchants of the Mughal empire to calculate profit and loss was to deduct the interest paid on the loans from the proceeds of commodity sales. The probable reason put forth for the popularity of money-loans was the accessibility of a market that would be free from theological restrictions, where the obligation for payment of debts and bills was governed by customary laws enforced in local courts. The demand for money and freedom to charge interest on the loans provided a firm foundation to the business of money lending as well as banking. In the commercial centres, the sarrafs took a leading position in financing commodity trade by advancing short and long-term loans depending on the seasons and of course, the circumstances of borrowing. The network of loan transactions which brought together merchants, moneylenders and intermediaries well described by the French traveller, Roques in the following terms:

“If a merchant, for example, is going to make a purchase at some place, he will not undertake his journey empty-handed. He will either carry or send some money or bill of exchange (hundi) to give the broker an advance for his purchases. The first, whose money is spent on purchases, is his security for the broker to obtain more loans who would be happy at the lack of money in order to deal with the saraf and conceal his dishonest dealings under his wings. The saraf, seeing that the merchandise has already been bought will happily lend him about as much money as can be raised, the only condition being that the buyer can do nothing to it unless he is satisfied..... Moreover, as the broker receives this money in small amounts at a time and uses it in the same way, he accounts to the saraf for the interest on a day by day basis and includes this interest in the principal which he counts as running from the date of the first loan that he took out”.

Roques' account is a good illustration of the link between commerce and credit and also of the role of the 'sarrafs' in financing commodity trade. In big cities like Surat and Agra, the dominance of sarrafs could be explained by the presence of the mint-and-bullion market, which was the main centre of their business activities. In case of townships and villages, even in big towns where the line that separated commerce and money lending was thin, it was the *mahajans* and *sahukars* who financed commercial and consumption loans as well as offered banking facilities to a diverse clientele. The *Mahajan* was basically a grain merchant who also got engaged in lending money at interest on a regular basis to peasants and the members of the upper rural strata. It was for this reason, that he was often classified differently from an ordinary merchant in the contemporary documents. The petty *mahajans* are also portrayed in our sources as modest pawnbrokers trafficking in the goods of insolvent debtors. The *mahajans* combined financial assistance to the agrarian communities to raise crops or pay tax with loans advanced to mansabdars against the tax yields.

### Check your Progress :

- 1) Comment on the monetary in circulation in medieval India.

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## 14.4 BANKING SYSTEM IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

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The expansion in commodity exchange and a concomitant rise in the demand for money exerted pressure on the resources available for credit. Given the complex nature of credit cycle and the diverse portfolios of the Mughal moneylenders, it is difficult to determine the volume as well as the composition of the various types of the capital flowing into his coffer. An unknown and self-generating portion of this capital was indeed made up of profit earned from interest and ploughed back into the reserve funds. The capital which originated outside the money market also constituted a regular source of running, money lending and banking operations. The device that attracted the idle balances towards the *sarrafs*, *mahajans* and *sahukars* was deposit banking. There were two essential ways in which the Mughal bankers accepted cash deposits – hundi (short term time deposits that were accepted against the bills of exchange) and demand deposits taken from individuals, merchant class as well as state officials. The classic description of direct deposit payable on demand comes from Agra where the entire amount deposited by diverse creditors was suddenly withdrawn probably, as a result of some immediate demand for cash. The difference between rates paid on deposits and loans, mentioned separately, constituted the profit of the bankers.

In addition to individual capital, the cash reserves of the state were also put on deposit with the sarrafs. In 1623 when Prince Khurram ordered “his treasure” to be transported to Mandu, the sarrafs of Ahmedabad were asked to make the remittance that caused ‘the great scarcity of money’ in the city. Had the ‘treasure’ already been in cash-hoard and now put with the sarrafs for the transmission through the bills of exchange to Mandu, it should have caused a superfluity, not scarcity of money at Ahmedabad. It appears that the ‘treasure’ had been previously deposited with the sarrafs to be lent out by them at interest and now that it had to be transferred to Mandu, the sarrafs at Ahmedabad were compelled to recall their loans, thereby causing a scarcity of money available for credit.

The Mahajans too accepted deposits from both merchants and state officials and there are numerous references of such transactions in the news reports sent from Rajasthan. The Mughal revenue collectors, instead of depositing cash with the treasury, often lent it out to the mahajans for personal gain, a practice that had been deemed fraudulent by the state. In

one such incident, the three revenue officials i.e. *amin*, *karori* and *fotahdar* were found falsifying the revenue records so as to earn interest from the money held with the mahajans. These deposits combined with the mahajan's own capital, obtained through commodity trade, to finance their banking operations.

The second important source of banking capital was short-term time deposits which the sarrafs and the mahajans received by issuing a bills of exchange ie hundi – the species of commercial papers in Mughal India which functioned simultaneously as a mode of money transfer from one place to another. To avoid the risks involved of transportation, the merchants used to deposit the cash with a banker in exchange for a hundi. It almost paralleled the travellers' cheque of modern times if the deliverer himself happened to be the payee and carried the hundi to the destination. The English and the Dutch were two of the several merchant-groups trading in India who remitted money through hundis in order to supply capital to their areas of investments.

The remittance of the state's resources to the central exchequer and from the latter to the treasuries throughout the empire was also affected through hundis drawn by the sarrafs. The hundis facilitated the remittance of sums as small as Rs. 50 in the case of John of Julfa and as big as Rs. 3 lakhs sent by the Governor of Patna to Agra or, in another instance, sent by Akbar to the Deccan. However, though the sarrafs were able to combine resources to handle the remittance of the large sums of money, such efforts were limited and the state often had to arrange the transportation of its treasures to distant provinces under the armed escot. It can be seen that the incoming streams of cash into the bankers' books, one from the investors in direct deposits and the other from merchants and travellers through hundis were matched by an outflow of loans advanced against debt contracts. In same way, as merchants advanced credit by buying bankers' bills to make cash remittances, the bankers too accepted hundis drawn by credit-worthy clients. This was done out of two considerations. First, to offer short-term loans and transfer their own funds. Second, which is more important to make payments on behalf of an individual who already had an account with them. In this case, the flow of credit was reversed from the one witnessed in the first type of hundi. Instances of merchants drawing such hundis to obtain loans are too numerous to be cited and though the preference for credit bills, which required no prior capital holding and were redeemed usually after the sale of commodities must have been greater among merchants, the two types of hundis effectively performed the same function: the exchange of cash for credit from one person and place to another.

When this hundi bore the statement that promised payment of a specified sum on demand to a person within or after a stipulated period of time, the conversion of credit into cash was regulated by the details mentioned therein. However, if the hundi was made payable to the bearer then the conversion of credit into cash was freed from the time and space constraint. The buyer could use this bill to either make payment, satisfy

his debts or receive cash from the drawee. This form of credit, emerging out of the negotiability of the bill, endowed it with a purely monetary function and contributed directly towards increasing the volume of money in circulation. While the money deposited for the bill was lent out by the banker, claims against it were used simultaneously to settle other transactions.

The terms of negotiability of such hundis, protecting the rights of the buyer in the event of non-payment, were brought up in a case in which a renegade Mughal prince left some of his debt floating in the market.

Each hundi was bought and sold at a price known as the 'exchange rate'. The exchange rate was determined by a variety of factors, such as usances of the bill and the demand for credit. But the significant factor was the cash-balance position of the places involved in the bill traffic. A comparison of the rates current at Surat, Ahmedabad and Agra demonstrated the monetary basis of the bills of exchange. The reason for this was that Surat was an entry-point for foreign bullion and merchants required remittances to be made for their inland investments. Agra, on the other hand, was a primary market for commodities requiring ready money for investments. Delivering money at Surat and collecting it in Agra, therefore, meant that the merchants had to pay in the form of discount on bills they had bought. Ahmedabad had lost its coveted position to Surat as a market for bullion and a mint town and its supply of fresh currency had gone down substantially in the seventeenth century. The bankers of Ahmedabad were thus using the bill traffic to transport the money from Surat and remit it to Agra and other towns on favourable terms.

With the demand for each type of bill guided principally by the nature of commercial links, this meant the accumulation of money at one end and its growing demand at the other end. In order to ensure a smooth functioning of this kind of network, the bankers had to strike a balance between the credit they received and the credit they gave at any one place while issuing and discounting bills. As the network was widespread, they had to also keep a constant cash-flow in order to maintain an overall balance. This was achieved partly by altering the exchange rates to induce the merchants to buy or sell bills and partly by transporting the money physically to their agencies through couriers, if at all it was in gold, or by carts, if large quantities of silver were required to be delivered.

The inter-regional structure of the rates of interest divides the highly commercialised regions of the Mughal Empire into two groups – Surat, Ahmadabad and Agra fall under one uniform group whereas Bengal and Golconda constituted the latter. Yet, one needs to note that the rate of interest in the second group was higher compared to the first one. A close look at the movement of rates over time reveals two things that immediately strike our attention: the long-term stability in the rates and a fall some time towards the middle of the seventeenth century. In the commercial correspondence of the European merchants trading in India



we get many examples of money driving the course of interest rates in the short run.

The money supply was the main determinant of the interest rate in the face of fixed demand for credit. The other determinant was the absolute demand for credit linked to the rate of profit. In the pre-industrial economies, this meant buying cheap and selling dear and the greater the rate of commercial profit was, the higher was the demand for credit and the interest rate. Even during this period there have been lot of instances of the merchants taking advantage of the opportunities created by short-term fluctuations in the prices.

Thus, one realises that both monetary and real factors were operative in the market economy of the Mughal period and exercised a dialectical influence over the cost of borrowing. In the long term, it was the sustained dominance of one over the other which would have determined the course of movement of the interest rates in the seventeenth century. If we assume that the reason for the fall in interest rates was an increase in money supply, regarding which we have substantial qualitative as well as quantitative evidences, this could have only come through an increased accumulation of banking capital in the form of deposits as well as profits generated from other portfolios.

The bankers exclusively handled the business of money-changing, both local and foreign, and also held a near-monopoly of buying and minting foreign bullion. This monopoly got strengthened especially in the second half of the seventeenth century by the creation of a class of sarrafs holding exclusive rights for supplying bullion to the mint. In the meantime, an expansion in the volume of the bill traffic ensured a substantial increase in the absolute level of bankers' profits. They also sold marine and inland insurance and collected premiums and high interest rates from respondentia loans for offering protection to goods and capital in transit as well as to the credit transactions.

At the regional level, interest rates in Bengal remained higher than those at Gujarat and Agra. If we accept that monetary factors lay behind the movement of interest rates, one possible explanation could be the lower level of money supply in Bengal vis-à-vis its demand relative to Gujarat and Agra. The amount of bullion which made its way to Bengal by direct foreign exports was comparatively smaller, and much of what it received came from Delhi, Agra and Patna. But the specie which Bengal received from these regions was partly held by the bankers who issued bills of exchange to transfer merchants' funds. At the same time, there was a reverse remittance of Bengal's money to Agra, Delhi and Gujarat in the form of the surplus revenue of the province and up-country remittances of the Mughal nobles and non-resident merchants. Some of this money was remitted from the hundis and some of it was transported physically. Bengal's economic and administrative relationship with the rest of the empire, it would seem on balance that the pressure on Bengal's monetary stock was greater than either Agra or Gujarat, and the situation that was

described in an early eighteenth-century source may be considered as typical of the provincial -monetary economy.

If these shortages in the capital were linked in any way to the high rates of interest, then one can perhaps also explain the fall in the second half of the seventeenth century. In this period, the influx of the European bullion to Bengal had increased dramatically and there must have been a simultaneous increase in the volume of commerce. The benefit of the increase in trade was shared largely by the mercantile classes, but more particularly by the money-changers and the bankers whose profit rose substantially with the transaction in money and credit. If this had been true for Bengal, which had developed money and credit market, then the trend in its interest rates could be linked, without any significant change in the credit structure, to the same broader movement which influenced the market of Gujarat and Agra.

The case of Coromandel is interesting not only because it was a different currency zone but also because the issue of tribute seems to have had an opposite effect on the interest rates, besides producing a dual impact on the monetary system of Golconda. The rates on the Coromandel coast and in Golconda in general were also high and there was a fall in the 1640s, a rise thereafter and the second fall in the 1670s. Golconda had a gold-based monetary system and the limited quantity of silver that it received from overseas commerce was mainly used to pay for goods imported from the rupee areas of the Mughal empire.

In 1635, Shah Jahan led a campaign against the Deccan kingdoms. The outcome of this was the establishment of a tributary relationship between Golconda and the Mughal empire. The terms of the treaty signed between the two states included, among the other things, the payment of an annual tribute and striking of rupees in the name of the Mughal emperor. By the 1660s, the need to remit the tribute in rupees and the establishment of a silver mint at Golconda begun to encourage silver circulation in the region. The introduction of the rupee into the economy of Golconda has also proved beneficial to the silver importers who were able not only to obtain the coins locally but also use it in payment for the purchase of export goods. At the same time, the tribute also triggered a triangular bimetallic traffic in bill and money between Golconda, Aurangabad, the Mughal capital of the Deccan and Gujarat. The Coromandel bankers lent huge sums in gold obtained from the state to the European factors and received payments in silver at Surat which was eventually transferred to Aurangabad to settle Golconda's obligations. This established a direct relationship between the supply of silver at Surat and the volume of credit at Coromandel at the same time, the state of Golconda to contain the expansion of a competing currency in its coastal areas.

If the incorporation of Golconda's monetary economy into the larger network of silver movement commenced soon after 1635, it can offer some explanation as to why interest rates were relatively higher in

the province before the 1640s and declined thereafter. The expansion in silver circulation, both in Gujarat and Golconda, allowed the total money supply to expand even when there was no substantial increase in the absolute level of gold money.

On the basis of an analysis of the temporal and inter-regional movement of interest rates, a case has been made out for a downward drift in the cost of borrowing resulting from an expansion in money supply in the seventeenth century Indian economy. The first case is illustrative of the point that if the volume of credit and banking fluctuated within an acceptable range following a change in specie supply, it could not expand beyond the permissible limit. The second case demonstrates the extent to which the volume of both currency and credit was susceptible to the increases and losses imposed by foreign trade. The two sets of evidence that we have indicate that the paucity of money created an immediate deflationary effect on commodity prices and a fall in sales and profits. At the same time, the tightness of money was deepened by a contraction of credit and the capital available to finance the commerce.

The seventeenth century brought considerable progress in the techniques of transferring capital and making payments. The function of credit instruments was to make the existing money to circulate more efficiently and take its place when it was not physically present. Moreover, the scope and size of banking activities was also defined by the volume of the metallic money. When the circulation of money reached at a point where it exceeded the demand for the commercial capital, the interest rates fell. The lowering of the cost credit greatly helped commercial investment and further broadened the parameters of monetized exchange.

### **Check your Progress :**

- 1) Examine the banking system in medieval India.

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## **14.6 SUMMARY**

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In this chapter we discussed the monetary and banking system in medieval India. Delhi sultanate and Mughals had a developed system of metallic currency. The rulers were dotted with mints issuing coins of gold, silver and copper. A Hundi is a financial instrument that developed in medieval Indian banking system for use in trade and credit transactions. There are also records of Indian bankers issueing of exchange on foreign countries. Overtime, many changes took place in monetary and banking system in medieval India. Business organisation and practices also varied

with this changes over time and across regions. Banking system not only benefited the manufactures or traders by facilitating trade but they also helped those merchants with additional funds who were looking expansion and development.

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### **14.7 ADDITIONAL READINGS**

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- 2) Irgan Habib, The Agrarian system of Mughal India (1556-1707), Bombay, 1963.
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### **14.8 QUESTIONS FOR SELF STUDY**

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- 1) Discuss the monetary system and its importance under the sultanate period.
- 2) Give an account of monetary system prevalent under Mughal empire.
- 3) Examine the banking system in the Medieval India.
- 4) Explain the silver and copper coins minted during the period of the Marathas.



**M.A. HISTORY**  
**Semester I Evaluation Pattern**

Internal Evaluation (40) + Semester End Examination (60) = 100

The Internal Evaluation for the Master of Arts (M.A.) History Sem I and Sem II (CBSGS) that is 40 Marks, shall be further distributed as follows - 20 Marks for internal Written Test and 20 Marks for written Assignment. The Internal Evaluation of 40 Marks will be conducted by the respective Course Teachers.

Internal Evaluation - 40 Marks	
Internal Written Test	20
Written Assignment	20

Semester End Examination - 60 Marks will be as follows, Time Duration Two Hours. Question Paper Pattern for M.A. History Semester I End Examination and Semester II End Examination.

N.B.

- a) Attempt all questions
- b) All questions carry equal marks

	SEMESTER - I	SEMESTER - II
Q.1	Based on Module I OR	Based on Module I OR
Q.1	Based on Module I	Based on Module I
Q.2	Based on Module II OR	Based on Module II OR
Q.2	Based on Module II	Based on Module II
Q.3	Based on Module III OR	Based on Module III OR
Q.3	Based on Module III	Based on Module III
Q.4	Based on Module IV OR	Based on Module IV OR
Q.4	Based on Module IV	Based on Module IV

