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# UNIT 1 PRE-STATE TO STATE

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Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Our understanding of the transition to the state in early India has developed and been refined over decades through painstaking investigation by scholars. What have emerged are possible scenarios that may help us trace what was, in any case, a complex complicated process.

Theoretically the state is not an institution of universal or ubiquitous nature to be located in any historically existing society, for it is found only in a differentiated economy or stratified society. Logically, then the following ideas emerge: non-stratified societies are pre-state societies; the origin of the state is not external; the state is inevitably *sui generis*; it gets neither diffused nor transplanted and; the concept of secondary state formation is a misnomer. The most crucial question, therefore, is the nature of the social formation that presupposes the absence or presence of a state. In history the state appeared as kingdoms and empires that were institutional outcomes of political processes in class structured societies. Hence we equate the state in history with the dynastic rule or monarchy and study the history of state formation as the history of the transformation of the chiefdom into the kingdom.

It is generally accepted that the transition from pre-state to state took place in North-India in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. In South India the transition came much later in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The conquest theory suggests that when the Aryans

conquered and subordinated the indigenous society the state come into existence. The theory of internal stratification regards caste structure as a system of stratification in which Ksatriyas were the ruling class and vis comprised the peasantry. The superior position and status of the Ksatriyas contributed to the emergence of the state in North India. Thus stratification was an essential pre-requisite for transition to state system. In south India the social stratification had a different composition and nature. Stratification creates conflicts and differences which necessitates the emergence of a power which can resolve and control conflicts. Another important precondition for the emergence of state is the establishment of peasant economy. Population growth and social circumscription also contribute to state formation. Social and cultural heterogeneity is another factor to leading to state formation. Trade and urban centers are crucial to the emergence of state. In a state system the political power has jurisdiction over a territory and it delegates authority to functionaries. Resources are required for carrying out the managerial functions of the state. Therefore, income collection is of utmost importance for the state. Socio-economic differentiation is thus intrinsic to the process of state formation.

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## 1.2 OUR SOURCES: PRE-STATE TO STATE IN EARLY NORTH INDIA

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There are various sources for the study of the transition from pre-state to state in early North-India. Some of these include the Harappan Evidence, the Vedic Texts, Archaeological Evidences, etc.

### 1.2.1 How Important is the Harappan Evidence

One of the problems we face is in figuring out whether and how the Harappan evidence can be brought to bear on the issue. It is now generally conceded that there were state — like institutions in the Harappan context. However, in the absence of textual traditions, reconstruction of the specific nature of the Harappan state tend to range from reasonable, imaginative possibilities, to more speculative ventures. What is more, it is well-nigh impossible to trace continuities in political processes from the Harappan to post-Harappan cultures.

### 1.2.2 Vedic Texts

Alternative trajectories have been worked out, primarily through an analysis of early and later Vedic literature. The former includes the *Rgveda*, while the latter includes the *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharvaveda*, as well as the Brahmanas, and the earliest Sutra literature. These were probably composed and compiled over a millennium (c.1500-500 B.C.). The four principal Vedas consist of prayer or chants (*mantras*), while the Brahmanas and the Sutras are in the nature of commentaries on rituals. As such, they do not provide us with a direct account of political events/processes. Scholars have sifted through accounts of myths, rituals, and legends to trace the development of political institutions.

### 1.2.3 Archaeology

There have also been attempts to correlate these texts with archaeological evidence. Perhaps the most well-known of such attempts is the correlation between later Vedic literature and the Painted Grey Ware Culture. These are based on

correspondences in terms of chronology as well as geographical spread: both the later Vedic texts and the Painted Grey Ware Culture relate to the mid-Ganga valley. In contrast, the *Rgveda* pertains primarily to the Indus and its tributaries, frequently mentioned as the *sapta sindhu*.

Several hundred sites of the Painted Grey Ware Culture have been found. Most of these settlements lasted for centuries, and in some instances (e.g., Kausambi, Mathura), these developed into important cities (also political centres) subsequently. The Painted Grey Ware levels at these and other sites indicate a fairly simple material culture. There is evidence of agriculture, pastoralism, small wattle-and-daub huts, and the use of some amount of iron. Apart from the Painted Grey Ware, which gives the culture its name, we find plentiful evidence for other kinds of pottery as well. In fact, the PGW was probably meant only for elite use.

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### 1.3 SOME PROBLEMS TO KEEP IN MIND

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You may have noticed that we have delineated a rather long chronological span, as well as a vast geographical expanse, through which we attempt to trace the process of state formation. Obviously, we cannot be too precise and specific. What is more, we need to remember that there were other developments taking place within the space and time frames we have isolated. There is, for instance, evidence of settled agricultural population in Bihar, which was marginal from the perspective of Vedic traditions. If we remember that south Bihar (Magadha) was the nucleus of one of the most powerful states in early north India, that culminated in the establishment of the Mauryan empire, we will realise that Vedic literature does not help us in understanding what led to such spectacular political developments in this region.

There is another, more technical problem. Sometimes, the texts continue to use the same term, even while adding on new meaning to it. For instance, the term *bali* often has the meaning of an offering to the gods, especially in the early Vedic context. In later situations, the term acquires meanings of gifts that are more or less voluntarily offered to the chief, and still later, in the post-Vedic context, it acquires the meaning of a regular tax. This also happens with the term *raja* (*rajan*), whose meaning gradually shifts from chief to king.

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### 1.4 THE EARLY VEDIC CONTEXT

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Historians have analysed the prayers contained in the *Rgveda* to suggest that the dominant social categories were dependent on pastoralism, especially cattle rearing. Apart from this, the horse was regarded as a prestigious animal, and the horse-drawn chariot was a symbol of power. Occasionally, the term *gopati*, meaning lord and/or protector of cattle, was used to refer to deities. Many of the terms used to describe deities were drawn from the human context, through analogies with the human situation, and it is likely that protection/possession of cattle was regarded as a trait typical of powerful men.

We also have prayers for victories in cattle raids, which were presumably led by chiefs, who may have distributed the booty thus acquired in gatherings in assemblies such as the *vidatha*. We are not sure how these resources were shared, but it is likely that the chief, his close supporters, and the priests who offered prayers and sacrifice for their success, may have claimed most of what was won.

There are other terms used to address powerful gods such as Agni, the fire god. These include terms such as *vispati*, literally the lord of the *vis*. The term *vis* is the one perhaps used most commonly to indicate the community, or the basic social unit. There is a sense of shared existence; this may include the sharing of resources, of responsibility for military activities with the *vis* functioning as militia, and of common rituals; that can be reconstructed from the hymns. The *vispati* may have coordinated such activities. References to the *vispati* die down in the later Vedic context, perhaps because the *vis* itself became increasingly differentiated, leading to a change in the nature of socio-political relations within the community.

Interestingly, some goddesses are addressed as *vispatni*. Would this suggest that women could act as leaders of the community on some occasions? Like the *vispat*, the *vispatni* finds no mention in the later tradition.

Many of the deities are addressed as *raja*. These include the principal deities, Agni, Indra, but especially Soma, and, typically, *Varuna*. A few goddesses are addressed as *rajini*, but this is somewhat exceptional. A typical attribute of the divine *rajas* is the quality of *ksatra*, with connotations of universal power. We also have occasional mention of human *rajas*, whose exploits are recorded by the priests. Such accounts become more common in the later tradition, where the achievements that are celebrated or commemorated include victories in battle, and generous gifts made to the priests.

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## 1.5 THE LATER VEDIC SCENARIO

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Later Vedic texts permit us to catch a glimpse of increasingly complex social and political relations, and the attempts made by the priests and their patrons to regulate these through an array of complicated rituals including the famous *rajasuya*, *vajapeya*, and *asvamedha*.

### 1.5.1 The Brahmana and the Raja

The virtual absence of references to *varna* categories in the *Rgveda* has been frequently remarked upon. By contrast, later Vedic texts are replete with discussions on the ideal relationship amongst *varnas*, especially the first three *varnas*. The relationship between the *brahmana* and the *raja/ksatriya* seems to have been marked by competition, tension, as well as by a sense that each needed the other (perhaps this was more true of the priest than of the chief/king).

One of the areas of conflict was related to ritual status. While *brahmanas* claimed the highest position in the ritual domain by virtue of being ritual specialists, with knowledge of the sacred language and lore, as well as through birth in what were proclaimed to be prestigious lineages, *ksatriyas*, who were the chief patrons of the elaborate rituals, may have viewed the situation differently.

There was also the vexed question of sharing material resources. The *brahmanas* valued the wealth that constituted *daksina*, the sacrificial fee, that could include gold and other metals, cattle as well as other animals, and cloth, slaves (men and women) amongst other things. *Rajas* who were generous were praised, but the problem which proved intractable was whether the donor or the donee could claim superior status on account of such gift exchanges.



Yet, in spite of tensions, the ties between the two were consolidated, partly because of recognition of dependency, if not of shared interests. Rajas depended on priests for the performance of elaborate rituals that both legitimized and sanctified their claims to power and status. Very often, in rituals such as the *rajasuya*, the priest actually announced that the *yajamana* (sacrificer) had now become transformed into a *raja*. These were also occasions when people brought in tribute, when they were treated to a visual and aural spectacle, and priests were clearly invaluable collaborators in conjuring up a sacred context. At the same time, priests too depended on patronage, and their status was reinforced through the performance of these elaborate rituals.

### 1.5.2 What Happened to the Vis

Perhaps the most striking change we notice is in the treatment of the *vis*. The term was still used to refer to the entire community. For instance, on major ritual occasions such as the *rajasuya* and the *asvamedha*, the sacrificer who was consecrated through the *abhiseka* was often proclaimed as the *raja* of the *vis*. At the same time, the *vis* was often used to designate a residual category, distinguishing it from the *brahmana* or the priest on the one hand, and *ksatriya/rajanya* (the ruler and/or his supporters) on the other. (The term *vaisya*, meaning of or belonging to the *vis*, owes its origin to this root).

This residual category was now, moreover, often identified as one that could be legitimately exploited. The most vivid imagery of this occurs in the notion of the *raja/ksatriya* as *visamatta*, literally, the eater of the *vis*, suggesting that the *raja* could appropriate the resources generated by the *vis* at will. In the earlier situation, the *vis* seems to have had some claims to a share of the booty obtained from raids. Now, this relationship was replaced by one of appropriation. At the same time, the *raja* was still not in a position to claim a regular tax, but depended on less structured mechanisms for garnering resources.

Rituals were also used as occasions to both construct, and represent, and perhaps, by extension, ensure what was regarded as the ideal relationship between the *ksatra* and the *vis*. From the point of view of the *raja/ksatriya*, the *vis* was ideally to be supportive but subordinate. So we find the use of rituals and mantras to ensure this. However, there are indications that such ritual manipulations may not have always worked. One of the constant fears expressed in the texts is that the *vis* might leave the *ksatriya*. Can we suggest that this might actually refer to situations where people might migrate from the realm of a *raja* who have become excessively extortionate, thus depriving him of resources, labour, as well as armed support?

### 1.5.3 Complex Rituals and their Implications

One of the major features of the later Vedic texts are elaborate descriptions and prescriptions for complex rituals such as the *rajasuya*, *asvamedha*, and *vajapeya*. Let us see what these rituals implied.

In the first place, they were extremely long. In the *asvamedha* or horse sacrifice, for instance, the horse was let loose, with an escort of armed men, to wander for a year. During that period, rituals, including recitations of a range of traditions about the king in particular, continued at the sacrificial site.

Second, each one of these rituals involved the mobilisation of resources. These included raw materials for food for all those who were expected to witness the ritual, as well as sacrificial materials, including animals, and of course the articles that were to be given to the priests as *daksina*. Some of these may have come in as voluntary gifts, others were probably obtained through a show of force.

Third, each of these rituals was marked by the ritualisation of what may have been actual contests for power. For instance, the high point of the *vajapeya* was the chariot race which inevitably ended in the victory of the sacrificer/*yajamana*. Similarly, the *yajamana*'s victory was automatically ensured in the game of dice that formed part of the *rajasuya*. The ritualisation of contests meant that the outcome was a foregone conclusion, and victory could be connected to divine support.

Fourth, and perhaps most obvious, the ritual provided the potential or actual chief/king with an occasion for displaying his power and resources. Most of the sacrifices would have included visual displays, including ritual drama such as mounting the throne, or the *abhiseka*, the sprinkling of *yajamana* with waters that were regarded as sacred and empowering. There are detailed discussions on those eligible to sprinkle the water, and these included, as one would expect, the priest, kinsfolk of the sacrificer, and a representative of the *vis*. The *abhiseka* was followed by the public proclamation of the change of status of the *raja*, who was now announced as the *raja* of the *vis*, whom he could "eat", with the *brahmanas* claiming exemption from subordination to *Raja* in the same context. Throughout, moreover, the *raja* was equated with the gods, especially with deities like Indra and Prajapati, but also, to a lesser extent, with Varuna and Soma. It is clear that the objective behind such elaborate displays was to overawe spectators with a sense of the power of the *raja*.

Did the rituals have their desired impact? There are perhaps no easy answers. We can envisage situations where they did impress the people, but there were other situations where the response was not so neat. In the first place, mobilising resources may not have been easy, and those who did garner these may not have wished to "waste" them on performing rituals. We have long discussions on the futility of rituals in the Upanisadic, Buddhist and Jaina traditions, and in some instances, the participants are identified as *ksatriyas*. Can we suggest that some *ksatriyas* may have been averse to ritual activity?

Second, many of the rituals were meant to ensure the subordination of social categories. For instance, in the *asvamedha*, the sacrificial animals were arranged so as to ensure that the other social groups (including women) remained subservient. One can suggest that these groups may have resisted such subordination, and may have withdrawn from participation in the rituals. In any case, while these rituals did not die down completely, they were replaced by other means of claiming and legitimising access to political power.

#### 1.5.4 The "Jewels" of the Realm

The *rajasuya* includes a unique ritual known as the *ratninamhavimsi*. This provided an occasion for the *raja* to visit a group of ten or twelve men and women (the lists vary from text to text), make an offering in their house, and claim their support. Obviously, these were special people, and very often they have been identified as forming the nucleus of an "administrative system". Their participation is evident in other rituals as well. For instance, the guardians of the sacrificial horse in the *asvamedha* were drawn from the *ratnins*.

Some of these who are classified as *ratnins* or jewels are expected candidates such as the *purohita* (chief priest), or the *gramani*. Others included the charioteer or *suta*, the companion of the *raja* in his exploits, and the one who was expected to narrate tales of valour on a number of occasions. There is mention of the *senani*, the leader of the army, as well as the *sangrahit*, associated with gathering resources.

Other inclusions are more intriguing. We have references to the wives of the ruler, including the *mahisi* or chief wife, *vavata* or favourite wife, and *parivrkti* or abandoned wife. Their inclusion may have been connected with the belief that they represented the prosperity and fecundity of the realm. It may also point to the importance of matrimonial alliances in consolidating political power. At the same time, many of the rituals graphically demonstrated the subordinate position envisaged for such women, who were often assigned specific roles in the sacrifice. For instance, in the *asvamedha*, the *mahisi's* participation was meant to ensure the fertility of the realm.

We also have a set of “ratnins” who are ritually never mentioned in later tradition. These include the *bhagadugha* or the distributor of shares, the *aksavapa*, in charge of dicing, the *govikartr*, who slaughtered cattle, and the *palagala* or messenger. It is likely that they were connected with economic and social transactions that were gradually being marginalized. In fact, some of the *ratnins*, such as the *govikartr* and *palagala* are regarded as *sudras*, with special rites of expiation being suggested to mitigate the ‘sin’ of including them within the sacrifice.

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## 1.6 EARLY HISTORIC TAMIL POLITY AS DESCRIBED IN SANGAM LITERATURE

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The early historic period in the historiography of South India used to be called the Sangam Age after the corpus of ancient Tamil heroic poems popularly known as Sangam literature. Old generation scholars have formulated what is called Sangam polity on the basis of political allusions in the poems. They have taken for granted that the ruling lines called Ceras, Colas and Pandyas celebrated in the heroic poems, were dynasties of monarchs. The Ceras ruled over the south-western part of Tamilakam (Tamil macro region including Kerala), the Colas, the north-eastern part, and the Pandyas, the south and south-eastern parts.

### The Ceras

The Cera region was a mixture of diverse ecological zones with the predominance of hills and forests. The resource base of the Cera was also therefore diverse though forest wealth was the main resource. A poem incidentally refers to the hill products and sea products of *Ceran Cenkuttuvan* and the gold that reached ashore by boats.

A notable fact about the Ceras is that they are invariably praised as the performers of *velvi* (Vedic sacrifices), though they are also described as devotees of *korravai*, the war goddess and Murugan. The poems equate Ceras with the Vedic gods such as Surya, Agni, Marut, the Pancabhutas, the constellations and the navagrahas. Poets eulogise the Ceras as wearing garlands made of seven crowns. A poem says that just as a mother fosters her child *Kopperunceral Irumporai* protects his people. All these attributes of the Ceras are indicative of a high degree of influence of the Vedic brahmanic as well as the Buddhist culture. What one can see in the

anthology is the gradual making of an ideology of political power and its cultural paraphernalia drawing heavily from Vedic itihasa-puranic-sastraic Brahmanism.

In many songs the Ceras are described as the overlord of all monarchs in the land between the Himalayas and Kanyakumari. Valluvan, the chief of Nanjilmalai, is mentioned in a poem as a Cera subordinate with military obligations. The chiefs of Payar malai and Vettaru were the other known Cera subordinates. Ceraman Celvakatunko was the recipient of tirai (tribute) from a number of *mannar* (warrior chiefs). The prominence of the Cera lineage is clear from the songs which form a separate collection. The Ceras are the only line of chieftains with a collection of eulogizing songs, Padirrupattu, solely for them. It is said that originally there were ten units of ten songs each dedicated to ten Cera chieftains. The surviving eighty songs (eight units of tens) dedicated to eight Ceras in the anthology give us valuable ideas about the structure of political power, sources of legitimacy and nature of authority in contemporary Kerala. There are references in the poems to the Ceras possessing an army of the classical four-fold division, conquering many rulers and subjecting them to a subordinate level. They are poetic stereotypes for praising the Ventar (chiefly lineage) and not expressions of reality. A poem claims Ceraman Perumcorrutiyar to have conquered the land of the Pandavas and to have given a feast both to the Pandavas and Kauravas after the Bharata war. The measures taken by some Ceras to prevent the pirates on the western coast and the 'arrangements of lights made on the shore as indicators of the coastline for the ships at night are mentioned in the Sangam literature. Utiyan Ceralatan, Imayavarampan Netum Ceralatan, Cenkuttuvan, Celvakatunko and Atukottuppattu Ceralatan are some of the most important chiefs of the Ceras.

### **The Colas**

The Cola who is well known as 'kaviri kilavon' in the poems had his land in the Kaveri delta, rich in paddy and sugarcane. There are a few poems in praise of the chiefs enati (Senapati) Tirukkuttuvan, enati Tirukkilli, and enati Tirukkannan as enati of the Cola. Pannam, the kilan of Cirukuti and Aruvantai the kilan of Ampar were the Cola subordinates with tributary and military obligations. In the case of the Cola it is clear that the Ventar used to exact puravu (paddy) from the people. A poem refers to the maravar warrior chiefs (or men) of Cola Nalankillio as pataimakkal meaning fighters. There is the well known tradition of Karikala Cola causing the anicut to be built. Karikalan, Perunar Killi, Killivalavan, Nalan Killi are some of the very important among the Cola rulers.

### **The Pandyas**

The Pandya also had a mixed ecological region dominated by pastoral and coastal tracts. A Pandyan calls himself the head of the land of numerous new resources. Nakan, the Kilavan of Nalai and Nampi Netunceliyan are mentioned as Pandya subordinates with military obligations. Pandya Netunceliyan refers to his people as those living under his shade. A poem eulogises Pandya Maran Valuti to have been ferocious enough to frighten the north Indian Kings. Mutukutumi Peruvaluti, Maran Valuti are some of the most important among the Pandya rulers.

### **The Political Structure: Historical Perspectives**

The old generation historians have attributed a centralised political structure to the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. They have characterised their government as having an organised system of central and provincial administration by applying the ideas of

the typical monarchy reconstructed from the epics, puranas and the Arthasastra at the instance of allusions in the poems. The political structure has been conceived as consisting of ministers, the king's council, standing army of fourfold division, delimited territory, periodic taxation, and officialdom. N. Subrahmanian has discussed at length the government at the center, municipal level and village government, warfare and military organisation, law and justice, revenue and finance in the Sangam age.

Sabha, aimperukuzhu and enperayam are the bodies or councils mentioned in the literature such as Cilappatikaram, Manimekhalai, Maduraikkanchi. V. Kanakasabhai says that Aimperumkuzhu consisted of the representatives of the people, the priests, the physicians, astrologers, army chiefs, envoys or ambassadors, ministers and spies. According to N. Subrahmanian Enperayam comprised of accountants, clerks, treasury officials, guards, elders of the city, infantry chiefs, cavalry chiefs, infantry chiefs, etc.

However, recent researches show that these are unfounded generalisations, made under the inspiration of patriotic sentiments and a sense of regional pride and without enough caution about the chronology, contents and context of the literary source.

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## 1.7 PRE-STATE SITUATION IN SOUTH INDIA

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The conventional historiography has always attributed dynastic and kingly status to the ruling lines called the Cera-s, Pandya-s, and Cola-s in the Tamil macro region (Tamilakam) that broadly corresponds to the landmass between Tiruvenkatam in the north and Kanyakumari in the south. An inescapable contingent of the South Indian historiography, this assumption continues to influence the students of history. Recent historiography has made a departure by identifying the aforesaid ruling lines as chiefdoms, quite typical of pre-state societies. This departure is founded on studies that show the socio-economic and political set-up of the region largely undifferentiated and non-stratified, enabling to categorise the aggregate as a pre-state social formation.

The pre-state social formation of Tamilakam was a combination of four different forms of subsistence viz., the hunting – gathering, cattle keeping, plough agriculture and crafts production, notwithstanding certain overlapping situations. Primitive agriculture and animal husbandry had politico-cultural dominance. The notion of *aintinai* (five eco-types) based physiographic division and their respective subsistence patterns and socio-cultural ideas and institutions embedded in the Tamil heroic poetics, is the perennial source for characterising the social formation. The overall socio-economic milieu was that of hunting – gathering and agriculture in the eco-types of hilly backwoods (*kurinji*), agro-pastoral subsistence in the grasslands (*mullai*), plough agriculture in the wetlands (*marutam*), fishing and salt making in the littoral (*neytal*) and predatory dependence on others in the parched zones (*palai*). Interspersed along these ecotypes some people engaged in a few metal and ceramic works. The peoples in the different ecotypes (*tinai*-s) interacted with one another through formal and informal means of exchange and predatory relations.

Peoples of these various economies lived in groups of kindred descendants, each in the self-sustaining settlement called *Ur*, the basic unit of production with varying degrees of development depending upon its technology and productivity. Despite the developmental unevenness, all of them were largely undifferentiated economies of reciprocity and redistribution. The old Tamil language and a variety of shared



beliefs and instituted practices rendered the economically diverse peoples to be linguistically and culturally homogeneous. The political structure of the social formation was characterised by chiefdoms of different sizes.

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## 1.8 CHIEFDOMS OF TAMILAKAM

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Our knowledge about the chiefdoms of Tamilakam is almost entirely based on the Tamil heroic literature. That is very well justified, for the formation of chiefdoms in Tamilakam synchronises with the emergence of the Tamil heroic literary tradition. The Ashokan edicts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. refer to the Tamil chiefdoms as the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas (Keralaputa, Coda and Pandya) apart from satiyaputa (Atiyaman). The allusions in the Tamil heroic literary compositions, Tamil brahmi label-inscriptions and Graeco-Roman geographers' (Ptolemy and Pliny) accounts would have us believe that the Tamil chiefdoms existed from the second century B.C and lasted till the close of the third century A.D. Archaeology of the chiefdom-level socio-economic processes goes further back in time to the mid first millennium B.C that witnessed the expansion of the iron using cultures, often distinguished by the megalithic monuments. Scholars have indicated the overlap between the cultures represented by the megalithic burial as well as habitat relics and the cultures represented by the heroic poems. It makes little sense in distinguishing cultures as tagged to the source materials and naming them as megalithic culture, black and red ware culture, Sangam culture and so forth. Instead, one should be able to visualise a scenario of the co-existence and interaction of peoples of different means of subsistence and shared cultural practices.

There are different levels of chiefly power represented in the poems that give us some clues to the pattern of distribution of power from the simple to the complex along the small and big descent groups. The heroic poems unveil before us an active scenario of co-existence and interaction of these unevenly evolved chiefly systems. They are mainly three: viz. the *Kilar*, *Velir* and *Ventar* systems.

The *kilar* chiefs were hunter chiefs of the descent groups called *vetar* and *kuravar*. Like the *Velir* chiefs, the *kilar* chiefs were also hunter chiefs either of *vetar* or *kuravar*. Certain *kilar* are also mentioned to have held sway over agrarian tracts who were relatively more resourceful. *Kilar* were also local big men in agricultural settlements.

The level of power represented by the *Velir* seems to be the most archaic and lineage conscious. A chief called *Irunko-vel*, (located in semi arid zone between the Kaveri and Vaigai Valleys) one of the traditional five *vels* is mentioned in a poem as *vetarkoman*, the chief of *vetar*, to have belonged to a long line of 49 generations of chiefs. The poems show that the *Velir* chieftains held sway over the *Kurinji* and *mullai* tracts, i.e. pastoral forest hills (*malai*). They were hill chieftains heading mostly the descent groups called *vetar*, *itaiyar* and *kuravar*. Venkatamalai, Kantiramalai, Kollimalai, Mutiramalai, Kutiramalai, Parampumalai, Potiyilmalai, Payarmalai, Elilmalai and Najilmalai are the famous millet rich hill chiefdoms celebrated in the poems. Elilmalai was the most prominent hill chiefdom of Kerala and the lineage of Nannan, the hunter chief of *vetar* (*vetarkoman*) was related to that of the chiefs of Kantiramalai. Another chiefdom closely linked to the southern end of Kerala was Potiyilmalai. The poems celebrate the *Ay* as *kuravarperumakan*, the chief of *kuravar* in the hill called Potiyilmalai rich in honey, jack fruit, elephants and



monkey. The Ay chief is addressed as *mavel*, the big *vel* and mentioned as belonging to the *Aykuti* (the Ay family). The association of the term Ay with *ayar* (pastoralists) and the claim of the later Ay chiefs to have belonged to the *vrishnikula* are there but as such there is no direct evidence to show that they were pastoral chiefs. Pari, the chief of Parampumalai; Ori, the chief of Kollimalai; Kari who killed Ori and became the chief of his hill, Elini, the chief of Kutirmalai and Pekan, the chief of Vanmalai, Kumanan, and the chief of Mutiramalai are the most celebrated hunter chiefs of *Vetar* or *Kuravar*. Sometimes the hill chiefs are called *vettuvar*. However, all the *Velir* were not hill chiefs, for instance, *Elini* the chief of Vettaru was a *vel* in control of agrarian low land.

The next category of political power is that of the *Ventar* represented by the three major chiefly lineages viz.; Cera, Pandya and Cola. These three are referred to in the poems as *muventar* or *muvar*. The poems show that they had their core areas in Karur, Madurai and Uraiyur respectively and the peripheral strategic points at Muciri, Korkai and Puhar respectively. The Ceras held sway over the *kurinji* dominated zones of the Western Ghats towards sea, the Pandyas, the *mullai*, *palai*, *neital* dominated zones in the south central region of Tamilakam and the Colas, the *marutam* dominated Kaveri region. There was no notion of precisely demarcated territory and apart from references to core areas of each, the poems give us no clues to the actual spheres of each one's control. The control got transmitted through subordinate chiefs towards the periphery where it waned and constantly fluctuated.

The Ceras are referred to in the poems as '*kanaka-natan*' (the chief of the forested *natu*) or *malaiyan* (the chief of *malai* or hill) which is suggestive of their ecological region. A poet praising Ceraman Kotai Marpan, expresses confusion as to how the chief should really be addressed. The poet asks whether the chief could be called *natan* as he had *marutam* lands or *uran* as he had *kurinji* lands or *cerpan* as he had coastal tracts. This would suggest that the Cera region was a mixture of diverse ecological zones with the predominance of hills and forests. The resource base of the Cera was also therefore diverse though forest wealth was the main resource. A poem incidentally refers to the hill products (*malaittaram*) and sea products (*kat-arraram*) of *Ceran Cenkuttuvan* and the gold that reached ashore by boats. The Pandya also had a mixed ecological region dominated by pastoral and coastal tracts. A Pandya chieftain calls himself the head of the land of numerous new resources, '*yanar maiyar koman*'. The Cola who is well known as '*kaviri kilavon*' in the poems had his land in the Kaveri delta, rich in paddy and sugarcane.

The *Ventar* category of chieftains also appropriated the resources through prestations and gifts. It is implicit that the incipient mechanism of appropriation was predatory. The subjugation process seems to have involved three different methods viz.; subordination with tributary obligations, expulsion and marital alliances. There are many references in the poems to all these methods of enlarging the domain of the *Ventar*. Valluvan, the chief of Nanjilmalai, is mentioned in a poem as a Cera subordinate with military obligations. The chiefs of Payar malai and Vettaru were the other known Cera subordinates. Similarly Nakan, the *Kilavan* of Nalai and Nampi Netunceliyan are mentioned as Pandya subordinates with military obligations. There are a few poems in praise of the chiefs *enati* (*senapati*) Tirukkuttuvan, *enati* Tirukkilli, and *enati* Tirukkannan as *enati* of the Cola. Pannam, the *kilan* of Cirukuti and Aruvantai the *kilan* of Ampar were the Cola subordinates with tributary and military obligations. Sometimes the lesser chiefs in the fringes had to be subordinate

of more than one line of *Ventari*, say for instance both the Ceras and Pandyas. The poems show that the subjugated chiefs could remain fearless only by submitting a share of their resources to the *Ventari* in the form of *tirai* or *kol* (tributes) in kind. Ceraman Celvakatunko was the recipient of *tirai* from a number of *mannar*. However, it appears that often the *Ventari* had to raid the settlements for exacting *tirai* from many a chieftain. In the case of the Cola it is clear that the *Ventari* used to exact *puravu* (paddy) from the *kutimakkal*. All the three *Ventari* are referred to in the poems with the term *iraivan* which means he who exacts. This would suggest that they had exacted from the people what was feasible according to the resource potential of the region. However, there is no evidence for any regular periodic exaction in fixed measure or quantity by any of these chieftains, to call it tax.

The returns from exchange relations must have enabled the *Ventari* to possess gold and other prestige items. As already noted, it is not clear how they were involved in the process of exchange. The poems show that the major activity of the *Ventari* like the *Velir* was accumulation of resources and their redistribution following the determinate pattern of social relationships. Plunder was indispensable for them also since their redistributive network was much more elaborate and complex than what they could have afforded with their actual resources. They had a large body of dependents such as their kinsmen (*kilainar*) scholarly bards (*pulavar*) warrior chiefs (*maravar*, *kilar* and *mannar*) warrior men (*maravar*) bards (*panar* and *porunar*) magico-religious functionaries and so on. The poetic flower symbolism of *vetci* (cattle raid) *karantai* (cattle recovery) *vanji* (chieftain's raid) *kanji* (chieftain's resistance of a raid) and *tumpai* (preparation for raid) show how institutionalised and common the plunder was. There is no evidence for the *Ventari* maintaining a ready troop of warriors like a standing army or systematically organised militia under them. But they had enough people of the fighter clan who could be mobilised instantaneously by the beating of a battle drum. The term *enati* can only be the result of poetic approximation by the bards. The Ceras are the only line of chieftains with a collection of eulogising songs, *Patirrupattu*, solely for them. The prominence of the Cera lineage is clear from the songs which form a separate collection.

The only institution of some political character mentioned in poems is *avaiyam* (*sabha*) which seems to have functioned as an assisting body of *Ventari*. The members of this body seem to have been mainly the warrior chiefs and the *pulavar* (the scholarly bards). However, the ideas of instituted process of polity were quite well known albeit without any correspondence to reality. For instance the poets conceived the *muventari* as the three crowned kings of ancient Tamilakam. Poets eulogise the Ceras as wearing garlands made of seven crowns. A notable fact about the *Ventari* is that they are often praised as the performers of *velvi* (Vedic sacrifices), though they are also described as devotees of *korravai*, the war goddess and Murugan. The poems equate them with the Vedic gods such as *Surya*, *Agni*, *Marut*, the *Pancabhutas*, the constellations and the *navagrahas*. The equation reminds us of the *lokapala* theory of the *itihasa-purana* tradition. All these attributes of the Ceras are indicative of a high degree of influence of Vedic brahmanism. But almost on equal footing the influence of the Buddhist ideas is also seen in their association with the *Ventari*.

There seems to be a lot of difference between the image that the poems try to build up for the *Ventari* and reality about them. We know that the whole of Tamilakam did not belong to them and there were other tribute-receiving chiefs like Atiyaman who were almost nearer to *Ventari* in status. A poem in praise of Netuman Anji

warns all the chiefs of agrarian settlements to rush to him with *tirai* if they wished to keep their *ur* with them. Many of the hill chiefs were uncompromisingly opposed to the *Ventar*. Pari of Parampumalai is one good example. He offered strong resistance to the *Ventar*, though he was subsequently defeated and killed. So reality was that *Ventar* were also chiefs, but of a little higher category. In short, the political level of the period differed from that of a state system.

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## 1.9 TOWARDS STRATIFICATION

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The tendencies towards stratification were much more evident in the headquarters of the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. In the ports and ruling headquarters several hereditary craftsmen and specialised functionaries drawn from hinterlands worked and perhaps got organised into corporate bodies (*nikamam*). In the ports like Korkai, Muciri and Tondi, there seem to have existed artisan/crafts folk settlements (*ceris*) of hereditary occupations. Probably both the ruling authority and organised merchant groups must have used labour of a class of servile people under conditions of coercion and relations of labour transcending kinship. Poems refer to captives working in pearl fisheries. The *ventar* level of political control implied the emergence of new hereditary occupations. In the process of predatory operations and redistribution, some kind of differential allocation of new position, status, roles and prestige within the complex redistributive relationships was natural. There was a slow emergence of hereditary occupations in the chiefly settlements with a greater proportion in coastal towns, marketing centres and ruling headquarters. The trend of differential allocation of positions and roles at the instance of the highest chiefly authority anticipated the formation of a hierarchy. However, the poems do not contain pointers to a clearly stratified society. Social differentiation was confined to the binary between *uyarntor* (the highborn) that comprised brahmanas and *ilipirappalar* (the lowborn), the people. That the second category comprised all people suggests a very flexible kind of social division, and lack of indications to the existence of intermediary positions confirms the fluidity. Similarly the differentiation in terms of the objective conditions of life was also confined to the binary division between *puravalar* (redistributors) and *iravalar* (redistributees/dependents).

The process involved the generation of a series of contradictions within the social formation. The most striking contradiction was the continued articulation of conditions totally uncongenial to the development of plough agriculture, which was the most potential form among contemporary forms of production. Predatory marches of chieftains, their destruction of agrarian settlements as part of the scorched earth policy in raids, and the dominance of the ideology of war and booty redistribution provided an adverse circumstance for the development of agriculture. As we have already seen, redistribution exerted pressure on production, but failed to translate itself as a motor of intensified or surplus oriented production since there was no scope for it within the kinship based forms of production. Intensified labour mobilisation for better production was beyond the working power of contemporary political apparatus that had little coercive ability with no institutional means of surplus extraction and or appropriation. It was not possible for the social formation to persist on for a long time in a set up of complex redistribution, generating contradictions. Obviously the major trend in the process was that of the gradual dissolution of the social formation.

What began taking shape in the brahman households was crucial for the real beginnings of a hierarchy. The permanent workforce attached to the brahman households had

the greatest possibility of being conceived hierarchically because of the stratifying system of production relations and the brahmanical tradition of social differentiation. The notion of hierarchy was implicit in the system of production in which the relation between two objectively antagonistic classes was fundamental. The mid-first millennium AD was thus a turning point in terms of stratification and hierarchical ordering. The process took more than two centuries to characterise the social aggregate. During the 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries the agrarian societies of Tamilakam were perceptibly becoming class-structured. This was directly related to the spread of plough agriculture and the corresponding new relations of production that meant social stratification based on entitlements to the nature of land-use. It was primarily a tripartite stratification of the people into landholders, leaseholders and tillers. Since plough agriculture also meant specialisation of a variety of arts and crafts, a further stratification of the people who were grouped along the line of occupations followed gradually. The nature of rights over land and the level of entitlement to the produce determined the strata of the people of different arts and crafts. Divided largely into the upper and lower strata the people were soon woven into a system of differentiation within each stratum. The social relations of the period resulted from an aggregate of these.

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## 1.10 THE FORMATION OF THE STATE

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With the sixth century AD we see the new agrarian system articulating its political control as manifested in the Pallava, Pandya, Cera and Cola ruling houses. The new political formation represented by the Simhavarman line of the Pallavas and the Kadungon line of the Pandyas owed itself to the developing agrarian society whose expansion was linked to royal patronage. The Colas of the Vijayalaya line at a later period represented the same kind of political authority engendered by the paddy-based economy. Though it is not clear whether the Ceras represented a comparable royal line of inheritance, the political authority represented by them too was engendered by the paddy economy. With the expansion of the new relations of production and the spread of wet-rice agriculture that characterised the period from 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the society became class-structured and the birth of the state plausible. The birth of a new political structure different from that of the chiefdom was a major simultaneous process with the development and expansion of wet-rice agriculture. Its antecedents involved the transition from kin-labour to non-kin labour, multiple functionaries to hereditary occupation groups, clans to castes, simple clannish settlements to structured agrarian villages, and chiefdom to monarchy.

A perceptible institutional feature of agrarian expansion was the proliferation of *brahmadeya* villages throughout the fertile tracts of major river valleys in the region. This was an organised affair under the royal initiative. A few copper plates, say Velvikuti plates for instance, speak about the restoration of the villages originally gifted to brahmanas as *ekabhoga* and subsequently lost through misappropriation by others. All such lost villages were later restored as *brahmadeyas* under the corporate control as the cases like the Velvikuti vouch for. This shift from individual holding (*ekabhoga*) to collective holding (corporate *brahmadeya*) is important in the context of the insecurity of the former. The *ekabhoga* holding continued but mainly as a grant in lieu of payment for a high status functionary. The proliferation of the latter meant the successful development of the new system of productive relations under a new institutional form and political patronage.

The social relations began to be further structured during the sixth-seventh centuries with the steady expansion of plough agriculture across the wetland. Expansion of



agrarian settlements through the creation of *brahmadeyas* often involved the superimposition of the superior rights of the brahmins over the communal holdings and the clan families of the locality. It must have been an intricate process of transformation of primitive agriculture and clan settlements into advanced agriculture and farmer settlements, respectively. The main features of the process were differentiation, stratification, and political formation leading to the development of the state-system and authority structures. These were simultaneous developments taking place as supplementary and complimentary to one another, resulting from the growth of agrarian economy. Such developments were in their turn ensuring the further growth of the economy.

The relations of production in plough agriculture were expanding towards domination of the total society. This was a long institutional process involving the proliferation of occupational specialisation and its ordering into a hierarchy. The formation of agrarian localities was an ongoing process, and everywhere it accomplished a uniform structure of social relations. As agrarian expansion advanced, human settlements (*ur*) originally bound by kinship got penetrated by the mechanisms of stratification. In short the transformation of non-brahman villages into productive relations transcending kinship was a continuous process. The non-brahman villages are called *vellanvakai* in contemporary inscriptions. Such settlements began to be integrated as agrarian localities (*nadu*). This *nadu* was hence fundamentally different from the *nadu* that figures in the heroic poems. As agrarian localities of hierarchically structured social relations, the *nadus* subsequently acquired great political significance in the monarchical system.

Irrespective of the fact whether the villages were brahman (*brahmadeyas*) or non-brahman (*vellanvakai*) settlements (*ur*), the social structure remained the same everywhere. It was a hierarchy with landholders (*brahmadeyakilavar* in the case of *brahmadeyas* and *urar/nattar* in the case of *velanvakai* settlements) at the apex. The large number of leaseholders (*karalar*) who were mostly artisans and craftsmen, constituted the intermediary. At the bottom of the society remained the primary producers (*atiyalar*). Almost parallel to the leaseholders there emerged a category of independent agricultural families who held small strips of land as hereditary holdings (*kani*). *Kani* rights were also assigned to many intermediary holders either from the temple lands or as family holdings. They became hereditary in due course. Such holdings originally tilled by the holders themselves too began to be tilled by the primary producers. The hierarchy became more elaborate during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. There emerged different categories of people with diverse types of hereditary rights on land. The agricultural produce circulated in determinate shares from the bottom to the top. It took a structured path through all the different categories of people enjoying the different levels of entitlement. The most benefited were the landholders who were ensured of goods and services by the settlers in their land while the most exploited were the primary producers. The state in South India was the structured outcome of the brahmanised agrarian society and polity.

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## 1.11 SUMMARY

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The textual traditions of the vedic period do not permit us to arrive at a complete understanding of political processes. Nevertheless, they point to important developments.

## Early State Formation

They suggest that there was an attempt to consolidate the power of the *raja*, and while the term may have referred to a chief in the early Vedic tradition, we can consider it as almost king—like in the later Vedic context.

The *raja* depended on support, drawn from priests, with whom the relationship was often tense. He also drew on support from an increasingly differentiated community, the *vis*, and on ties with certain individuals who performed functions that were more or less valued.

Nevertheless, the political structures that were evolving were not stable. They were subject to pressures and contestations, and seem to have been constantly modified. The pre-state system in Early Vedic period was characterised by the lineage society. According to Romilla Thapar “A lineage has been defined as a corporate group of unilineal kin with a formalised system of authority”. The later Early Vedic period was a transitional stage between pre-state lineage society of Early Vedic period and emergence of incipient state in the form of *gana sanghas* and full fledged state systems viz. monarchies which emerged in the age of the Buddha.

In the south the pre-state social formation was a blend of four forms of subsistence patterns viz. hunting-gathering, cattle breeding, plough agriculture and craft production. The political structure was characterised by chiefdoms. The source of information about these chiefdoms is the Tamil heroic literature. The socio-economic and political system was undifferentiated and non-stratified. Thus it can be considered as a pre-state social formation. The transition to state in South India took place in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD with the establishment of the rule of Pallavas, Pandiyas, Ceras and Colas.

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## 1.12 GLOSSARY

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<b>Abhiseka</b>	: Consecration
<b>Constellations</b>	: Group of stars on the ecliptic near which the moon passes (Asvini, Krttika).
<b>Itihasapurana</b>	: Ancient Indian historical tradition compiled by bards and panegyrists and it contains genealogical data.
<b>Lokapala</b>	: Guardian of the universe (Indra, Varun, Kuber and Yama).
<b>Marut</b>	: Spirit of Storm.
<b>Murugan</b>	: Chief deity of ancient Tamils.
<b>Navagrahas</b>	: Nine planets: Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Rahu and Ketu.
<b>Pancabhutas</b>	: Subtle elements (ether, air, light, water, earth).
<b>Purohita</b>	: Chief priest
<b>Suta</b>	: Charioteer
<b>Yajamana</b>	: Sacrificer



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## **1.13 EXERCISES**

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**Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.**

- 1) Explain the process by which social and political relations became complex in the later Vedic period.
- 2) Discuss the nature of chiefdoms which evolved in Tamilakam in the early historic period.

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## UNIT 2 TERRITORIAL STATES TO EMPIRE

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Politics from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

### Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Pre-state to State
  - 2.2.1 Early Vedic Stage
  - 2.2.2 Later Vedic Stage
- 2.3 Age of Buddha: Origin of the Territorial States
- 2.4 The Gana-Sanghas
- 2.5 Monarchies
- 2.6 The Mauryan Empire
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 Glossary
- 2.9 Exercises

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the Age of the Buddha one for the first time comes across the existence of a series of territorial states in northern India in general and the Gangetic plains in particular. These are known as the sixteen mahajanapadas. Peninsular India was beyond the pale of any such development in the middle of the first millennium B.C. Similarly, there were many other cultural backwaters in the sub-continent. At this point it may be useful to list the states, giving some idea of their capitals and /or location. The list comprised Anga (Champa/Bhagalpur), Magadha (Girivraja/Rajagriha), Vatsa (Kausambi/Allahabad), Kasi (Varanasi), Kosala (Sravasti/Ayodhya), Kuru (Delhi), Pancala (Central Doab), Surasena (Mathura), Matsya (Jaipur), Gandhara (Peshawar), Kamboja (north of Gandhara), Cedi (Bundelkhand), Avanti (Ujjain/Malwa), Asvaka (near Avanti), Malla (Kusinagara) and Vajji (Vaishali). All of them were not of the same type, they included both monarchies and what has come to be popularly known as 'republics'. Vajji and Malla are good examples of the latter. Actually, they represented non-monarchical forms of government or to use the expression known from the sources Ganga-Samgha political systems. While in the monarchies the king was raised above the society, exercised unfettered power and the individual was subordinated to the state and varna order, in the Gana Samghas the dominant kshatriya group exercised power to the exclusion of the other sections in society. These societies compared to the monarchical order were less stratified and took time to develop complex forms and varna hierarchy. With the establishment of monarchies and the so-called republics the details of early Indian history emerge with greater clarity. But then the emergence of states with such spatial spread warrants some explanation.

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### 2.2 PRE-STATE TO STATE

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It is difficult to generalise about the origin of states because they are products of the convergence of numerous processes of change. Nevertheless, one has to address the issue because the state as an institution did not exist from time immemorial. Before proceeding any further on the matter one may briefly dwell on the question

of what are the core issues. One may begin by defining the term state, search for its correlates in ancient Indian texts and then move on to see how and when the constitutive elements came together, leading to the emergence of states. The saptanga theory of state in the Arthashastra can be a convenient point of reference and, flowing from it, one could investigate the emergence of kingship, crystallisation of varna divided society, evolution of private property in land, the idea of a sense of belonging to a territory and the introduction of taxes, fortified settlements, administrative machinery and the standing army to make the general point that these variables promoted the cause of the state. Alternatively, one can focus on the processes to show how complex were the developments and why and how ultimately the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas emerged as the power elite, enjoying a significant part of the societal surplus, while others agreed to pay taxes and render labour.

### **2.2.1 Early Vedic Stage**

During the early part society was characterised by kin organisation. Terms such as gotra, vratya, sraddha and even grama denoting groups of people were actually kinship terms. Such groups reared their cattle, went for a hunt and fought the enemy as a unit. These kin groups, possibly resembling band living, were based on the need for collective subsistence. Each of these units was headed by its chief, who need not be confused with the later day king. In the later part of the Rig Vedic stage, we are told, one encounters larger kin units like jana and vis, which are comparable to tribes and clans respectively. The chiefs came to be known as janasya gopta, gopa janasya or vispati. These terms emphasised their role as herdsmen or protectors. There is evidence for intra-tribal and inter-tribal conflicts which, it is said, strengthened the position of the chiefs because of the role they were called upon to play in such situations. Both in the event of victory and defeat, as also the weakening of kin loyalty, the chiefs had to provide for some kind of order and cohesion. Such role (functions) apart, the chiefs also presided over the Rig vedic assemblies viz., the Sabha, Samiti, Vidhatha and Gana. Community wealth, including the booty from successful raids, was distributed equally among the members of the tribe. Individual members on various occasions gave a part of what they had to the chief largely owing to the latter's leadership functions. The chiefs usually redistributed such gifts during community feasts. Since the economy was predominantly pastoral and it was difficult to accumulate wealth, therefore, Rig vedic society was largely egalitarian in nature. Notwithstanding the reference to the four varnas in the Purushasukta at the end of the Rig Veda, which is usually considered to be a later interpolation, society continued to be egalitarian. However, in so far as the political developments were concerned the chiefs gained in status both owing to their leadership role as well as the hymns composed in their praise by bards who received gifts (dana) from them.

### **2.2.2 Later Vedic Stage**

The Later Vedic period was an important transitional stage, marked by the sharpening of developments in certain areas, leading to the threshold of state systems. The scene of activity shifted eastward, to western Uttar Pradesh and the adjoining regions of Haryana and Rajasthan. Based on the chronological and spatial parallel between later vedic literature and the painted Grey Ware culture (PGW) which are dated to the first half of the first millennium B.C., it is envisaged that the authors of the texts and the archaeological culture were the same people. Flowing from it the material culture of the times is constructed on the basis of the combined testimony of the two sources. The people practiced agriculture and reared cattle. Wheat, rice,

pulses, lentil. etc., were known. The assured food supplies sustained major and minor sacrifices (yajna), and the Doab became the cradle of sacrifices. Royal sacrifices such as the rajasuya and asvamedha went on to influence kingship ideology for more than a thousand years. Apart from the fertility element inherent in these rituals, which had something to do with placating the earth and augmenting production, they also helped to raise the status of the chief and his associates. One comes across the term rajan and its expanded forms such as rajanya, rajanya-bandhu, as also kshatriya. While rajan meant the chief, the term kshatriya, deriving from the word kshatra (power) represented the group of the people wielding power. The sacrifices involved community feasts which the rajan alone could organise and the successful performance of these rituals implied the bestowal of divine boons and attributes on the performer i.e., the rajan. These developments emphasised his importance.

The rajan or kshatriya's rise to power was not all that smooth, it was the result of long drawn processes. A whole range of imageries and rituals were played out in public to achieve the ascendancy of the rajan and subordination of the community (vis). The king ritually lent his hand to agricultural operations at the beginning of the season and practiced commensality with the members of the vis to signify common identity. Simultaneously the texts through the clever use of similes highlighted his exalted position. For example, the rajan and vis were compared with deer and barley or the horse and other ordinary animals respectively. The ambivalent attitude focusing on solidarity with the community on the one hand and differentiation on the other sums up the transitional nature of the times. The rajan was a part of the community and yet had to be above it to execute decisions of common interest. Such compulsions were attempted to be overcome through ritual means. With the rise of the rajanya/kshatriya there was a corresponding enhancement in the status of the brahmana. It was they who officiated at the rituals and were thus instrumental in the elevation of the rajan. That perhaps explains the brahmana-kshatriya relationship (involving legitimation for one and patronage for the other) and the emergence of the power elite in early India. The proper conduct of sacrifices was prescribed in the Brahmana texts to ensure brahmana kshatriya dominance and the subservience of the vis.

Rituals such as the upanayana ceremony were performed to emphasise varna and gender inequality. Women like sudras were kept out of it. There were differences in observance of the matters related to detail by the upper three varnas, signifying hierarchy. Similarly, groups from outside the kin were ritually roped in which weakened kin ties and helped the process of the emergence of differentiation, which was necessary for state formation. However, given the dependence of the elite on the lower varnas, pretensions of solidarity were maintained by involving members of the lower varnas in aspects of rituals or, for example, referring to the vaisyas as arya. These, however, did not prevent the emergence of varna divided society. While in theory chiefs continued to be elected the Brahmanical literature prescribed formulas for preserving the office of chief over generations in the same family. It suggests that the idea of hereditary succession was gaining ground. However, it was the favoured son, and not necessarily the eldest, who succeeded the father. That the idea of territory or territorial affiliation was acquiring currency can be seen from the prevalence of terms such as rashtra and janapada. However, taxes were not yet formally collected. Bali, the gift of affection of the earlier period, was possibly acquiring an obligatory character. The absence of officials and administrative functionaries to assess and collect revenues is quite clear. It is difficult to perceive the ratnins, who

had a role to play in the coronation ceremony, as some kind of nascent officialdom. When it came to the defense of the realm the vis in the absence of an organised army, did it collectively. At the end of the later vedic period certain attributes of the state were in place or to put it differently peasant communities were on the threshold of state formation, but the state had not yet fully emerged. It is argued that iron was yet to enter the productive process, agriculture had still not yielded the necessary surplus and sacrifices like the Asvamedha and Vajapeya, among others, involved the slaughter of animals and wasteful consumption. Together they held back the rise of the state.

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### 2.3 AGE OF BUDDHA: ORIGIN OF TERRITORIAL STATES

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As one enters the age of the Buddha many of these limitations were overcome. The introduction of iron in agriculture helped deeper ploughing and the breaking of the hard soil in the mid-Ganga plains. Iron was also used in various crafts and the making of metallic money, i.e., the punch Marked coins. Almost simultaneously wet paddy transplantation came to be practiced in this naturally rice growing area. Cumulatively these developments led to surplus produce, which in turn sustained trade, taxes and the emerging stratified society, with its administrative functionaries, ideologues and wage labourers. Dharmasutra literature justified varna divisions and institutionalised inequality. Vaisyas and sudras bore the brunt of carrying out production and provided the necessary revenue and labour to uphold the king's men, army personnel, priests, ideologues and so on. Buddhism too recognised and endorsed many of these developments. There are references to ministers and armies in the context of Magadha and Kosala. The presence of officials such as balisadhaka and karakara, for example, suggests that taxes like bali and kara were collected. Thus, by the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. territorial states emerged in northern India.

The above mentioned perspective had been criticized largely on two counts. First, it is said that the final emergence of states has been explained with reference to some kind of technical determinism in what appears to be an iron-productivity-surplus-state formation line of argument. Secondly, the emergence of the varnas and their assigned roles, either as receivers of taxes and gifts or providers of produce and labour, has not been fully explained.

That brings us to Romilla Thapar's explanation of the emergence of states. She refers to anthropological concepts like lineage society and house-holding economy to explain the evolution of the hierarchically structured varna society, and her emphasis is on the interplay of multiple processes of change, bearing on state formation. It is said that Vedic literature is replete with references to lineage terms, viz., gotra, vraja, etc. Lineage groups comprised members of the senior (rajanya) and junior (vis) lineage. The senior lineage both controlled and had greater access to community resources, though in principle there was collective ownership of land by the lineage group. In course of time by characterising the seniority based on genealogical superiority as one premised on the ideology of patrilineal descent the rajanya asserted its authority. It emphasised endogamy to claim purity, and flowing from it asserted its exclusivity and superiority. The differentiation between members of the senior and junior lineage increased with the transition to the later vedic period.

The emergence of a socio-economic form approximating what is known as house-holding economy is seen to have hastened the process of internal differentiation and the dissolution of lineage organisation during the later vedic times. The household comprised three to four generations of family members who may have resided in one or more than one house, but for purposes of production, consumption and rituals formed one single unit. The extended family gradually began to exercise right on the land it cultivated, theoretically though such land was initially allotted to the community for its use in cultivation. In situations where the extended family labour was not sufficient to work the land, the non-kin members who were not related to the family by Kinship ties were roped in for agricultural activities. These people need not be confused with wage labour. They were practically a part of the family, participated in all family activities except the family rituals. In the long-term as land allotted for cultivation was transformed into private property such retainers, who were some sort of family inheritance and may have emerged out of defeated and dispossessed peoples, were reduced to family servants. The rajanya/kshatriya and vaisya evolved from the senior and junior lineages respectively. Those relegated to the position of labourers and artisans become Sudras. Because the extended families within the given socio-economic structure generally incorporated three-four generations it allowed younger generations to move out, clear and settle in new lands in conditions of population pressure. There are literary references to the fissioning off among communities as a consequence of such developments. Such tendencies facilitated the process of agrarian expansion and extended the frontier of peasant activity. Thus, within the framework of the house-holding economy one comes to understand the transition from lineage society to a complex society and the state.

In the final stages leading to the emergence of the state Thapar, eschewing simple mechanical explanations, focuses on the mutually interactive nature of the processes. Environment, technology, social stratification, surplus, urbanisation and ideology, among others, were important factors in the making of the state, but it is difficult to prioritize them or identify the single most important factor. Surplus, for example, was related to social and political hierarchies and the need of the non-producers to live off the produce of others. Similarly, it was linked to the distribution of the produce. In brief, society does not produce a surplus simply because of the availability of a given technology. It is the result of a combination of factors. The relationship between social differentiation, urbanisation and ideology too are quite complex. Powerful contemporary religious ideas and systems (Buddhist) played an important role in shaping the nature of the emerging state systems – gana sanghas and monarchies. The Buddhist Sangha (monastic institution) characterised by its egalitarian ideas was useful to the early states because it was able to integrate the varied groups across caste and clan lines. The Sangha too depended for its sustenance on the existence of a strong state. Kings like Ajatsatru of Magadha and Ashoka Maurya extended patronage to Buddhism. In this analysis it is also argued that the mahajanapadas were either gana-sanghas or monarchies. While in the so called republics of North-eastern India (Malla, Vajji) the process of transition to powerful centralised state was slow owing to the common ownership of land by the kshatriya clans (which blocked the possibility of land revenue appropriation) whereas the territorial states in the upper Ganga plains (Kurus) could not easily shake off the later Vedic legacy of rituals, cattle sacrifice and wasteful consumption (which hindered the rise of strong states), those like Kosala and Magadha which were located in the mid-Ganga plains were characterised by no such limitations. In addition, Magadha had the advantage of rich soil, gentle gradient towards Ganga, a history of rice cultivation,



good rainfall, irrigated land, Bandhs used as water reserves, several rivers like the Son, Gandak, etc., which could also be used for communication and trade, and it was close to the mines and minerals of Dhalbhum and Singhbhum. The forest of Rajmahal hills were used for procuring timber and were also the habitat of elephants. Magadha controlled the Dakshinapath (trade route) and all routes on the southern bank of the Ganga were linked to Magadha. The states that emerged in this part of northern India were evidently more viable and strong. They could sustain greater populations and generate the necessary taxes to meet the requirements of the state.

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## 2.4 THE GANA-SANGHAS

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In post Vedic period the geographical focus shifted to the middle Ganga valley and migration and settlement of people took place along two routes: Northern originated from the Himalayan foothills and moved south to merge into the southern route near Pataliputra. The Buddhist sources as well as Ashtadhyayi of Panini give us information about middle Ganga valley and Gana sanghas respectively. It were the gana-sanghas of the middle Ganga valley such as Vrijjis which contained the constituent features of state formation. Monarchy was initially established in Kosala, Magadha, Gandhara, Kasi and Kausambi. There were the two categories of state systems as they emerged in the Age of the Buddha: Gana-sanghas and Monarchies.

The origin of the gana-sanghas is related to migration to middle Ganga valley. Migration resulted due to population pressure and also due to a process of fission in lineage systems. Due to fissioning off among Kshtriya clans in later Vedic period the members of Rajakula migrated to some other area and established a new janapada. Janapada referred to a territory named after a Kshtriya clan. A group of clans formed a jana and the area where they settled was called janapada literally meaning the place where the tribe puts its feet. This is how Sakya, Koliya and Licchavi clans came into being. Some of the gana-sanghas comprised of single clan units like Sakyas, Koliyas and Mallas. Some were confederacies of clans of which important were Vrijji of whom Licchavis were most important. In the gana-sanghas the system of clan (vis) holdings was prevalent. Therefore, Gahapatis (family [three to four generations] as owners of holdings) are rarely referred to as agriculturists in gana-sanghas. In the gana-sanghas the Kshtriya lineages were regarded as owners of cultivable land. The name of the territory was derived from the Kshtriya lineage who had earlier cultivated land on a family basis but now used labour when the size of holdings became too big to be manageable. The clan held the land jointly on the criteria based on birth and the produce was therefore distributed among its members. The gana-sanghas were the assemblies of Kshtriya lineages. They were established by the younger members of the established Kshtriya lineages. In the gana-sanghas ownership of land was vested in the Kshtriya lineage. Non-kin groups provided labour for working on the land of Kshtriya lineage. There was very little scope for rituals. Gana-sanghas have been variously interpreted as republics, oligarchies and chiefdoms. The members of the ruling lineages were referred to as rajas, rajakulas or consecrated Kshtriyas. The head of each household was raja. The symbols of the gana-sanghas were embossed on punch marked coins which indicates the beginnings of the use of coined money. Decisions were arrived at through the method of voting. Within the rajakulas all members were regarded as equal. Thus chiefdoms have a centralised command structure in which status to leadership is decided by birth and ancestry and genealogies become important. There is reference

to military and fiscal offices. They did not possess a standing army nor did they have any regular system of revenue collection. However, the sources do refer to taxes imposed on traders. Varna organisation did not determine social status in Gana-sangha areas. Rituals were not important and two broad categories in this area were those who owned land and those who laboured on it. All these features indicate the existence of an incipient state or stratified society. Difference among the members of the gana-sanghas would lead to fissioning off among groups. These groups would settle fresh areas. However in such a situation if one segment of the clan would seize power then the janapada (gana-sangha) could turn into a monarchy.

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## 2.5 MONARCHIES

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With the establishment of the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala the term janapada included villages, markets, towns and cities which meant existence of a system of administration and revenue. Power came to be vested in the hands of certain families, who did not possess the highest status. Pasenadi the king of Kosala legitimised his position as a king by performing asvamedha, vajapeya, etc. in which hundreds of animals were killed. The rituals were now a mere symbolism to legitimise power and not a method to part with wealth acquired in raids. In Kosala and Magadha land was owned by gahapatis and they cultivated it themselves or used the labour of others (tenants). State also undertook cultivation of land. Wasteland was brought under cultivation and with the expansion of agrarian economy a large surplus was released in the monarchical states. The ritual gifts granted to Brahamnas at the time of Yajna were fewer and instead the practice of gifting of land to Brahamnas was initiated. The tax collection machinery was well established in Kosala. Bali now meant a tax but could also mean an offering at a sacrifice. Bhaga and ardhha constituted a share of total and sulka meant customs duty. Reference to karsapana points to the introduction of coinage. Panini mentions taxes prevalent in the eastern area including land tax. The importance of Kosa (treasury) is indicated. This was necessary for maintaining a standing army an essential condition for emergence of a state system. Rulers of Magadha paid due attention to army organisation which included recruitment and training of soldiers and the innovation in armoury. In the campaign against Vrijjis Magadha used two new techniques *ratha-musala* (chariot with knives) and *maha-silakantika* (catapult for throwing stones). Now raids were replaced by planned campaigns.

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## 2.6 THE MAURYAN EMPIRE

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The continued manifestation of the processes discussed above had a bearing on the rise and ascendancy of Magadha and the emergence of the first empire in Indian history. Historians differ in their characterisation of the Mauryan state. Generally these differences have much to do with their approach to and perspective of early India. However, it is not entirely unrelated to their vision of social and political formations in the Ganga valley in the mid-first millennium B.C. Those who perceive of similar developments across the Ganga plains in the said period usually present the picture of a centralised, uniform, pan-Indian bureaucratic state. Its universal presence, if not always said in so many words, is implicit in their writings. In this case the *Arthashastra* constitutes the basic source material. On the other hand those like Thapar who recognise the prevalence of uneven patterns in north India

in the Age of the Buddha while not questioning the existence of an empire move on to address issues related to its nature and structure.

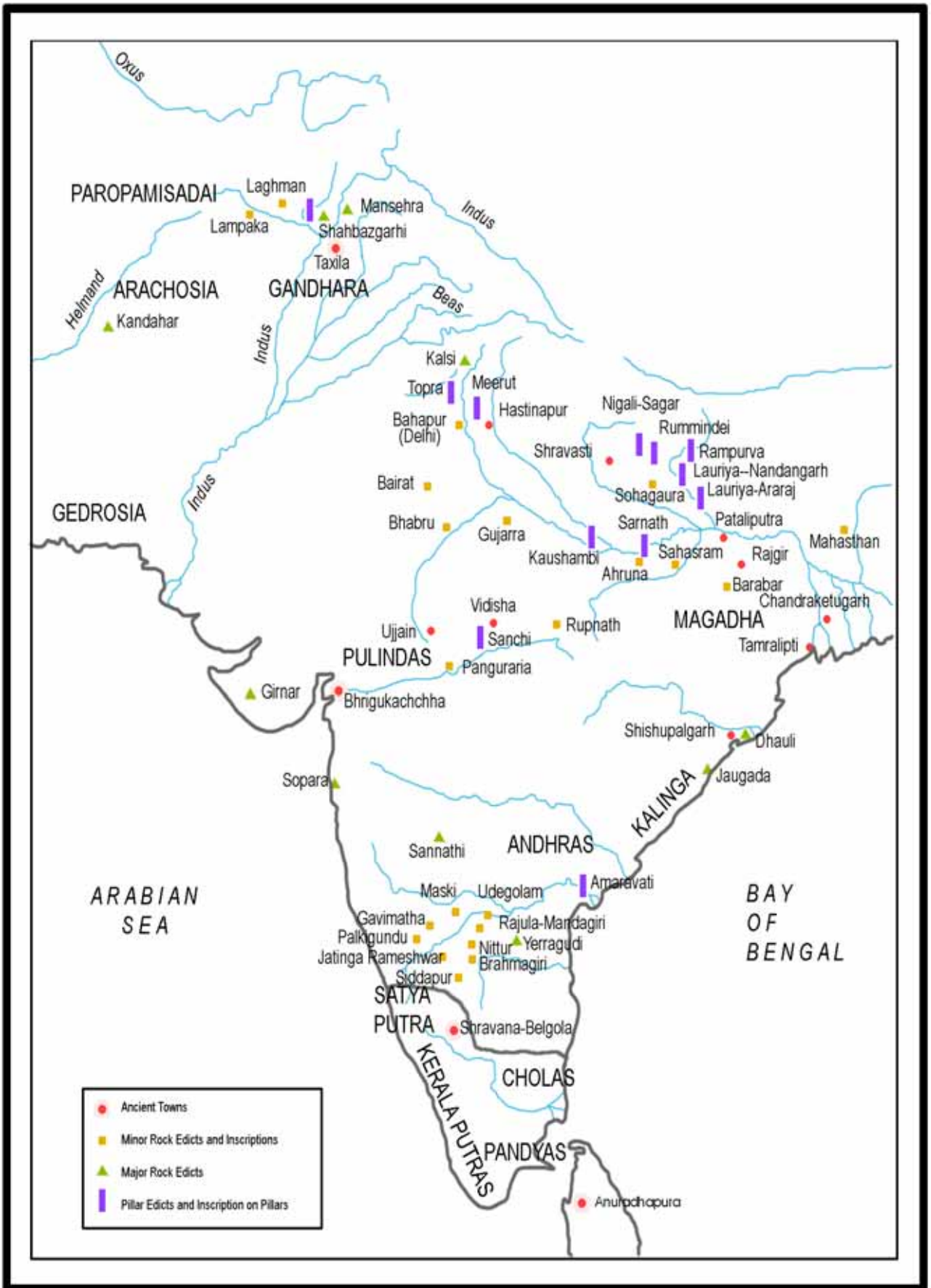
The idea of the more or less uniform or even spread of the Mauryan state, deriving from its centralised nature through reading of the *Arthashastra*, *Indica* and the Asokan inscriptions, has been contested for quite some time. Those arguing for a pan-Indian unitary, integrated administrative apparatus point to the wide geographical distribution of the Asokan edicts, the knowledge of places and peoples, across the country, mentioned in them and the administrative details in the above mentioned texts. Historians trying to understand the structure of the state in terms of contemporary historical processes look at it differently. The spatial spread of the Asokan inscriptions suggests the inclusion of those territories in the empire, but it does not necessarily follow that the administrative structure was similar all over the territory including in the Maurya Empire. Further, the assumed date and nature of the above mentioned literature has been questioned. The *Arthashastra*, for example, it is generally accepted was a product of considerable evolution and, the form in which we have it today, may not just belong to the Mauryan period. Similarly, it is believed to be a manual on state craft, dealing with what ought to be than what was, and may not represent the administrative history of any particular period. Kautilya's arthashastra gives seven elements (prakritis) which constitute the state. The seven elements are Swami, Amatya, Janapada/Rashtra, Durga/Pura, Kosa, Danda/Bala and Mitra. The power of king is emphasised by the use of the term swami. Amatya constituted an administrative group. Janapada referred to a territory comprising of mines, cultivable lands, forests, pastures, irrigation and water sources, farmers, trade-routes, etc. Fort indicated the royal capital which referred to a city having artisans and guilds which was also a political and trading center. Kosa meant the treasury where the revenue which was collected was deposited. Danda has been categorised as force. Mitra carried the connotation of friend. These elements comprised the saptanga or seven limbs of the body of the state. Rashtra was used more frequently as compared to janapada. It denoted sovereign power. Diversity necessitated that the coercive legal power of the Swami ought to be used to maintain order. Mauryas did not claim divine status. The king was the symbol of the state. However, association with deities added to the power of the king.

State exercised control over the utilisation of resources especially forests. Land was divided into categories: wasteland, state land, communal and private land. Taxes are mentioned viz. Bali, Bhaga, sulka, kara, etc. There is reference to vishti and share cropping. It seems that the earlier category of ritual offering, gifts had got metamorphosed into taxes. Bali and Bhaga were taxes levied on a regular basis. Megasthenes states that the king was the owner of land and those who cultivated it paid tax. Commerce was not a state monopoly but the state also came to be associated with it. The evidence for coined money is attested by the discovery of punch marked silver coins. The state carried out the managerial role related to revenue collection from agriculture and trade, it was responsible for organising the army (Bal and Danda) and civil administration for maintaining the law and order and securing the territorial integrity. Through the mechanism of force (Danda), Dharma (ordering of society) was enforced which legitimised the state which further helped in reinforcing varna hierarchy. With the emergence of state the Mandala theory became important. This theory implied that for maintaining the peace and security of empire frequent wars were undesirable, therefore, neighbouring states had to be categorised into friendly or hostile states.

The inferences drawn by scholars on the basis of the sources have to be treated with caution besides, it is said that if in Mughal times it took a messenger on horse back several days to reach Bengal from Agra then the situation could only have been worse during the Mauryan period, almost two thousand years earlier. The general point the statement makes is that the problems of communication could have hindered the extent of centralisation, allowing for some kind of regional and/or local initiative in day-to-day administration.

There is a qualitative difference between an incipient small state and an empire. An empire emerges from a strong state which acquires large territorial dimensions through conquest and possesses a centralised administrative system. Because it is a conquest state gap separates the victors from the vanquished. Such compulsions force the emperor to introduce measures with pretensions to uniformity (such as uniform law, coinage and the spread of monumental art), intended to involve all, including the conquered, in sustaining the empire. Again, in the course of conquest the focus could be on the resource yielding regions viz., agricultural pockets, mines and mineral zones or trade routes. Thus, an empire while representing a political formation might comprise several socio-economic formations, peoples at different levels of socio-cultural growth. That being so the administrative response of the imperial centre would naturally vary across the regions. While a developed region would require treatment similar to that available for the core territory, for purposes of assessment and collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order, mine and mineral zones, undeveloped areas or territories dominated by tribes and pastoralists would not have needed the same. An army contingent or some other form of token presence might have served the purpose. The unevenness built-into the empire thus warrants differential or dissimilar administrative arrangements.

The combined testimony of literature, epigraphy and archaeology suggest that the growth of material culture was limited largely to the Ganga Valley and its fringes. The archaeological data clearly point to the disparity, in the nature of material developments, between Ganga valley region and elsewhere. Agriculture and economic prosperity evidently spread to the other regions during and after the Mauryas. The developments in the post-Mauryan period in the Deccan and Kalinga indicate the opening up of communication routes and fruitful interactions between the heartland and these regions. Notwithstanding these trends, economic and cultural disparities continued to persist across regions, with a bearing on the political structure, in Mauryan India. There was growth, but perhaps not enough to bind together different parts of the empire and keep it going.



Map 1 : Mauryan Empire (After Romila Thapar, *Early India from the Origins to AD1300*, Penguin, 2002)



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## 2.7 SUMMARY

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The transition from pre-state to state was a complex process. In North India the Vedic period especially the later vedic was a transitional stage leading to the establishment of territorial states. Among the states the gana-sangha can be categorized as an incipient state system whereas monarchies can be regarded as representing a mature and strong state system. The background to the rise of the territorial states is important for understanding how the state system evolved. The important features of the territorial states have been discussed. The establishment of the Mauryan Empire illustrates the functioning of a strong monarchical state.

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## 2.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Arya</b>	: Denotes man of wealth and possessions.
<b>Dharmasutras</b>	: Earliest sources of Hindu law important being Baudhayana, Apastamba and Gautam sutra (500 – 200 B.C.)
<b>Gotra</b>	: Exogamous clan
<b>Grama</b>	: Village
<b>Jana</b>	: Tribe
<b>Purushsukta</b>	: Late hymn added to Rig Veda which ascribes the origin of four varnas to the body of prajapati.
<b>Rastra</b>	: In the post Vedic period the term was used for territory.
<b>Sraddhas</b>	: Feeding both the living and the dead in the form of feasts.
<b>Upanayana</b>	: Sacred thread investiture ceremony
<b>Vraja</b>	: Village pastures
<b>Varna</b>	: A system of stratification in society which was based on colour differentiation.
<b>Vis</b>	: Clan
<b>Vratya</b>	: Degraded

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## 2.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Explain the rise of territorial states in the age of Buddha.
- 2) Discuss the nature of the Mauryan state.



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## UNIT 3 POLITIES FROM 2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY B.C. TO 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY AD

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Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

### Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Post Mauryan Period: Sungas and Kanvas
- 3.3 Rise of the Power of the Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas
  - 3.3.1 Indo-Greeks
  - 3.3.2 Sakas and Parthians
  - 3.3.3 Kushanas
- 3.4 Nature of Kushana State
- 3.5 Peninsular India: The Rise of the Power of the Satavahanas
- 3.6 Nature of Satavahana State
  - 3.6.1 Socio-economic and Political Background
  - 3.6.2 Administrative Structure of the State
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Glossary
- 3.9 Exercises

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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The period between *circa* 200 B.C. and A.D. 300 in conventional historical writings is usually perceived as a dark period, largely owing to the absence of territorially extensive political formations. The Kushana imperial project, covering large parts of Northern India, was an exception. However, viewed differently the five centuries between the decline of the Mauryas and coming of the Guptas were important for various reasons. They were characterised not only by extensive economic and cultural contacts within the country and with the West and Central Asia, the beginning of a long-term mutually beneficial networks of exchange with southeast Asia, and the evolution of new art forms at Mathura, Sarnath, Sanchi and Amaravati, but also significant developments in the political sphere. The exalted notion of kingship in ancient India with its pompous titles, as also its identification with divinity gained currency from the post-Mauryan period onwards. The process of state formation manifested itself outside northern India also. The early state in Kalinga under Kharavela and that of the Satavahanas in the Deccan are good examples of it. But these need not detain us here because the nature of Satavahanas state will be discussed subsequently in this Unit.

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### 3.2 POST MAURYAN PERIOD: SUNGAS AND KANVAS

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The death of Ashoka seems to have inaugurated the disintegration of the Mauryan empire. In Kalinga and in the south there is no evidence for the continuation of Mauryan rule after the great emperor. Brihadratha, the last ruler of the dynasty, was murdered by his general, Pushyamitra Sunga, in about 185 B.C. He then founded

the Sunga dynasty which lasted a little more than a hundred years. Pushyamitra was a brahmana and is said to have performed the *ashvamedha* sacrifice, suggesting its revival for political purposes after a considerable break. This need not necessarily imply a brahmanical resurgence at the cost of Buddhism. The Sunga territories comprised the Ganga valley and northern India, extending up to the Narmada in the south. Pushyamitra had to defend his dominions against the Greek invaders from Bactria who entered the Indian plains. However, he met with little success in his endeavour since area as far as Mathura was lost. At the end of the second century B.C. the Greek ambassador, Heliodorus, erected a Garuda pillar at Besnagar, near Vidisha. The inscription on the pillar besides recording that he was a follower of the Bhagavata religion also mentions the contemporary ruler (Bhagabhadra) who perhaps belonged to the Sunga dynasty. The last king of the dynasty was assassinated around 73 B.C., leading to the foundation of the short-lived Kanva dynasty by Vasudeva, the brahmana minister of the deceased king, who is said to have had a hand in the palace intrigue.

Magadha under the later Sungas and Kanvas was a pale shadow of its former glory. The scene of activity had shifted to the northwest, the Deccan and southern India. In ancient Punjab and the adjoining territories “tribal” or *Gana-sangha* polities, which had been subsumed under the Mauryan empire, resurfaced. The Audambaras, Arjunayanas, Yaudheyas, Kunindas and Malavas, among others, were some of the important communities who usually issued coins in the name of the *Gana*, suggesting their largely egalitarian character. Notwithstanding the continuation of the *Gana-sangha* tradition, these communities experienced internal change. It is borne out by archaeological and numismatic evidence. Some of the late Yaudheya coins were issued in the name of the *Gana* and *Mantradharas* i.e. the Executive Council, suggesting the existence of a managerial group or ruling stratum. Similarly, we come across terms such as *maharaja* and *mahasenapati* by the end of the period under discussion, pointing probably to the transition to monarchical form. It has been suggested that the trade route from Mathura to Taxila and beyond passed through their territories, which opened them to the movement of goods, ideas and people from the various areas. The polities affected by these influences were transformed.

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### **3.3 RISE OF THE POWER OF THE INDO-GREEKS, SAKAS, PARTHIANS AND KUSHANAS**

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Nomadic tribal movements occurred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. and acquired a coherent form. The nomadic central Asian tribes pushed westward towards Bactria. It was occupied by the Scythians and later the yueh-chis the two important central Asian tribes.

#### **3.3.1 Indo-Greeks**

An equally important political development during this period was the waves of movements from across the northwestern borders. The Seleucids had been thwarted in their efforts to enter the Indian plains. The Greek kings of Bactria succeeded where the Seleucids had failed. Though Diodotus revolted against the Seleucids and founded the Greek kingdom of Bactria in the middle of the third century B.C., it was Euthydemus, the third ruler, who won recognition from the Seleucid king, Antiochos III, in the closing years of the third century B.C. The successors of these Greek kings of Bactria are known as Indo-Greeks who came to occupy large parts

of northwestern India and Afghanistan. About three dozen such kings are known largely from their coins. Indian literary sources refer to them as *Yavanas*. Demetrius, son of Euthydemus, moved into the Indian plains. He and his successor Menander led several successful campaigns annexing most of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and perhaps even reaching as far as Pataliputra. The conquest of large parts of northwestern India is attested by Strabo's *Geography* and *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. Menander is the best known Indo-Greek ruler and his reign is dated to 155-130 B.C. While his coins have been reported from Kabul and Mathura, the *Milindapanho* records discussions between him and the Buddhist philosopher Nagasena. With the death of Menander the political influence of the Indo-Greeks waned. Besides Gandhara art, which synthesised Greek, Roman and Indian elements, and the Heliodorus pillar, mentioned above, the Indo-Greek coins, which unlike the Indian punch-marked coins, can be identified with individual kings and have been dated are among their important legacy. While the volume of Indo-Greek coins unambiguously point to their role in trade and commerce, the image of the king on the coins had political implications. It was a statement of royal sovereignty.

### 3.3.2 Sakas and Parthians

Continued manifestation of the process of conquest of northwestern India can be seen in the emergence of the Sakas (people of Central Asian origin who had kin ties with the Scythians) as the new rulers of the region in the first century B.C. Political developments pushed them towards Bactria and Iran and from Bactria they moved into the northwest of India through southern Afghanistan. Maues or Moga was the first Saka king in India. He and his successor Azes I founded a large kingdom by displacing the Indo-Greeks. Their territories extended from the northwest to Mathura and included the whole tract from Ujjain to Saurashtra. Deriving from their familiarity with aspects of Indo-Greek and Iranian culture they issued coins in imitation of the Indo-Greek style and used the Iranian title kings of kings (*shahanu shahi*), which can be translated into Greek as *basileus basileon*. The introduction of the impressive title 'kings of kings' into India under the above mentioned influences was not without political content. It points to the existence of a number of lesser chieftains or smaller kings. Besides, there were the provincial governors known as *Kshatrapas* and *Mahakshatrapas* who were appointed by the king. The political system as it emerges appears to be a confederation of ("tribal"/clan) chieftains headed by the Saka kings. The chieftains and governors seem to have exercised a considerable degree of autonomy or independence within such a system.

The assertion of independence by the local *kshatrapas* led to the waning of Saka power. Azes II was the last important Saka king in the northwest. In the early part of the first century A.D. they were replaced by the Indo-Parthians or Pahlavas, whose rule did not last long. Pahlavas originally came from the Iranian province of Parthia. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. they occupied Bactria. Gondopharnes who ruled in the first half of the first century A.D. is the best known among them. The rise of the Kushanas to prominence in India coincided with the decline of the Pahlavas. While the Kushanas dominated the political scene in northern India a branch of the Sakas continued to rule in Kathiawar and Malwa in western India. Rudradaman happens to be the best known of this group. The lengthy inscription at Junagarh dated to the middle of the second century A.D. records his conquests and achievements. The record is important because it is the earliest specimen of Sanskrit as a court language, as also the preferred medium for making statements of power. The fact that it is a public document imbues it with political meaning. The Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela of Kalinga dated in the later part of the first century B.C.

is another example of a similar document with political overtones. These were perhaps precursors of the *prasastis* in the land grant charters of the early medieval centuries, and were meant to reassure, impress and win the confidence of the people.

### 3.3.3 Kushanas

The Kushanas entered the northwest in the early first century A.D. when various powers were contending for supremacy in the region. The Yueh-chi tribe, to which they belonged, had settled down in Bactria by the end of the second century B.C. where they were divided into five units. Each of them had a chief known as *yabgu*. Kujala Kadphises, chieftain of the Kuei-shang (Kushana), united the five tribal units of the Yueh-chi and proceeded to conquer Kabul and Kashmir. When he died at the age of eighty he was succeeded by his son Wima Kadphises who conquered northern India. The early history of the Kushanas is recorded in the chronicles of the Han dynasty of China which are said to have been compiled around the fifth century A.D. Wima Kadphises was succeeded by Kanishka, but the relationship between the first two kings and Kanishka is far from clear. Some of the early inscriptions of Kanishka have been found at Sarnath, Kausambi and Mathura suggesting that he was initially associated with the eastern part of the empire and from there he moved on to extend his authority over the rest of the Kushana territories. Under him the empire extended from the Oxus in the west to Varanasi in the east and from Kashmir in the north to Sanchi in the south; with Mathura occupying the position of a second capital. Purushapura (Peshawar) was the imperial capital. Kanishka was succeeded by Huvishka and Vasudeva was the last important Kushana ruler. The dynasty continued into the early decades of the third century A.D. However, by then the empire had shrunk and whatever little we know about these later rulers is essentially based on information gathered from their coins.

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## 3.4 NATURE OF KUSHANA STATE

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The geographical spread of the Kushana coins and inscriptions as well as the richness of the Kushana layers in terms of archaeological material found in various sites from Central Asia to Varanasi would on the face of it suggest the existence of a well organised, centralised state. However, the available administrative details appear to be far from satisfactory. It is said that the political organisation did not possess the rigid centralisation of the Mauryas. The inscriptions and coins do not indicate a powerful and large administrative machinery. We however, come across grandiloquent titles of the rulers. They bore titles such as *maharaja*, *rajatiraja* (king of kings), *devaputra* (son of God), etc. Kanishka and his successors used the title *shaonano shao* (*shahanushahi* being its Persianized form) as a prefix to their names on the coin legends. Even the epithet *Kaiser* or *Kaisara* was used. Kanishka, for example, in an inscription at Mathura represents himself as *maharaja rajatiraja devaputra shahi*. The Kushana titles on the one hand suggest their superior position in relation to other petty rulers and chieftains and on the other point to the possible influences which went into their making. While *maharaja* was an old Indian title, encountered as early as the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, *rajatiraja* was of Sanskrit origin and had been used by the Sakas. The term *devaputra* being close to the Chinese idea of ‘mandate of heaven’ may have had something to do with such influences.

The details of provincial and local administration are hazy. It is doubtful if the Kushanas exercised direct administrative control over all parts of their territories. Below the king there seems to have been the *kshatrapas* at the provincial level. It has been suggested that there were about five to seven *satrapies*. Contemporary sources do not provide sufficient information about such administrative units or the *kshatrapas* themselves. The Sarnath Buddhist image inscription of the time of Kanishka refers to the reinstatement of two *kshatrapas* who were the descendants of a *mahakshatrapa*. In some cases people erected a *stupa* and *sangharama* in honour of the *kshatrapa*. This was analogous to the system of giving religious donations to ensure the well-being of the Kushana kings. Such evidence points to the autonomous status of the *Kshatrapas*. There are references to *vishayas* as administrative units and the *grama* at the bottom of the hierarchy constituted the basic unit of administration. We come across terms like *dandanayaka* and *mahadandanayaka*, offices which combined civil and military functions, and the *kshatrapas* seem to have exercised their power through these officials. However, as in the case of the *kshatrapas* here too their territorial jurisdiction and functional aspects are far from clear. There are references to some other officials like *bakanpati* (incharge of religious affairs), *danapati* (to do with donations) and the *padrapala*, who looked after uncultivated land around the villages. In the region of Mathura the *gramika* as the village headman seems to have looked after the maintenance of local law and order. The importance of the institution is also borne out by other contemporary references. *Manusmriti* refers to the term *gramasyadhipati* and in the *Shanti parva* we come across the expression *gramadhipati*. The *kshatrapas* were also known as *gramasvami*. All these indicate the importance and authority of the village headmen. The guilds similarly may have played an important role in the administration of urban centres.

For analyzing the political system the administrative details are rather insufficient. How the different levels of administration related to one another is not known. Given the small size of the administrative machinery and the abundance of Kushana coins, particularly in gold and copper, it is said that the officials would have been paid in cash. Deriving from the autonomy of the *kshatrapa* and the use of such terms as *rajatiraja*, *mahakshatrapa* and *mahadandanayaka*, denoting the existence of lesser rulers, there have been efforts to look for feudatory relations in the Kushana polity. It may be mentioned that instead of invoking such parallels (viz. feudatory relations) one may, as in the case of the Sakas, see it as an incorporative political system.

The pre-occupation of the Kushanas with the legitimation of their power and their non-sectarian, broad-based syncretic religious policy in the background of the paucity of information related to administration raises questions which have a bearing on the nature and structure of the Kushana state. To elaborate, the Kushanas used high-sounding titles derived from a variety of cultural contexts. Titles like *devaputra* unmistakably sought to link them with divinity. This aspect is further elaborated in their coins. The obverse of the Kushana coins shows the king engaged in rituals before a fire altar, his bust emerging from the clouds, flames emanating from his shoulders or a nimbus or halo around his head. The context in each case is clearly supernatural. The evidence for religious donations by people for the well-being of the kings and the institution of *devakulas* under the Kushanas, involving the housing of the statues of dead rulers in temple like structures, together suggest the efforts towards bestowal of divinity status to the kings or conferring of this status to the kings. The reverse of the Kushana coins bear Indian (Hindu and Buddhist), Greek and Persian symbols and deities, indicating their syncretic religious ideology. It may

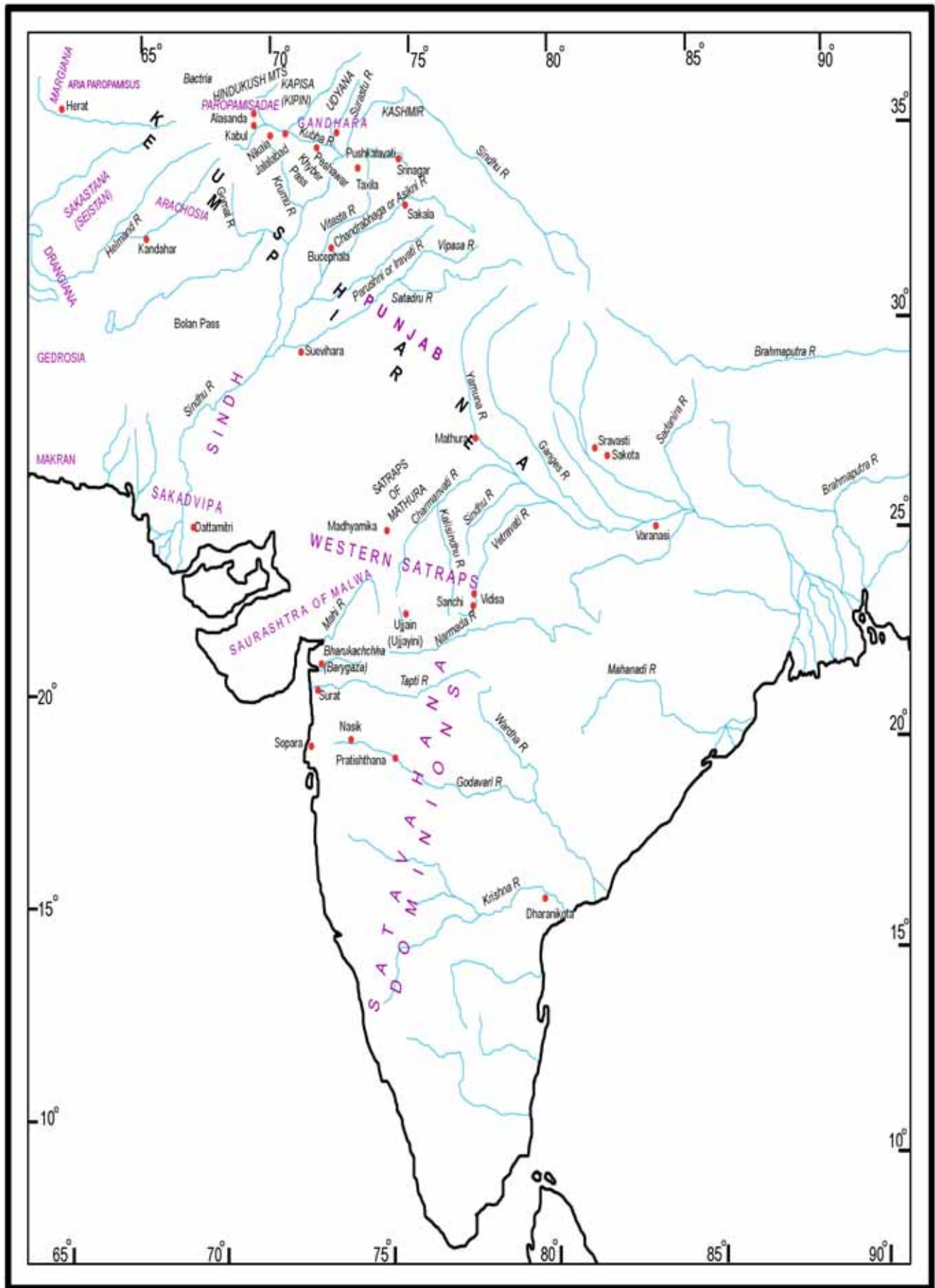


be of interest to note that there is archaeological and epigraphical evidence to show that numerous later day Hindu sects associated with Saivism and Vaishnavism thrived along with Buddhism and Jainism under the Kushanas in northern India. The Kushanas seem to have accepted and reinforced the assimilative nature of Indian socio-religious and political system.

Turning to the socio-cultural situation obtaining within their empire one observes the prevalence of numerous languages, religions and cultures. The population in Bactria was already composite by virtue of having integrated varied influences. North Indian society was characterised by rich diversity, the Upper and Middle Gangetic plains being different from the ancient Punjab. In the Punjab and adjoining regions there were a number of *Gana-samghas*, which outlived the Kushanas and continued up to the Guptas, suggesting the existence of varied socio-economic and political patterns. The official language of the Kushana state was Bactrian written in Kushanised Greek script. Sanskrit too was in use and records were written in Brahmi and Kharosthi as well. A coin of Kanishka found near Termez on the Oxus bears legends in Bactrian on the obverse and Sanskrit on the reverse. The extensive territory of the Kushanas inhabited by various ethnic groups, speaking different languages and practising diverse religions made it necessary for the state to adopt a liberal and accommodative approach.

The Kushana state characterised by ethnic, linguistic and cultural pluralism tried to integrate varied groups by being non-sectarian accommodating variety and developing a syncretic ideology. Thus, the state tried to sustain and perpetuate itself by being responsive to the aspirations of diverse groups. That explains the adoption of multiple royal titles and the accommodation of numerous deities from various traditions, across the empire. The Kushana titles and motifs on the coins show how zealously they tried to legitimize their rule.

With the establishment of Kushana power in Gandhara and Indus region the land-trade from Ganges to Euphrates and sea trade across Arabian sea and Persian Gulf to Rome flourished and expanded. The silk route passed through Kushana territories in central Asia and it was linked with China and Asian provinces of Roman Empire. Kushanas might have imposed tolls on caravans passing through this route. Kushana gold and copper coins indicate that internal trade flourished under them. Kushana rule led to the establishment of new settlement with an admixture of population. This must have led to mobility in society and with the increase in the number of crafts and guilds and growth of foreign trade the rigidity of the caste system weakened especially in the trading ports and towns. Kushanas had established trade links with the Romans. The adoption of the title Caesar (*Kaisarasa*) in the Ara (*Attock*) inscription of the year 47 throws light on Kushana contacts with the Romans. Both the Kushanas and the Romans minted gold coins to be used in trading transactions. Kushanas were the beneficiaries in this trade. They also established trading relations with South East Asia, China and Central Asia in this period. There is no evidence for state monopoly in any sector of the economy nor for that matter state intervention in day-to-day economic transactions. It seems to have been a non-intrusive state allowing for a good measure of autonomy at various levels. However, it did play an important role in encouraging trade and other commercial activities. Under Kanishka and his immediate successors integrative forces seem to have prevailed over tendencies to fission or break away. If the Kushanas borrowed aspects of political ideas and organisation from their predecessors and contemporaries, their coinage, titles and images, sculptures, kingship, including the deification of the ruler, influenced the Guptas and other polities in early medieval India.



Map 2: Kushanas and Satavahanas (based on K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.II. The Mauryas and Satavahanas 325BC-AD 300, Calcutta, 1957.

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### 3.5 PENINSULAR INDIA: THE RISE OF THE POWER OF THE SATAVAHANAS

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The earliest dynastic rule in peninsular India was that of the Satavahanas. In history dynastic rule or monarchy is generally equated to the state and it is valid so long as the former is found resting on class structured societies. The state is found only in a differentiated economy or stratified society. However, until recent years the term, state was used in Indian historiography without such theoretical presuppositions. Earlier on historians recounted the history of the dynasty with a ruler wise focus on the nature of administration and they debated over the dates of succession. Later when historians tended to be theoretical, the debates revolved round theoretical models. The former viewed the Satavahanas as an independent state while the latter theorised it a Mauryan transplant or a secondary formation. Now the debate is about the degrees of theoretical rigour. In the most rigorous sense of the theory, the origin of the state is not external for it is integral to the society's internal dynamic. Naturally the state gets neither diffused nor transplanted. It is inevitably *sui generis*. So the concept of secondary state formation is a misnomer.

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### 3.6 NATURE OF SATAVAHANA STATE

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The Satavahana state, as in the case of any other state, has to be studied against its socio-economic background and hence at the outset, it is imperative to characterise the social formation and examine the institutional features of the political process therein. Unfortunately, the existing historiography hardly gives enough knowledge about the life of the people in those days to characterise the social formation. However, it is important for a student studying the discipline to know the available knowledge and use it for understanding the process of state formation.

#### 3.6.1 Socio-Economic and Political Background

By third century B.C. the Krishna - Godavari valleys had witnessed the rise of agrarian localities of paddy cultivation as the place name Dhanyakataka or Dhamnakada suggests, presupposing specialisation of arts and crafts, trade networks, urban enclaves, social differentiation and the entailing political processes. However, it was obviously not more than a simple hierarchy of the landed households (*gahapati-s*) and their servants (*dasas and bhrtaka-s*) at the level of production relations. The agrarian localities were small compared to the large uplands and forest tracks inhabited by the 'tribal' people who constituted the majority. Paithan was the region's nerve centre of economic activities and its strategic importance in the context of trade and urbanism also accounts for its Buddhist and Jain importance as well as the Mauryan political control. The ports of transmarine commerce, such as Barygaza, Supara and Kalyan added to the region's significance. The Mauryan control in its turn further enhanced its importance and in the process over the years, gave rise to a local ruling aristocracy transcending the structure of the 'tribal' political relations. It is out of this aristocracy that the line of the Satavahana rule began. In short, the historical context of the emergence of the Satavahana state relates to the differentiated economy and stratified societies in the Krishna - Godavari valleys.

From the Jain legend we assume that Paithan was the headquarter. Some twenty-four inscriptions and a few hoards of coins besides literary references mainly including the Jain and Buddhist accounts and puranic genealogies constitute the main sources of Satavahana history. The rule persisted under about 30 kings covering roughly four and half centuries from around 234 B.C. down to c.A.D. 207. Needless to say that there would be gaps and discontinuities in the royal genealogy covering such a long span of centuries. There were interruptions of the Scythians, Greeks and Parthians.

King Simuka, probably also called Satavahana as the Jain tradition shows, was the founder of the dynasty. Like many a dynastic name, Satavahana is variously interpreted and there is no consensus as to how it derives its meaning. The term *sata* means *dana* (gift) and *vahana*, the bearer seem to make better sense than other derivations that scholars have put forward. All the puranas agree on the fact that Simuka's reign lasted 23 years. He seems to have caused the construction of Jain *basati-s* and Buddhist *Caitya-s*. Simuka's brother Kanha (Krishna) who ascended the throne as the next king, extended the kingdom to Nasik if not beyond. His reign seems to have lasted 18 years. Siri Satakani (Satakarni), son of Krishna was the next king after whose title most of the Satavahana rulers came to be known, as exemplified by Cakora Satakarni, Mrgendra Satakarni, Gautamiputa Sri Yajna Satakarni and so on. Satakarni is another curious name like Kumbhakarna, Jatikarna, Lambodara, and the like that defies easy derivation. Hathigumpha inscription refers to Kharavela of Kalinga to have sent his army to the west disregarding Satakarni. The synchronism of Kharavela with Satakarni has enabled historians to determine the latter to have ruled between 200 and 190 B.C. His successor Satakarni II who according the puranas ruled for 56 years was also a contemporary of Kharavela. Apilaka and Hala are two other important successors in the line. Hala's reign witnessed the hey day of economic growth, military exploits and cultural achievements.

The Satavahana rulers were patrons of both sramanas and brahmanas. The construction of Jain and Buddhist monuments earned them religious merit and higher status while the conduct of vedic rituals and *mahadanas*, legitimacy as kshatriyas. It is striking that the Satavahanas maintained *gotra* names of the Vedic brahmanas. They were followers of matrilineal system or the cross-cousin system of marriage, especially with father's sister's daughter. However, their succession followed the system of patriarchal inheritance.

The Satavahana reign got interrupted by the Sakas, Kushanas, Parthians, Yavanas etc. The Kshatrapa Nahapana's coins as well as the epigraphs at Nasik and Karle show that the Nasik and Pune Districts had become part of Nahapana's kingdom, obviously captured from the Satavahanas. It appears that during the period of the later Satavahanas, the kingdom shrank itself to the region around Paithan. Soon Gautamiputra Satakarni restored the large extent of the kingdom and enlarged it further up to Vidarbha, Rajaputana, Malwa and northern Konkan. In the south it extended up the Kanarese country. Gautamiputra was succeeded by Vasishtiputra Pulumavi who ruled for 24 years. According to the puranic genealogy, the next Satavahana king was Siva Sri Satakarni followed by Sivamaka Sada, Madhariputra, Sri Yajna Satakarni, Vasishtiputra Cada Sati and Pulumavi III. It is believed that the line of rulers came to an end with Pulumavi III.

### 3.6.2 Administrative Structure of the State

The Satavahana state was structured by the dominance of the monarch, a miniature variant of the Kautilyan *vijigishu* assisted by a team of *amatyas*, *senapati-s* and



*dandanayaka-s*. It seems to have incorporated chieftains of the agrarian localities as *samanta-s* and of 'tribal' zones as *rathika-s* and *bhoja-s*. Epigraphs mention *mahasamanta*, *maharathika*, *mahabhoja*, *mahasenapati*, and *mahadandanayaka* showing that they worked as higher level constituents of a hierarchical structure. This is not to suggest that it was a well-organised bureaucracy with defined structure and function. Their functions were not just what their name presupposed. For instance, *mahasenapati* was a provincial ruler too like *mahasamanta* and for that matter, any high-ranking dignitary was a local ruling authority. The dignitaries, who constituted the nuclei of the king's power structure, were the most prominent among the *gahapati-s* (*swami-s*) of the *nagara-s* and *grama-s*. The *gahapati-s* of the *nagara-s* were merchants, generally called *vanija* or *negama*. They were organised into a corporation called *nigama* headed by *sethi* or *sreshti*.

It needs no special mention of the fact that the structure of the Satavahana state was not of a centralised character in any pure sense, which even the Mauryan was not. We cannot say that the higher functionaries were under the direct control of the king and that all the powers of the state emanated entirely from the capital. It was a strong monarchy at the heart of the kingdom with the provincial or regional rulers and chieftains in the periphery accepting the king's suzerainty reinforced by the standing army under the *mahasenapati* stationed at the capital.

The Satavahana state followed by and large the Mauryan revenue system that was based on regular returns from agriculture, trade and industry as well as from a variety of periodically exacted taxes. The Satavahanas had crown lands and the revenue from them was substantial. The state enjoyed monopoly over all the mines of metals and minerals and the salt production. The lands held by the *gahapati-s* were subjected to more than one tax. An important source of revenue was the tax levied on merchant *gahapati-s* and merchandises. As it was a money economy, all the dues to the state were appropriated in cash. There seems to have prevailed a high rate of interest, i.e., 12% per month, suggestive of a state of deflation. The variety and distribution of the Satavahana coinage indicates how great was the demand for money as medium of exchange, measure of value and means of payment. The Saka, Kushana, Nahapana Kshatrapa coins co-existed with those of the Satavahanas who struck such coins again as their own. Coins were minted with the name or legend of kings and hence their distribution was symbolic of the king's identity and the extent of his dominions. This accounts for the Satavahanas' reproduction of their intruders' coins, as for example Nahapana's silver coins restruck by Gautamiputra Satakarni.

Under the Satavahana rule, agriculture, trade, markets and urbanisation made headway. Amaravati, Naneghat, Pune, Bhaja, Karle, Kanheri, and Nasik were the major towns and trade centres developed in the age of the Satavahanas. These were centres of Jainism and Buddhism as the vestiges of several *basati-s*, *caitya-s*, *vihara-s* and *stupa-s* in the region indicate. The funding and joint patronage of these monuments by the monks, merchants, local chieftains and kings shows the group relations and processes of power that manifested as the Satavahana state.

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### 3.7 SUMMARY

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In the post-Mauryan period several powers dominated the political scene in north India. These were Kanvas and Sungas who succeeded the Mauryas. Ganasangha



polities also re-emerged in this period. An important feature of this period was the rise of the power of Indo-Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushanas who intruded through the north western frontier into India from central Asia and Iran. The most important among these were the Kushanas. With the establishment of Kushan state trading activities received great impetus. In the social and cultural sphere assimilation and syncretic tendencies emerged and were strengthened. In the Deccan this period was marked by the emergence of the Satavahana state.

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### 3.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Amatya</b>	: Minister
<b>Caitya</b>	: Sacred spots or small groves of trees on the outskirts of a village which might also include a stupa.
<b>Dandnayaka</b>	: Captain in the Army.
<b>Manu Smriti</b>	: Law book of Manu composed in its final form in 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> century A.D.
<b>Nahapana</b>	: a great satrap of saka clan (Ksaharata).
<b>Prasasti</b>	: Eulogy
<b>Santiparva</b>	: 12 <sup>th</sup> book of the Mahabharata which contains passages on state craft and human conduct and was included in the epic in the early centuries of Christian era
<b>Seleucids</b>	: Greek rulers of Bactria who derived their dynastic name from the Greek general of Alexander, Seleucus Nikator.
<b>Senapati</b>	: General
<b>Stupa</b>	: Domes having a central chamber in which the relics of Buddha were placed
<b>Vijigishu</b>	: King who desires conquest
<b>Vihar</b>	: A Buddhist monastery
<b>Vishayas</b>	: Districts

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### 3.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Explain the chief features of the Kushan state.
- 2) Analyse the socio-economic and political background which contributed to the rise of Satavahana state.

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## UNIT 4 POLITIES FROM 3<sup>rd</sup> CENTURY A.D. TO 6<sup>th</sup> CENTURY A.D.

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Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

### Structure

- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. The Rise of Gupta Power
- 4.3. The Gana-Sangha “Tribal” Polities
  - 4.3.1 Yaudheyas and Malavas
  - 4.3.2 Sanakanikas
- 4.4. Monarchical Set-up: Samatata and Kamarupa
- 4.5. Forest Chiefs
- 4.6. Nature of State under the Guptas
- 4.7. Rise of Feudatories and Disintegration of Gupta Empire
- 4.8. Nature of Polities and their Social Origins in South India: Evidence of Puranic and Epigraphic Sources
- 4.9. Historical Geography of Peninsular India
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  - 4.9.2 Karnataka
  - 4.9.3 Maharashtra and North Karnataka
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- 4.10. General Remarks on the Historical Geography of Peninsular India
- 4.11. Summary
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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Indian sub-continent witnessed a prolonged flux in the post- Mauryan period with no major territorial organisation or major political power exercising control over large territories like that of the Mauryas (who were indigenous) or Kushanas, the latter being of central Asian origin. The Guptas were the first indigenous ruling family after the Mauryas to emerge as a powerful dynasty with a large territorial base in north India from the fourth to the sixth centuries AD. They were also the first major dynasty to have recorded their ventures (the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra Gupta) into south India as invaders raiding the eastern regions of the peninsula right down to the southern extremity of Andhra, encountering rulers like Hastivarman of Vengi (Salankayana) and Visnugopa of Kanci (Pallava) probably establishing a line of control meant to be a show of their prowess and dominance in a changing socio-political scene. With the Guptas also emerged the first state with a dominant Brahmanical- Puranic ideology and social institutions establishing the *Varna* hierarchy. A rich literary tradition in classical Sanskrit developed and norms were evolved to create a new order in socio- political organisation based on texts like the *Dharma Sastras*, which sought to establish the Brahmana- Kshatriya dominance.

Peninsular India seems to have been influenced by these changes in varying degrees during the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, with the Deccan ( Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra regions) marking a transition from the intensive commercial and urban economy of the early historical period (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) towards a new agrarian order and a dominant Brahmanical socio- political organisation. The Tamil region, on the contrary, had no clear political configurations and was in a constant state of flux after the decline of the traditional Sangam chiefdoms of the Ceras, Colas and Pandyas. Till the sixth century AD, i.e. till the emergence of the Pallavas and Pandyas as the two important kingdoms the Brahmanical tradition remained one of the competing ideologies for socio- political organisation.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD signalled the death knell of a great power, the Kushanas in the northern part of India and in the north western borderland of the subcontinent (about 262 AD). With the decline of the Kushanas, the political scenario was dominated by numerous independent indigenous powers like the Malavas, the Yaudheyas, the Arjunayanas and the Madrakas in eastern Punjab and Rajasthan, the Nagas in the Western Uttar Pradesh, the Maghas at Kausambi and a number of small 'tribal' states and forest kingdoms in the south of Uttar Pradesh. These powers, however, could not prevent the rise of the Guptas in the middle Ganga valley. The period from 300-600 AD is marked by the domination of the imperial Guptas for nearly two hundred and fifty years over north India.

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## 4.2 THE RISE OF GUPTA POWER

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The foundation of the Gupta power by Chandragupta I seems to have brought the middle Ganga valley and the region around Pataliputra back to political limelight. During the rule of the Kushanas, the seat of power was Mathura in the Ganga Yamuna doab. This shift of geo-political focus is particularly important as being firmly rooted to the middle Ganga valley, the Guptas sought to exterminate rivals in the Ganga-Yamuna doab, upper Ganga valley, Punjab and Haryana, central India and Malwa plateau and tried to expand in the lower Ganga regions. The various powers of the Ganga basin were mostly monarchical. On the other hand with the exception of Nepal in the north, it was surrounded on all the three sides by a ring of states which were mostly gana samgha (translated as republican or oligarchical and often also as 'tribal'). These gana-samghas were not guided by Brahmanical ideology of monarchy and was an alternative to monarchy but gradually the gana-samgha political tradition had to succumb to the impact of monarchical state system.

In the initial phase of the rise of the Gupta power we find that Chandragupta I, who laid the foundation of the Gupta empire, married into the Lichchhavi family, once an old, established gana-samgha of north Bihar (Vaishali in Muzaffarpur). The non-monarchical character of the lichchhavis was known at least since 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. This marriage is attested by a gold coin where we have the representation of the Gupta monarch along with the Gupta queen Kumaradevi whose Lichchhavi origin is evident from the legend Lichchhavayah. The marriage finally resulted in the incorporation of the Vaishali region in the Gupta territory. The discovery of Gupta seals from the Vaishali excavations points to the creation of provincial administration and a head quarter in Vaishali. The legend in one of the seals read [V]aisalyadhistan-adhikarana and has been translated as 'the chief of the government of Vaishali (city Magistrate?)'. Though the Guptas never directly conquered the non-monarchical clan in north Bihar, the seals indicate the penetration of Gupta monarchical polity in Vaishali which was a territory of strategic importance.

## 4.3 THE GANA-SANGHA “TRIBAL” POLITIES

The Gana-samgha tradition was very much present in the greater portions of the ‘tribal’ belt of Central India, Rajasthan and eastern Punjab prior to the Gupta rule. From the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta we learn that non-monarchical groups like the Malavas (Jaipur area, Rajasthan), Arjunayanas (located in the Delhi-Jaipur- Agra triangle), Yaudheyas (Bharatpur, Rajasthan), Madrakas (between the rivers Chenab and Ravi in Pakistan), Abhiras (in western Deccan around Nasik), Prarjuna, Kakas (near Sanchi), Sanakanikas (near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh), and Kharaparikas (possibly in the Damoh district, Madhya Pradesh), paid homage and tribute to Samudragupta. Thus it appears that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, Samudragupta’s conquest resulted in the dissolution of a number of gana-samghas in north India. Though these were not directly conquered and incorporated in the Gupta realm by Samudragupta, they no longer figured in any evidence since the time of Chandragupta II. It needs to be mentioned that though the final blow to the gana-samgha polity, which had held its own as an alternative to monarchy, was dealt by Samudragupta, the structures of some early gana-samghas were already undergoing processes of change. These changes were the result of an overall change in the politico-economic scenario. Their location upon important networks of communication also accelerated the process of change. Most of these non-monarchical clans struck coins and the non-monarchical character of their polity is indicated by the legends on their coins and seals.

### 4.3.1 Yaudheyas and Malavas

The coins of the Yaudheyas on which the word gana occurs are assignable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. At the same time during this period, the Bijaygadh inscription and a seal speak of a Maharaja-Mahasenapati and the seal adds Mahakshatrapa to it, as the head of the Yaudheya republic. The assumption of the Mahakshatrapa title was perhaps the result of their close association with the Sakas and Kushanas. The Yaudheyas in this period became a part of the vast network of commerce and the discovery of thousands of their copper coins and coin moulds from Rohtak in Haryana and from Sunet in Ludhiana district of the Punjab bear testimony to this. Thus the use of the title Maharaja may indicate an inclination towards monarchical polity within the broader framework of non-monarchical polity as they continued to use the term gana, though its character had necessarily changed. With regard to the Malavas we have a very interesting inscription from Nandsa (in eastern Rajasthan) dated AD 226. It records the performance of Ekashashtiratra sacrifice by a scion of the royal Malava family. The Malavas were claiming a status as high as the Ikshvakus. This may be taken as a step towards construction of genealogy which is associated with the Brahmanical legitimation of monarchical power. It is interesting to note that the rulers do not bear any title like maharaja or rajan. It would appear that the republican traditions were still strong among the Malavas and no regal titles were permitted to their rulers even when they had established hereditary dynasties ruling at least for three generations. With their gaining tributary status during Samudragupta’s time, the area ruled by the Malavas saw the rise of two branches of the Aulikara ruling house in the Dasapura area (present Mandasore in Rajasthan), one group acknowledging the Gupta suzerainty and the other remaining independent. The presence of the Aulikara ruling house marked the end of the non-monarchical Malava ganas.

### 4.3.2 Sanakanikas

Transformation of non-monarchical polity into monarchical set up could be seen in the case of the Sanakanikas too. The Sanakanikas were enlisted in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription with the other 'tribal' states. But during the time of Chandragupta II we have an inscription referring to a Sanakanika maharaja who was a vassal of Chandragupta II. It is evident from the inscription that both the father and grandfather of this Sanakanika maharaja were also designated maharaja in the inscription. So perhaps even during the time of Samudragupta, when the Sanakanikas finally pledged to pay tribute to the Gupta sovereign, the process of transformation had already begun.

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## 4.4 MONARCHICAL SET-UP: SAMATATA AND KAMARUPA

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In the case of the peripheral regions of the Gupta empire as mentioned in the Allahabad inscription we find that the rulers of the region are referred to as simply *narpatis* of a particular region without even mentioning their names. It is a pointer to the fact that these rulers were merely chiefs and so did not gain enough attention from the Gupta ruler to be referred to by name. One may particularly cite the case of Samatata which perhaps was experiencing rudimentary form of monarchical set up in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD but finally by 6<sup>th</sup> century AD Samatata definitely experienced monarchical set up as mentioned in the Gunaigarh copper plate dated 507 AD, Maharaja Vainyagupta was ruling in the region. Finally in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, Samatata emerges as an independent monarchical set up, its kings being given the designation of Samatatesvara or Lord of Samatata. A similar process of consolidation of monarchical state structure is also seen in Kamarupa in upper Assam. Kamarupa was also one of the frontier states of Samudragupta in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and perhaps the incipient monarchical state was put under a ruling family by the Gupta emperor. From the genealogical account given in the Nidhanpur copper plate of Bhaskarvarman we learn that Pushyavarman was the first historical ruler of Kamarupa and he may be placed in about 350 AD or a little earlier. Interestingly Pushyavarman out of his loyalty and devotion to his Gupta overlord named his son and daughter in law Samudravarman and Dattadevi or Dattavati. Though Kamarupa was comparatively a small frontier kingdom in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, it appears that king Narayanavarman performed two *Asvamedha* sacrifices which evidently indicates some increase in the power of the family under him. Perhaps he threw off the yoke of the Guptas around that time. Kamarupa became powerful under the next king Bhutivarman in about the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. but even then he was simply called maharaja. The transition from *nrapati* to maharaja indicates the gradual crystallisation of the monarchical state structure. As for the kingdom of Davaka, located in the valley of the Kapili river in modern Nowgong district, Assam, we have reference to its existence in AD428 from the Chinese account of an embassy sent in that year by the king of Ka-Pi-Li. But this kingdom which was a part of the Gupta empire was incorporated within the kingdom of Kamarupa perhaps during the time of Bhutivarman.

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## 4.5 FOREST CHIEFS

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The Gupta emperor also reduced the forest chiefs (*atavikarajas*) to the position of his servants (*paricharakikrta*). These forest chiefs may conveniently be located in the



present Baghelkhand region. It is obvious that this region was initially outside the purview of a complex state society. With the penetration of Gupta power in this region, emergence of a state structure following the pattern of the Gupta administrative system can be noticed. This is reflected from the Khoh copper plate inscription of Sarvanatha dated 512 AD, belonging to the Uchchakalpa family and another Khoh copper plate inscription of Samkshobha dated 529 AD belonging to the Parivrajaka family. Both of these ruling houses were feudatories of the Guptas. Thus the pre-state atavika society ends up being transformed into a monarchical set up. With monarchical set up, the social structure naturally became more complex and Brahmanical or Sastric norms were championed. The Parivrajaka rulers in the atavika area boasted to have upheld and maintained the varna organisation (varnasrama dharma-sthapana niratena). A complex social structure can be seen with the creation of agraharas or revenue free settlements in favour of religious donees. The expansion of agriculture and the advent of the agricultural society is closely linked with the gradual hardening of the varna- jati organisation. The Brahmanical or Sastric norms were instruments which provided some integration in a society with increasing inequality of access to resources, status and power. The transition from incipient to a mature state was also made possible by the incorporation of the autochthonous cults into Brahmanical belief systems and also the patronage of the dominant autochthonous deities by kings. The monarchical polity was expanding and the final annihilation of the gana samgha system of polity was taking place. It is interesting to note here that not a single Dharmasastra text, discusses the constitution of the republics and this silence testifies to the Brahmanical opposition to republics. On the other hand theoretical treatises of this period display a mature understanding of the elements of a monarchical state.

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## 4.6 NATURE OF STATE UNDER THE GUPTAS

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A distinct feature of the monarchical system under the Guptas was the greater use of the concept of the divinity of the ruler. Thus Samudragupta is considered as equal to Kuvera, Varuna, Indra and yama (dhanadavarunendrantaakasama), as a being beyond comprehension (achintyapurusha) and as a deity residing in the terrestrial world (lokadhamadeva). Manu's dictum that the king was a great deity in human form is thus translated here.

From the reign of Chandragupta-I onwards the Guptas took the title of Maharaja Dhiraj as is known from inscriptions, coin legends and seals. The other titles mentioned in the Gupta coins and inscriptions are paramarajadhiraja, rajadhirajarishi and rajarajadhiraja. In the Allahabad pillar inscription Samundragupta is regarded as God living on Earth. In the genealogical accounts he is referred to as Kuber, Indra, etc. Hereditary succession was established in this period though the emperor chose the heir apparent. The Guptas adopted the policy of administrative decentralisation. Several powers conquered by the Guptas were allowed to function independently. They were subjugated but were not incorporated into the empire. These feudatories paid tribute to the Guptas but at times some of them did not mention Guptas as their suzerain in their official records. The practice of land grants and also grants of villages started under the Satavahanas and continued under the Guptas. These grants carried with them administrative rights which led to the decentralisation of administrative authority. Rights of subinfeudation were given to the land donees. Visti (force labour) was applied to all classes of subjects.

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire was followed by the rise of monarchical states while the ganas faded into oblivion. These states derived legitimacy from

Brahmanical Puranic ideology and varnasharam dharma. The monarchical state, represented by the emergence of ruling monarchical lineages, had covered all nuclear regions and had progressed well into peripheral areas by the end of the Gupta period.

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## 4.7 RISE OF FEUDATORIES AND DISINTEGRATION OF GUPTA EMPIRE

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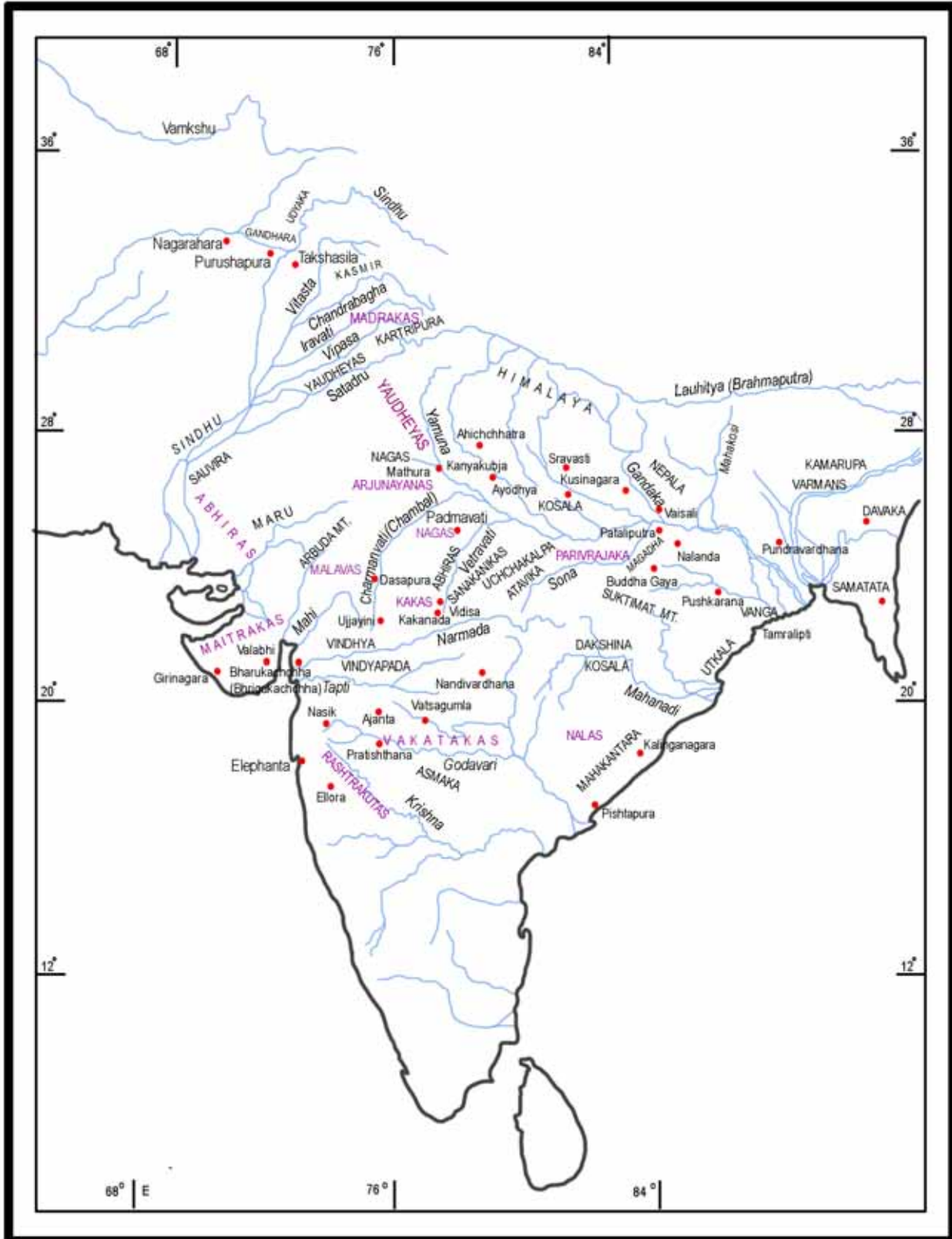
The Gupta empire divided into provinces and feudatory domains, was internally weakened by quarrels in the royal household. Hereditary succession in the high official posts as well as in the families of the feudatory rulers resulted in the tendency to concentrate power in the hands of certain groups which naturally threatened the stability of the empire. Ultimately the empire, smarting under the effect of the Huna invasions, could not effectively check the growth of the power of the feudatory families. Vishnugupta was the last of the imperial Gupta monarchs. The empire virtually ceased to exist by the middle of the sixth century AD. However the vestiges of the empire could have continued in an outlying province like Kalinga. The Sumandala inscription of the year 250(AD 569/70) refers to the rule of Prithivivigraha in Kalinga rashtra in the Gupta kingdom. We do not know who was Prithivivigraha's overlord. The rest of the century was marked by the rule of Manas in the north and Sailodbhavas in the south.

The Aulikaras and the Maukharis, who had earlier served the Guptas were causing serious trouble to the Gupta monarch. The record of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman from the Gaya district, palaeographically datable to about the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD does not either attribute to him the title of a paramount sovereign or refer to the rule of the Guptas. It appears that Anantavarman declared de facto independence, owing perhaps a nominal allegiance to the Guptas. The Risthal inscription of Prakashadharman dated AD514/515 and Mandasore inscription of Yashodharman dated 531/32 AD, the Aulikara rulers, suggest that this family had a great role in stemming the Huna menace in India and weakening the existing Gupta kingdom. The Maukharis probably extended their power to the region of Uttar Pradesh and established their capital at Kanauj. They and the family of Krishnagupta, known as the later Guptas became the two principal powers contending for supremacy in India during the second half of the sixth century AD. An emerging political force about this time was the dynasty of Pushpabhuti at Thanesar in the Ambala district, Haryana. The Maitrakas of Valabhi, who had been ruling as feudatories from the last quarter of the fifth century, became independent in the second half of the sixth century and gained importance by the end of that century. The Gurjaras founded a small kingdom in the Jodhpur area of Rajasthan by about the middle of the sixth century AD. Another principality around Broach was carved out by the Gurjaras in about the last quarter of the same century. In the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, the Sassanians, the local ruling families of the Punjab area, the group of Kidara and the Hunas dominated in different areas in different times.

Thus the period under review is marked by the spread of monarchical polity. The political scenario cannot be viewed in terms of a centralised power wielding authority over large territories. Even the superior political power and position of the Gupta empire did not lead to the establishment of a paramount political power in the subcontinent. At the close of the sixth century north India experienced the emergence of a number of ruling houses who were originally vassals of the Guptas in different

areas. Though the strength and power of all these ruling houses varied, some of them made their presence felt and at the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> century north India saw the rise of some very important powers like the Pushyabhutis, the Maukharis, the Later Guptas. The Maitrakas were powerful in Western India and in eastern India Bengal emerged for the first time as a power to reckon with in north Indian politics under Sasanka of Gauda.

Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.



MAP 3 : Guptas and Vakatakas (based on R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.III, pt.II AD 300-985, New Delhi, 1982.

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## 4.8 NATURE OF POLITIES AND THEIR SOCIAL ORIGINS IN SOUTH INDIA: EVIDENCE OF PURANIC AND EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

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In order to understand the nature of the polities and the social origins of the ruling families which emerged in peninsular India, it is necessary to correlate the evidence from inscriptions with the Puranic material. The importance of epigraphic sources which are increasingly available from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and become more numerous in the early medieval period has been emphasised for reconstructing the historical processes of the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. However the importance of early Puranic texts (albeit with some interpolations) for the historical processes in the Deccan and Andhra for the period 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. along with inscriptional evidence needs to be recognised as the Brahmanical polities of the period invariably followed the Puranic tradition and religious ideology for legitimising their emergence to power and territorial authority. However, the concept of territory had not quite crystallised into cognisable regions with clear limits or boundaries, which could be claimed by any one of the ruling families that are known from the epigraphic sources, the exception being the Vakatakas and Kadambas of Maharashtra and Karnataka respectively and to an extent the Visnukundis of the Andhra region. It becomes necessary, therefore to adopt a historical geography approach to study the peninsular regions in order to situate the ruling families in their respective zones, which were constantly fluctuating due to conflicting interests among them.

Ruling lineages claiming Brahmana origin or connections with the gotras that are recognised in the gotra lists of the *Srauta Sutras* emerged in peninsular India, conspicuously in the Deccan plateau and Andhra plains. This is reflected in the inscriptions of the ruling families. A new term Brahmakshatra/Brahmakshatriya, occurring only once in the corpus of inscriptions, represents a rather dubious category of social status, which is claimed by a few of the ruling families like the Visnukundi and the Pallavas, indicating either the assumption by Brahmanas of Kshatriya functions and status, creating monarchical states with territorial bases or the local clan or 'tribal' chiefs combining the functions of priest and ruler being described by the term Brahmakshatriya and claiming territorial authority. In the process they may well have been influenced by the evolution of monarchical states in the north and the Dharmasastric model of the institution of kingship.

In the *Puranas*, the Vamsanucharita sections list the progenitors of the gotras as descendants of the Ikshvaku or Ila lineages. The epic and Puranic sources refer to the Kshatropeta dvijas and occasionally to the Brahma Kshatriya. The Kshatropeta dvijas who, according to the Puranas were brahmanas endowed with kshatra qualities, may be the same as the Brahmakshatriya of the mid- first millennium AD and early medieval inscriptions. Some of the lineages with gotra identities cannot be covered by the category of Brahma Kshatriya. It seems to be an extra constitutional category which evolved over time (also found in early medieval Rajput inscriptions). There are several explanations of the term. That the "brahmakshatriyas were originally brahmana families which changed over to the profession, life and status of kshatriya in course of time; that the Brahma Kshatriya was a halfway house resulting from matrimonial alliances between kshatriyas and brahmanas ; that the Brahma Kshatriya was a transitional status which was seized upon by the new royal families before they could formulate a pure kshatriya origin, particularly in the early medieval period. In the early medieval period- brahmaksatriya was a special category of



brahmanas who had taken up the duties of the Ksatriya varna without being relegated to a lower status. The Brahma Kshatriya category was an important social category that was constructed for the sake of certain brahmana families which acquired temporal power, but continued to subscribe to their earlier brahmana identity. This category has also been turned down as pure fabrication by some historians

It is also possible that the social category of brahma- kshatriya. might have had its origin among the non- brahmanical descent groups and clans of the Deccan quite independent of the societal processes visible in the epic- Puranic tradition. It would be difficult to envisage a strict separation of the political and religious spheres of activity in such societies. Perhaps in the case of the Brahatphalayanans and the Ananda gotrins (of the Andhra region), brahma- kshatriya represents the brahmanical version of the vestiges of a non- brahmanical institution i.e., 'the priest-chief'. Therefore the social category of the brahma- kshatriya might have had multiple origins in the post- Satavahana Deccan.

That they were more numerous in the Deccan and southern India is admitted by all historians, Karnataka in particular where the early Kadambas began their political career. In the Andhra region the Visnukundis claimed the status of the Brahma kshatriya. Vikramendravarman is described by the Tummalagudem Plates (AD 557) as endowed with the brilliance of Brahma Kshatriya. It is noteworthy that none of the ruling families of this period claimed connections with Chandravamsa (Lunar) or Suryavamsa (Solar) lineages.

The totemic name of the clan or the name of some fictitious ancestor might have been brahmanised to resemble a gotra term. The Brahatphalayanans ruled over present day Gudivada taluk. and adjoining parts of Krishna and Guntur districts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> –4<sup>th</sup> century AD. and the name Brahatphalayana might have been a lineage or family name which acquired the status of a gotra as it was a popular practice among contemporary lineages to mention their gotras in their inscriptions. The Kandara kula, who came to be called Ananda gotrins, had possible non- brahmanical origins and the transformation of their social identity as rulers might have been provided by the Vedic – Puranic brahmanas, some of whom might have been the donees of the brahmadeya charters. The Anandagotrins performed the Hiranyagarbha mahadana, which is believed to be a device used by post-Satavahana ruling lineages for acquiring a new noble birth or even as caste for the first time as suggested by I.K. Sarma. This ritual may be treated as a ceremony for rejuvenating the persona of the ruler as suggested by D.D. Kosambi and not for changing the caste or varna.

The social origins of the dominant ruling lineages also point to the influence of the Bhargavangirasa Brahmanas (elite groups) on the formation of post- Satavahana polities in the Deccan and Andhra regions. It appears that the Puranic references provided the ideological foundation for the ascendancy of at least some of the Bhargavangirasa brahmana families to temporal power in the Deccan in the mid-first millennium AD.

Major dynasties like the Vakatakas of both Nandivardhana and Vatsagulma branches are said to belong to the Visnuvridha gotra. The Vatsagulma branch also had the matronymic Haritiputra. The Ajanta cave inscription of Harisena claims Brahma origins for the Vakatakas and the founder Vindhyasakti is called a dvija. The Vakatakas, who, according to K.M. Shrimali had a 'tribal' origin, also seem to be Bhargavangirasa brahmanas of the Visnuvridha gotra. The early Kadambas claimed



to belong to the Angirasa gotra. The Kadamba Kula is also described as a dvija kula with the rulers assuming matronymics like Haritiputra and the gotra, Manavya and are said to have followed the path of the three Vedas. The Western Gangas are said to be of the Jahnaveya kula and the Kanvayana gotra. The Early Pallavas were of the Bharadvaja gotra and trace their descent through Angirasa, Drona and Asvatthama.

All four (gotras of the Vakatakas, Kadambas, Western Gangas and Pallavas) belong to the Bhargavangirasa group of Brahmana gotra in the *Srauta Sutras* but are recognised as Kshatropta dvija families of Bhargava and Angirasa in the *Puranas*. In the *Mahabharata*, which was earlier than the Puranas, the motive of interpolations was the construction of the image of the brahmana warrior hero. Asvatthama, one such brahmana warrior was cursed to wander (as a terrifying brahmana warrior) alone on the face of the earth in uninhabited countries. His wanderings could have been the basis of the claims by some local ruling families as a possible dynastic ancestor, e.g. the Pallavas. Such claims were often made in a specific context.

The Brahmana claims made by the Kadambas in their early records are indicative of the fact that they were Kshatriyised brahmanas. (Manavya gotra) and were respected as both Brahmanas and Kshatriyas. The Kadambas also claimed to be Angirasa brahmanas, guided on the one hand by the warrior brahmana image of Rama Jamadagnya, while assimilating, on the other hand, the locally popular cult of Karttikeya and the Matr-ganas, as also some epithets and family name of their predecessors perhaps for greater acceptance. Thus the stock references to Mahasena-Karttikeya and the Matr-ganas as tutelary deities is significant, considering the beliefs of scholars that they were Vedic brahmanas. The Vishnukundis of the Andhra region, who came half a century later than the Kadambas also claimed brahma kshatriya identity, may also have had a probable brahmana origin.

The Salankayanas of the same gotra claimed to be worshippers of Chitraratha svamin or the Sun god and may have had links with the Maga brahmanas of Sakadvipa (Sind?). Chaturvaidyasalas or Ghatikas of a later period, which were centres of Brahmanical learning were established by them.

In the mid- first millennium AD there was a proliferation of brahmanical ruling lineages and the adoption of gotras must have been occasioned by a necessity to validate repeated transgressions of the *Smriti* injunctions or the Dharmasastric theoretical axiomisation or model of what a varna based society should be like. Hence the construction of the Puranic category of the Kshatropeta dvijas and the Itihasa – Puranic tradition rationalising these very transgressions within the theoretical model of the Smriti tradition.

The epic motif of the brahmana warrior hero personified by Rama Jamadagnya primarily has greater implications for the societal processes that occurred during the post- Satavahana period. There was thus a preponderance of the Bhargavangiras brahmanas, who were rulers as well as beneficiaries or donees.

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## 4.9 HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PENINSULAR INDIA

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Based on the mid-first millennium AD inscriptional evidence, there is an overall consensus that the period was marked by the emergence and prevalence of

polities with a predominantly agrarian base in a manner hitherto unprecedented on both sides of the Vindhyas.

### 4.9.1 The Andhra Region

#### The Ikshvakus

Taking up the various ruling families in the Andhra region, as far as possible in a chronological order, the earliest were the Ikshvakus of Vijayapuri (Nagarjunakonda). The Ikshvakus who succeeded the Satavahanas in the Andhra region- the Krishna valley (Krishna and Guntur districts) are known from archaeological, inscriptional and numismatic evidence as representing the transition towards a Brahmanical socio-political order.

Nagarjunakonda is situated on the left bank of the River Krishna in the present Palnad Taluk in Guntur district. The only spatial aggregate clearly identifiable as a territorial entity in the Ikshvaku inscriptions is Kammaka rashtra (later Kamma rashtra in Pallava inscriptions), which included large parts of Prakasam district and southern parts of Guntur district. Other inscriptions attest to Ikshvaku control over parts of Guntur district (Jaggayyapeta, Kudurapura, Gurzala, Uppugundur referring to Dhannakataka or Amaravati) and also parts of Krishna district (inscription from Halura). Thus the Ikshvakus controlled large parts of the coastal districts of modern Andhra Pradesh including Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam districts. Their influence extended even to Kurnool and Cuddapah districts.

They also exercised control over specific communities like the Pukiyas (Mahatalavaras) with whom they had matrimonial relations, and the Hiramnakas. The Pukiyas probably occupied the area on either bank of River Gundlakamma between Srisailam in the west and Bay of Bengal on the east. The Hiramnakas were residents of Hiranya rashtra represented by parts of modern Kurnool and Cuddapah districts and are known from a few coins.

The Ikshvaku rule over Nagarjunakonda (Vijayapuri) was interrupted by brief spells of control by other chiefs like the Mahatalavara, Mahagramaka, Mahadandanayaka Sivasen (b) a of the Kausika gotra and the Peribideha family. On the north west frontier of the Ikshvaku domain, in central Deccan (parts of Medak, Karimnagar and Warangal districts) coins of a Sebaka assignable to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD were found suggesting the presence of chiefly families in various parts of Andhra around the core of the Krishna valley.

Archaeological evidence from Nagarjunakonda, both Buddhist and Brahmanical monuments (Astabhujasvamin and Puspabhadrasvamin temples), apart from Roman coins (of Hadrian), excavations at Yelesvaram on the banks of Krishna opposite Nagarjunakonda, Vaddamannu and Kesanapalli in Guntur district, Ghantasala in Krishna district, Veerapuram in Kurnool district, Nelakodapalli in Khammam district (where only their influence reached), coins in Anantapur district, the Tenali hoard (Guntur district) in Duvvuru in Nellore district point to the extent of their control as most of the discoveries are well within the territory of the Ikshvakus known from their inscriptions. The Ikshvakus were followers of the Brahmanical tradition, while at the same time the women of the royal household came from chiefly families patronising the Buddhist religion. The Ikshvakus themselves promoted Buddhist centres on account of the continuous trading and commercial activities in Andhra region till about the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

### **The Brahatphalayanans**

The Brahatphalayanans are known from a lone Copper Plate record of Raja Jayavarama, which is a brahmadeya grant of Pamtura gama in Kudurahara. Kudurahara is represented by parts of the present Gudivada taluk in the Krishna district indicating that the Brhatphalayanans controlled the area in and around Gudivada taluk.

### **The Salankayanans**

The Salankayanans ruled over parts of West Godavari and Krishna districts. The units referred to in their inscriptions are: 1. the Kanirahara, a unit larger than a village, wherein was situated the grant village of Mulakalapalle (either in Nidadavolu taluk of west Godavari district or Mulagalampalle in Polavaram taluk of the same district), which covered the area stretching from Polavaram upto Tanuku taluk in west Godavari district; 2. Vacada Visaya, perhaps part of West Godavari district not far from Guntupalli. Vengipura identified with Peddavegi in West Godavari district was their centre of power. There were several agraharas in the same district created by the Salankayanans; 3. Another unit called the Kudrahara Visaya contained the villages of Chinnapura(Chintapura) pallika and Kompare (Kommaru in Mandavalli taluk of the Krishna district) and Kuruvada grama (= Kuruvada or Kunda in Gudivada taluk of the same district) and Videnura pallika in the same unit. Thus large parts of Krishna district also came under the Salankayanans; 4. Natapati or Nadattapati (also Nata Visaya?), yet another unit included parts of Krishna and Guntur districts in the lower Krishna valley.

Excavations at other individual sites like Elura (Eluru in West Godavari ?) and Ghantasala in Krishna district show evidence of maritime trade or contacts during the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The Buddhist caityas and Viharas in Guntupalli dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the period of the Salankayanans show that parts of these two districts, West Godavari and Krishna districts were under their control

### **Ananda Gotrins**

The territory under the Anandagotrins seems to have covered southern parts of Guntur and adjoining Prakasam districts as indicated by their Copper Plate charters referring to villages like Chezarla in Guntur district.

### **The Pallavas**

The early Pallava charters record grants of land in the eastern districts of Andhra Pradesh, while later inscriptions point to a southward movement from Guntur through Prakasam, Nellore districts and beyond, which was also a major artery of trade and communication.

Andhapata is a term which occurs for the first time in one of the early Pallava grants referring to such a route of communication. It relates to the grant of Viripara= Vipparalapalle on the bank of the tributary of River Vogeru in Narasaraopet taluk in Guntur district. Apata may be taken as a route and Andhapata may be one such route connecting Amaravati with its hinterland. The officers to whom these grants were addressed were the Vyapata and the Ayukyaka.

The various units mentioned in the Pallava records are:

Satahanirattha, perhaps the same as Satahanihara, Karmma or Karmmaka rashtra. (present day taluks of Addanki and Darsi in Prakasam district). A unit called Kavacakara bhoga is located within Karmma rastra.

Munda rastra, in which the grant village called Uruvapalli grama was located seems to have covered large parts of present day Nellore taluk around the Penneru river flowing through Cuddapah and Nellore districts, which is the same as Suprayoga flowing through Hiranya rastra. Munda rastra is represented by Kovur, Nellore, Ravur, Butchireddipalem and Venkatagiri taluks of the Nellore district.

Sendraka rajya= present day districts of Hassan and Chikmagalur in Karnataka.(also mentioned in Kadamba and Ganga inscriptions).

Nadattapati (Vesanta grant), a portion of the larger Nata Visaya included Talluru and Guntur taluks.

Adeyaru rastra in which Udayendiram and Kanchivayil were located is represented by Gudiyattam taluk of North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu.

Grants of land outside the Nellore- Prakasam and Guntur area included the Vengo rastra which may be the area around Vengadam or Tirupati, the well known Vaisnava pilgrimage centre

Hiranya rastra= present day Cuddapah and Kurnool districts covering the banks of River Kanderu.

Unattached place names are known from other inscriptions such as Manchikallu in Palnad taluk in Guntur district, while Kanchi, which was the place of issue of early Pallava charters is the present Kanchipuram in north Tamil Nadu.

None of the rulers belonging to the collateral line of the Pallava dynasty claimed connection with Kanchipuram, but the rulers of the main line did issue charters from places other than Kanchipuram like those located on the banks of the river Nudgali and Tambrapasthana in Andhra Pradesh. The Early Pallavas were on the move frequently. It would appear that the early Pallavas were a pastoral clan with ruling chiefs constantly seeking a territorial base. The shortlived regional bases occupied by them were subjected to inroads by the Visukundis and the Telugu Cudas into their early regions and caused shifts in their base. Simultaneously the involvement of the Pallavas in the internecine struggles of the early Kadambas and Western Gangas also led to a major shift in their territorial base. The Pallavas of the main line seem to have acquired a stable base in the Tondai region with Kanchipuram as the capital during the last decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD perhaps at the expense of the collateral line. The territory lost to the Visukundias and Telugu Cudas were re- annexed by the time of Mahendravarman I in early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**The Visukundis.**— Of the six dynasties of the Andhra region, the Visukundis were the only outsiders to the Krishna- Guntur- Prakasam area. Known as Sriparvatiyas they seem to have begun their political career from the Srisailam hills in the Kurnool district. The Srisailam area along with Mahbubnagar- Nalgonda was known to the early Puranas as the Rsika country.

The units known from their inscriptions are: 1. Velpuru Desa in which the Skandhavara (military camp?) of Velpuru was located comprised of the Ipur taluk and parts of the adjoining taluks of the Guntur district. 2. Guddadi/ Kuddavadi visaya or Kudavada, identified with Gudivada in the Peddapuram taluk and Vilembadi identified

with Velampalem in the Ramachandrapuram taluk (River Tulyabhaga) of the East Godavari district. Their inscriptions are also found in places in the Krishna and Prakasam districts. 3. Plakki rastra mentioned in the Ramatirtham plates comprised of the present day districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam district up to Anakapalli taluk. 4. Natapati known from the Chikkulla plates comprising of Jaggayyapeta, Nandigama taluks and the adjoining parts of the Krishna district. 5. Vaiyerakara represented by the northern parts of East Godavari district and Tundi (Tuni) in Tuni taluk in southern Visakhapatnam district and Akiveedu in a taluk of the same name in West Godavari district. Places on the banks of the Krishna occur in many of the records.

The Visnukundis started their political career from the Mahbubnagar- Nalgonda-Srisailam area and later they appear to have established control over West Godavari district, which was the stronghold of the Salankayanas earlier. They seem to have gained parts of northern Guntur and Krishna district at the expense of the Anandagottrins and the early Pallavas and a firm base also in East Godavari district and moved northwards to Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts. They pushed the Pallavas to Tondai region and occupied Kamma rastra in the Prakasam dist.

Typical copper coins of the Visnukundis with a squatting lion symbol are known suggesting the possible continuity of trade activities on the eastern coastal regions, though less intensive than in the early historical period. The discovery of 787 coins from Tangutur in Nalgonda district and other finds in the Deccan and further south, apart from the Roman coins of the later Byzantine period, indicate that the extent and geographical spread of trade contacts in this period, which scholars like R.S. Sharma have characterised as one of 'urban decline', was considerable and hence the theory of 'urban decline' needs to be re-assessed in the context of regional variations in the intensity of trade activities and contact with the outside world.

The Puranic religion was patronised by the Visnukundis and brick temples were erected for the Puranic deities like Vinayaka, Harihara and Sakti. Vengi or Pedda Vegi might be considered as one of the main centres of activity after the decline of the Salankayanas. Brahmanical cave shrines at Vijayavada, Undavalli and Mogalrajapuram have also been attributed to the Visnukundis

It appears that there was a hierarchy of preferred areas among the six dynasties. The nucleus of this area was the Krishna river on either bank now represented by the modern districts of Guntur and Krishna in which the regions of Andhapata, Natapati and Kudurahara were located. The second area of attraction was the lower Godavari valley and the Rayalasima area. The main contenders for this region were the Salankayanas and Visnukundis. The Ikshvakus and Pallavas also sought to extend their influence over the Rayalasima area. The last area, i.e., the northern coastal districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam attracted only the Visnukundis. The southern coastal districts of Prakasam and Nellore were coveted mainly by the Pallavas. The location of some of the donated villages on the banks of the smaller rivers like the Penneru and the Tulyabhaga may be a result of either conscious agrarian expansion from the nuclear areas or alternatively, the earlier proto-historic sites with other kinds of resources were now sought by the new ruling families.

The concentration of the territorial bases of the dynasties on the Andhra coastal plains is primarily due to the fertility of the region. Metal may well have been another resource for which new settlements emerged in the Mahbubnagar – Nalgonda area of the Plateau and the discovery of Visnukundi coins at a few places



might be indicative of their attempts to procure iron from the Telengana region. Cotton also may have been imported from the Telengana region. The Hiranya rastra and Vengo rastra of the early Pallavas are also located in an iron bearing zone in the Rayalasila region. Brahmadeyas begin to appear in this region too. Copper was yet another metal from the Plateau region. Trade in metal and/or implements seems to have been an important economic activity.

## 4.9.2 Karnataka

### Ananda Satakarnis of Banavasi

Vaijayanti or Banavasi in the Sirsi taluk of Uttara Kannada district has been associated with the Kadambas at least from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD as indicated by the Talagunda (Sthanakundura in the Shikarpur taluk of Shimoga district) inscription of the Kadamba Santivarman. However, even before the Kadambas, evidence of an earlier ruling family, which may be called the Ananda Satakarnis, i.e. local chiefs ruling over the region around Vaijayanti known as Vanavasa in the late second- third century AD, i.e., is available. They assumed the title 'rajan'. A few coins of Raja Cutukulananda and Raja Mudananda found in unstratified contexts in Banavasi and epigraphic evidence suggest that the Ananda Satakarni rulers controlled the Vanavasa country comprising Uttara Kannada district and adjoining parts of Shimoga and Belgaum districts, Dharwad and Chitadurga districts in Karnataka.

This was a period when Sanskrit was being introduced in the Deccan as the main language of the royal charters and inscriptions thus replacing Prakrit, which was still being used in the Early Pallava records. The Cutukula (Ananda) Satakarnis ruling Vaijayanti before the Kadambas, known from a Banavasi inscription, seem to be different from the Ananda gotrins of the Andhra region. Cutukulanand may also have been Bhartiyas or subordinates (servants) like the Maharathis under the Satavahanas and the Mahatalavaras under the Ikshvakus. .

The Early Kadambas of Banavasi are known from the Talagunda panegyric and the founder of this dynasty, Mayuravarman, defeated the frontier guards of the Pallavas and occupied the tough and forested terrain extending up to the Ghats and Sriparvata. He is believed to have had control over central Karnataka and much beyond up to the region of Tungabhadra, i.e., the Malaprabha river in the north flowing through Belgaum and Bijapur districts. He seems to have levied taxes on the Brhatbanas and controlled other rulers such as the Gangas, Punnatas, Kongalas, Pandyas and Alupas. The Punnatas are located in the region of Mysore and adjoining parts watered by the Kaveri and Kabini and probably allied with the Western Gangas. The Kongalas are found originally in Kodagu area and owed allegiance to Kadamba Ravivarman. The Kadamba territory thus extended up to Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu.

The other units or cognitive regions known from the Kadamba records are: 1) Antarmalaya rajya, which comprised of the Uttara Kannada Ghats and swampy lands along the Kanara coast where the rivers descend the Ghats. 2) Mogalur Visaya, i.e., the Bagewada taluk in the Bijapur district. 3) Asanda Visaya, represented by parts of Chikmagalur district and the adjoining Chitaldurga district. 4) Suddikundura Visaya- present Dharwad taluk and district. 5) Mahisa Visaya, also mentioned in some Western Ganga charters, represented by the Madhugieri taluk in Tumkur district. 6) Sendraka Visaya (also Sindaka Visaya) - parts of Chikmagalur, Hassan and Mysore districts. 7) Vallavi Visaya- within Sendraka

## Early State Formation

Visaya- parts of Hassan and Mysore districts. 8) Pankti pura Visaya- parts of Dhrawad and Shimoga districts. 9) Karvannaga Visaya- parts of Siris and Siddapur taluks in Uttara Kannada district. 10) Tahare Visaya- modern Belur taluk of Hassan district, which also formed a part of Sendraka Visaya. The Early Kadambas emerged in the Hanagal taluk of Dharwad district and do not seem to have had control over any part of Mysore.

There were two branches of the Kadambas and neither had any clearly defined domain. The rulers of the collateral branch had issued charters recording land grants within the territory controlled by the main branch and also controlled their capital Vaijayanti after the death of Harivarman the last ruler.

Gudnapura- 5 km away from Banavasi seems to have been the royal residence at least under Ravivarman of the main line. Banavasi and Hanagal contain the remains of some early temples. That there was important trading activity is known from the Byzantine coins in gold which have been found in the Kadamba region.

The core areas of Kadambas were the modern districts of Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, Belgaum and Dharwad and parts of Dakshina Kannada district. They extended up to Raichur, Bellary and parts of Chitaldurga districts. The Kadambas had to contend with the Early Pallavas and Western Gangas for control over Hassan and Chikmagalur districts.

## Early Western Gangas

A fairly clear idea of the territorial limits of the Western Gangas can be obtained from their inscriptions. Yet many places remain unidentified. The units known from their inscriptions are: 1) Paruvi Visaya, ( Paruvi= Parigi in Gauribidanur taluk of Kolar district) comprising of present day Hindupur taluk in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh and the adjoining taluk of Gauribidanur in Kolar district. 2) Kulungijya rajya around modern Kunigal, a taluk headquarter in Tumkur district. 3) Morasa nadu— modern Mandya district. 4) Perura Visaya — around Herur in Sira taluk of Tumkur district and Hiriyur taluk of Chitaldurga district. 5) Kaivara visaya— modern Sidlaghatta and Chintamani taluks of Kolar district. 6) Maragare/ Maruk(g)are Visaya— Madhugiri taluk of Tumkur district the confluence of a small stream with Jayamangali, a tributary of the Penneru. which comprised of Tumkur, Madhugiri, Gubbi and adjoining parts of Kunigal taluk of Tumkur district. 7) Kuvalala/ Kolvalal visaya/rastra - area around modern Kolar taluk in the same district. 8) Mudukottura visaya—modern Bangarpet taluk and adjoining parts of Kolar and Mulbagal taluks in Kolar district. 9) Vallavi visaya in Sendraka rajya, also called asta sahasra visaya, the earliest division with a numerical suffix. ( Sendraka visaya seems to have been larger than other divisions like Vallavi and Devalage visayas). 10) Korikunda bhoga/ visaya—Malur taluk in Kolar district and probably adjoining parts of Hoskote taluk in Bangalore district. 11) Pudoli visya/ Pudal nadu rastra—Hodali visyay in Ganga epigraphs- Srinivaspur taluk and adjoining parts of Kolar district. 12) Ganje nadu — perhaps in Kolar itself. 13) Vanne visaya—located near Tumkur? 14) Punnata and Pannada—the area watered by the Kaveri and Kabini i.e., modern Mysore district and adjoining parts of southern Karnataka. Punnata was rich in mineral resources and forest wealth – timber, beryl, elephants and ivory- and it might have been a bone of contention among the brothers of Durvinita in late 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. 15) The Perura adhissthana, where a garden land for 500 *karsapanas* was donated to the temple of Arhat in Perur is represented by modern Herur.

As most of the early charters of the Western Gangas refer to place names in Kolar, Anantapur, Tumkur and Mandya districts, it seems to be their original homeland. The core area of the early Western Gangas was represented by the present day districts of Kolar, Tumkur, Mandya and parts of Bangalore in Karnataka and Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh. Due to competition from early Pallavas and early Kadambas over Hassan and Chikmagalur districts towards the end of the fourth and beginning of the sixth centuries AD, they appear to have moved into the area around modern Mysore district in Karnataka and controlled parts of Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu.

The respective domains of the Ananda Satakarnis, Kadambas and Western Gangas are situated in the 'meso-region' known as the Karnataka plateau, which is a part of the peninsular uplands macro- region.

It is not surprising that Banavasi or the erstwhile Vijayanti had developed into an urban and religious centre on account of its proximity to the intersecting Ghat routes in Sirsi taluk.

Vanavasa, the core area of activity under the Ananda Satakarnis and early Kadambas belonged to the Malnad region which is a hilly and heavily forested country. But an attempt to control the adjoining maidan region is clearly visible with the discovery of the coins of the former and in some land grants of the latter in the region. The dynasties of Karnataka did not have the resources of a fertile deltaic region for their expansion (as in Andhra Pradesh). None of the records mention the 'bhumi-chidra nyaya' as the guiding principle of the lands granted. All grants to Brahmanas, Jains and Buddhists were made in villages already settled and well populated.

The Kadamba and Ganga inscriptions allude to some sort of a mercantile organisation variously termed as Tuviyal or Tuthiyalla in this area which was controlled by Brahmanas. That there was inter-regional trade is attested to by the reference to the Manigramma sreni in Hassan plates in Peruru adhishtana (Melkote plates of Ganga Madhavavarman III).

### **4.9.3 Maharashtra and North Karnataka**

#### **The Vakatakas**

The Vakatakas were a major ruling family of the period from the fourth to the sixth centuries AD, who were directly influenced by the changing political configuration in north India under the Guptas. They not only had close political ties and matrimonial relations with the Guptas but also for the first time introduced Gupta political structures in peninsular India.

Their original home lay in the Vindhyan region of Madhya Pradesh. Moving down to the eastern districts of Maharashtra, probably in the wake of Gupta expansion, they acquired the Puranic description, Vindhyakas. The main centre of the Vakatakas i.e., Pravara-pura, modern Paunar, is situated about 10 km from Wardha. Vatsagulma or Basim, which was the centre of a branch of the Vakatakas, is the headquarters of a Tahsil in Akola district in Maharashtra

The regions which are known from their inscriptions include : Supratistha ahara was situated in Warora, Yavatmal and Hinganaghat tahsils of Chanda, Yavatmal and Wardha districts respectively. Asi bhukti included Morsi and the adjoining parts of Achalpur tahsils in Amaravati district. Pakanna rashtra is represented by parts of Wardha and Amaravati districts i.e., the banks of river Wardha.

## Early State Formation

Aparapatta of Vennatata or Bennakata represents parts of Gondia tahsil in Bhandara district, Umred taluk of Nagpur district and some portions of Balaghat district in Madhya Pradesh.

Bhojakata rajya, in which a grant village Chammanka (Chammk) was located, covered parts of Amaravati and Chandor tahsils of Amaravati district. Chammak in Achalpur tahsil of Amaravati district is itself situated on the bank of river Madhu, another name for the Chandrabhaga.

Bennakarppara bhoga on the river Benna is represented by the area around Amgaon on the eastern bank of the Wainganga.

Arammi rajya may be Amla in Wardha district and included parts of Nagpur district. Varuccha rajya covered parts of Chhindwara district in Madhya Pradesh.

Krsnalesalikataka was probably in the present Amaravati district. Uttarapatta was located on the north and north east of river Wainganaga in Bhandara district.

Nagarakataka was the region around Mangrul in Akola district. Anartapura bhukti covered large parts of Dhule district. The extent of most of these regions or units mentioned in the Vakataka inscriptions is difficult to determine.

Several margas are mentioned in the Vakataka inscriptions suggesting that the regions around important routes to the Deccan came within the authority of the Vakatakas. Padmapura— purva marga seems to have included Wardha and Nagpur districts. The Padmapura apara marga marked the area around Masoda in Katol tahsil of Nagpur district, which lay to the west of Padmapura purva marga. Varadakhataka marga was in Lohanagara bhoga, which covered the adjacent parts of Amaravati district and Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. Yasapura marga may be located in Nagpur tahsil and Sundhati of the Sundhati marga might be Samanapur near Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh. Nandikada Uttara marga represented the adjacent parts of Akola, Parbhani and Namded districts. The location of others like Gepuraka marga is difficult to ascertain.

Archaeological evidence from Paunar i.e., Pravaraपुरा, apart from a few coins and dilapidated temples (including Jain temples), archaeological evidence from Tharsa (Nagpur district), Bhokardan (Aurangabad district) and Vakataka temples (Varaha, Bhogarama and Kapotarama temples) at Ramtek (Nagpur district) known as Ramagiristhana in copper plate inscriptions are significant as some of the earliest indicators of the importance of the Puranic religion and the Brahmanical tradition that the Vakatakas adopted and promoted in peninsular India. The Mahayana caves at Ajanta excavated under the patronage of the Basim branch of the Vakatakas point to the flourishing state of Mahayana Buddhism in the Deccan which continued to be important till the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Titles like Dharmamaharaja and Matronymics like Haritiputra (especially adopted by the Basim branch) suggest that while they were influenced by the Gupta political traditions, they carried some of the earlier symbols of the regional ruling families of peninsular India. However it is important to note that they claimed to be Brahmanas of Visnuvrudha gotra and worshipped Puranic deities like Siva and Visnu

The entire expanse of the territories controlled by the Vakatakas at different points of time throughout their political career is situated within the “macro- region” known as the Peninsular Uplands. Later the core area shifted to the ‘first order’ region

known as the Vidarbha plain, a part of the 'meso-level' Maharashtra region, i.e., Wardha—Penganga plain and Upper Godavari valley east. The territories of the two families were spread over complex ecological zones unlike their contemporaries elsewhere in the Deccan.

The escarpments of the Vindhyan sediments— became a traditional socio-cultural boundary between north and south India. The Vakatakas began their political career in a transitional zone i.e., the Tapti—Purna river system and Basim, the catchment area of the Godavari.

The southward movement of the Vakatakas may not have been solely due to the pressure exerted by the expansionist regime of their contemporaries— the Guptas. The shifting of territorial base would have been prompted by the need to control an economically viable ecological niche that could be exploited over a long period of time.

The theory of urban decline after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD in the whole subcontinent has influenced the approach to the study of the Vakataka expansion and territorial base in the Deccan, although scholars like K.M. Shrimali are not oblivious to the existence of some form of trade and industry in their domain. Hence it has been argued that there was a burgeoning of rural settlements in the territories controlled by both the branches of the Vakataka lineage and that a large number of immigrant brahmanas (e.g. the beneficiaries mentioned in the Chammak copper plates) settled in these regions. However, no reference to the original home of the donees is made in the records. There is also no direct evidence of Brahmanas from the northern plains being brought into these areas as is often claimed in the early medieval inscriptions (6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). Yet Brahmanas seem to have moved within the region and received plots of land in already settled villages. In most settled areas only a few new plots and villages were donated. Most villages (e.g., the Thalner plates of Harisena) are traceable in the Tapti- Purna valley in Dhule district, Maharashtra. There is no reference in the Vakataka charters to the setting up of new villages by residents of abandoned towns and cities. None of the donated villages were demarcated on the basis of 'bhūmicchidra nyaya' or 'avaniradhra nyaya' as was the custom for denoting new settlements in later periods.

The westward expansion of the Vakatakas visible in the grants of Pravarasena II and his successors is indicative of the attempts to integrate already existing settlements through the institution of brahmadeya, but not the creation of new ones in all cases.

The territory of the Vakatakas in general and Vidarbha in particular, was not untouched by the influences of Sanskrit culture in the pre- Vakataka period, especially from the mid- first millennium BC and more particularly from the Mauryan period. The occurrence of the Northern Black Polished Ware and Punch Marked Coins in excavations, the reference to Vidarbha in the *Aitareya Brahmana* show evidence of Vedic, Buddhist and Puranic religious presence.

#### 4.9.4 The Tamil Region

Contrary to the Deccan and Andhra regions, the Tamil region has no evidence of clear socio-political configurations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. After the decline of the Sangam chiefdoms of the three major ruling families— the Cera, Cola and Pandya, probably due to the decline in maritime trade and constant flux in the cultural traditions, as also the reference to a people called the Kalabhras in later inscriptions and traditions as the intruding elements, subverting the early historical



socio-political order, no polities emerged or no monarchical organisation came to be established in the Tamil country till the occupation of Tondai nadu (northern Tamil region) by the Pallavas moving from the Andhra region with their Brahmanical leanings and Puranic religious traditions in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD and the simultaneous rise to power of the Pandyas, claiming descent from the Sangam Pandyas but largely transformed by the influence of Brahmanical traditions and new institutional forms like the Brahmadeya and the temple. Often called the Kalabhra interregnum and also the dark age in conventional historiography, Tamil history of the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD shows no evidence of the crystallisation of polities and social organisation of the early medieval type of polities under the Pallavas of Kancipuram and the Pandyas of Madurai.

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#### 4.10 GENERAL REMARKS ON THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF PENINSULAR INDIA

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The nuclear regions where early dynasties such as the Vakatakas emerged to power are thus not mere geographical regions. They represent a historical category and developed due to historical processes and hence they are not a given geographical or ecological zone per se.

The geographical sense prevalent during the period is indicated by units larger than a single settlement such as the margas, bhogas, visaya, rastras and rajyas. They varied in size and some were inherited from the Satavahanas and others evolved due to the creation of agrarian settlements or integration of existing ones. There is very little evidence for an organised or centralised administrative apparatus imposed from above and no clearly demarcated units. It would be futile to construct hierarchies of administrative divisions on the basis of the analysis of suffixes like rastra, visaya, bhoga, desa, bhukti etc. often used interchangeably. There were no bureaucratic centres in the post- Satavahana polities that went about the task of organising land revenue and tax administration in their respective spheres of influence. There is evidence of the gradual integration of some areas into a regional unit with one of the settlements as the centre.(e.g., Kudurahara under the Salankayana) No fixity was attained by some of the divisions of this period.

Some of the spatial units found in the epigraphs and Puranic texts of this period may be classified as ‘naively given’, i.e., one which is recognised as a meaningful territorial entity by its inhabitants or by other people to whom it is of some concern. Spatial aggregates like Dakshinapatha, Andhra, Vanavasa etc. would qualify as ‘naively given’ regions during the mid- first millennium AD. Vanavasa— also a naively given region— specific topographical feature rather than a people or a route of trade. Punnata— ‘naively given’ ( Ptolemy refers to it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). It attracted the Western Gangas. Vidarbha also seems to be a ‘naively given’, although it was known much earlier.

The Pallava records refer to Andhpatha i.e., a route of trade and communication in Andhra connecting the lower Krishna valley urban centres to the Telengana region. The land grant charters of this period bear testimony to the struggle among several ruling lineages for control over this fertile region.

Titles like Kadambanam Dhrama Maharaja, Vakatakanam Maharaja and Pallavanam Maharaja could well have been chiefs of lineages rather than a particular territory. While the Western Ganga inscriptions refer to the janapada, which may indicate the

territory controlled by them, the Pallavas describe their domain as constituting a paura janapada. All this would point to the lack of crystallisation of territory related identities prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

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## 4.11 SUMMARY

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The decline of Kushanas in north India was accompanied with the rise of Gupta power. The Guptas had to contend with the power of a number of gana sangha polities and chiefdoms. The forest chiefs were also subjugated by the Guptas. The emergence of feudatories was a result of the policy of administrative decentralisation and practice of sub infeudation of land rights. The Gupta empire disintegrated in the sixth century A.D. and several ruling houses emerged which had been vassals of the Guptas. Gupta state was based on the dominant Brahmanical- Puranic ideology and the concept of Varna hierarchy. The socio-political organisation was legitimized by and based on the Dharmashastric tradition. On the basis of Puranic and epigraphic evidence the social origins and nature of polities in south India between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. has been discussed. Several polities with a predominantly agrarian base emerged in Peninsular India in this period. The historical geography of these polities has been traced on the basis of archaeological evidence. It has been suggested that there was no organised or centralised administrative apparatus in these polities.

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## 4.12 GLOSSARY

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<b>Agrahara</b>	:	Grant of village
<b>Ahara</b>	:	District
<b>Aiteraya Brahamana</b>	:	Text on sacrificial rituals which are appendices to Vedas
<b>Autochthonous</b>	:	Indigenous
<b>Avaniradhra Nyaya</b>	:	A term used in the land grants (inscriptions) in Maharashtra in the 6 <sup>th</sup> century A.D.
<b>Bhukti</b>	:	Province
<b>Bhumi Chhidra Nyaya:</b>		A term used in the inscriptions found in Gujarat and Maharashtra between 5 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> century A.D. which was based on the maxim of fallow land.
<b>Dharmashastra</b>	:	Hindu text of instruction on morals and law
<b>Dvija</b>	:	Twice born
<b>Hunas</b>	:	Central Asian Tribe also known as white Hunas.
<b>Jati</b>	:	Castes which emerged due to hypergamous or hypogamous marriage among dvija castes
<b>Karsapanas</b>	:	A silver coin.
<b>Kidara</b>	:	The Kushana king who ruled over Kabul and upper Sindh valley
<b>Mahabharata</b>	:	Epic literature
<b>Nuclear Region</b>	:	Core Region

<b>Early State Formation</b>	<b>Puranas</b>	: Sacred text which form part of Smriti literature
	<b>Sassanians</b>	: Dynasty of Persia.
	<b>Smritis</b>	: A class of literature comprising law books, Epics and Puranas
	<b>Srauta Sutra</b>	: Text on sacrificial Ritual.
	<b>Sreni</b>	: Guild
	<b>Tehsil</b>	: A unit smaller than a District.

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### **4.13 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Trace the rise of the Gupta power in north India in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. How would you characterise Gupta polity?
- 2) Discuss the nature and social origins of polities in south India between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Polities from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century  
A.D. to 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

R.S.Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*;

—————, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*

—————, *Origin of the State in India*

Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State, Social Formations in the Mid First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*;

—————, *The Mauryas Revisited*

Kumkum Roy, *The Emergence of Monarchy in North India*

B. Chattopadhyaya, *Kushana State and Indian Society*

B.N.Puri, *India under the Kushanas*

S.K.Maity, *The Imperial Guptas and their Times*

K.A.Nilkantha Sastri,(ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India, Vol.II*;

—————, *A History of South India*

T.V.Mahalingam, *Readings in South Indian History*

K.M.Srimali, *Agrarian Structure in Central India and Northern Deccan*

Romila Thapar, *Early India from the Origins to AD. 1300.*

*M. A. History*

*List of Courses*

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>Title of the Course</b>
MHI-01	Ancient and Medieval Societies
MHI-02	Modern World
MHI-03	Historiography
MHI-04	Political Structures in India
MHI-05	History of Indian Economy
MHI-06	Evolution of Social Structure in India Through the Ages
MHI-07	Religious Thought and Belief in India
MHI-08	History of Ecology and Environment: India

*MHI-04 Political Structures in India*

*Block-wise Course Structure*

Block-1	:	Early State Formation
Block-2	:	State in Early Medieval India
Block-3	:	State in Medieval Times
Block-4	:	Colonization - Part I
Block-5	:	Administrative and Institutional Structures
Block-6	:	Administrative and Institutional Structures
Block-7	:	Colonization Part II



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## UNIT 5 EARLY MEDIEVAL POLITIES IN NORTH INDIA, 7<sup>TH</sup> TO 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES A.D.

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Early Medieval Polities in  
Peninsular India 8<sup>th</sup> to  
12<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.

### Structure

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The land grants bestowed upon the Buddhist monks by the Satvahana rulers in the second century A.D. referred to transfer of administrative right to the donees. This was a novel feature which characterises the post Mauryan polity. An important feature of the Gupta polity was that the position of the officers of the districts had become hereditary. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards the land grants became numerous. The feudatories of the Guptas in Central India issued grants to *Brahmins* which carried with them administrative rights (control over revenue and law and order maintenance). These grants were generally held in perpetuity. These measures later led to the emergence of *Brahmin* feudatories who held administrative rights independent of the royal authority. Land grants made by the Gupta rulers did not entitle the grantee the right of sub-assignment. However, the earliest example of sub-infeudation can be traced to an inscription from Indore in Central India which refers to the approval given by a feudatory of the Guptas regarding a grant made by a merchant. Towards the close of the Gupta period grants were issued by the feudatories without seeking the approval of the royal authority in the core of the empire. In the periphery this practice is dated much earlier. In the Gupta period there is evidence of land grants bestowed upon officers for religious purpose. The officials were generally assigned revenues as payment for services. There is no specific and clear instance of land grants made to administrative and military personnel. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Gupta period) the term *Samant* was generally used in the context of subjugated chiefs who became feudatories (tributaries). The Barabar hill cave inscription of Maukhari chief Anantvarman (who was a feudatory of the Guptas) refers to him as '*Samanta Cudamanih*' (the best among feudatories). Soon it came to be applied to royal officials (in the period of Kalachuri-Chedis [who ruled in Maharashtra and Gujarat] and Harshavardhan). In Harsha's period it appears that not only the vanquished chiefs but officials were also bestowed with the titles such as samanta-maharaja and mahasamanta. In times of war the samantas were obliged to render military aid to the suzerain. The *Harshcharit* of Banabhatt elaborately discusses the role of the *Samantas*. It seems that tributary relationship was the keynote of the *Samant* (feudatory) system.

From the above account it is clear that land grants made by the kings were initially for religious purpose and the emergence of feudatories within the state system in the

Gupta period created a hierarchical structure based on suzerain/subordinate relationship. In the post-Gupta period there was proliferation of ruling lineages which, in the process of aspiring for political power, at times collaborated to form a supra-local authority at the regional level. In this context the Kshatriyaisation process and the *Samant* system characterised by land grants to secular personnel was the basis of state formation.

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## 5.2 TRANSITION TO EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA: VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES

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An important problem which confronts historians is characterisation of historical phases into periods such as ancient, medieval, modern etc. These periods had earlier been correlated with Hindu, Muslim and British periods respectively. N.R. Ray laid stress on associating chronology with the special features or aspects of historical change. The term 'early medieval' suggests the evolution from the early historical period to medieval period and brings out the characteristics of continuity and change in the broad historical context. This viewpoint, demolishes the ideas of orientalism which emphasised 'timelessness' and 'changelessness' of Indian polity, society and economy.

We have to analyse the historiography for understanding the periodisation of Indian History into ancient, medieval and modern. According to the conventional interpretation ancient period began with the Aryan invasion and the medieval period with the Muslim invasion. Recently historians are using the term 'early historical' rather than ancient for the period starting from the middle of first millennium B.C. For defining the 'early historical' phase the following features have been outlined by historians like R.S. Sharma:

- Territorial states headed by *Rajanyas* or *Kshatriyas* developed into an extremely centralised officialdom where the authority did not emanate from landholding since the officials were remunerated in cash. The economy was marked by the development of cash nexus, urbanisation, overseas trade, urban crafts etc. In the villages communal landholdings were prevalent among the village communities which constituted the core of social and economic activities of the village.
- Consolidation of the *Varna* system in which the *Kshatriyas* and the *Brahmanas* had control over the produce and *Vaishyas* paid the taxes since they were the traders and the peasants engaged in trading and agriculture and the *Shudras* rendered slave labour. Slavery was prevalent but it was not similar to serfdom. The multiplicity of castes did not exist. These features are found in their mature form in the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

The transformation from 'early historical' to medieval is explained in the context of Indian feudalism by the most acceptable school of ancient Indian historiography represented by D.D. Kosambi., R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava. The basic premise of the feudal polity is:

- i) The disintegration of the unitary administrative system of the Mauryan state based on money or cash economy led to the creation of various loci of authority.
- ii) The religious and secular land grants of the period also embodied the administrative rights, which led to fragmentation of authority and sovereignty.

In most of the conventional writings on early medieval political system the states are considered as monarchies with the kings wielding power and authority through the officialdom but the feudal attributes lead to fragmentation and decentralisation of authority and weakening of the central control within the Hindu political system. A. S. Altekar's views reflect the prevalent notion of early medieval India among the historians, " (the) ideal of federal-feudal empire with full liberty to each constituent state to strive for imperial status but without permission to forge a unitary empire after the conquest, thus produced a state of continuous instability in ancient India". This transformation was regarded as a crisis since the centralised state was replaced by fragmented polity.

The other generalisations regarding the polity of pre-modern India relate to the presuppositions such as traditional polity and oriental despotism. The basic proposition of scholars subscribing to this viewpoint is the changeless nature of the polity, economy and society.

N. R. Ray divides the medieval period into 3 phases:

7<sup>th</sup> century –12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

12<sup>th</sup> century – 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

16<sup>th</sup> century – 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

He gives the following characteristics of medievalism:

- i) The kingdoms become regional and they are regarded as analogous to nation states of Europe.
- ii) The nature of economy gets transformed from one based on monetary transactions to predominantly agrarian.
- iii) In the sphere of the development of language, literature, script etc. the regional features get consolidated.
- iv) The distinctive feature of religion in this period was the mushrooming of a number of sects and sub-sects.
- v) Art was categorised into specific regional schools such as Eastern, Orissan, Central Indian, West Indian and Central Deccanese.

Ray's postulate is also based on the feudal theory or assumption (conjecture).

The early period of medievalism according to the established historiography is located in the pre-Sultanate phase and it has to be analysed in the context of Indian feudalism. The important features of this postulate are given hereunder:

- i) Fragmentation of polity: This process was antithetical to the centralised polity of the Mauryan period. It got consolidated in the post-Gupta period. The essential characteristics of the state were vertical gradation, division of sovereignty, emergence of a category of semi-independent rulers viz. *Samantas*, *Mahasamantas* etc.
- ii) The rise of landed groups: This is attributed to the prevalence of land grants bestowed mainly upon *Brahmanas* or religious institutions in the initial period (starting from the early centuries of Christian era and later). In the post-Gupta phase land grants were made to individuals and for other secular purposes. There is reference to fief holding *Samantas* in this period.
- iii) An important constituent of this model was the decay of market economy, trade and urbanism. Services were paid through land assignments. With the growth

of agrarian economy social relations in the rural areas underwent transformation due to the movement of groups into rural areas and the consolidation of the *Jajmani* (patron-client) system.

- iv) Exploitation of the peasants: They were subjected to high taxation, compulsory labour and were deprived of the right of freedom to move from one place to another.
- v) The multiplicity of castes: A unique characteristic of the post-Gupta period was the stratification within society. This was brought about due to the prevalence of the concept of *Varnasankara* (intermixture of castes which originated in the pre-Gupta period) but the process of emergence of castes got strengthened in the post-Gupta period. Due to this phenomenon many new categories came into existence such as *Kayasthas* and untouchables.
- vi) The basis of the ideology and culture of this period was *Bhakti* which was analogous to the feudal construct since both relied upon attributes like fealty and faithfulness. The deterioration in the sphere of religious practices (development of Tantricism etc.) and court culture and the emergence of the category of landed intermediaries led to the crystallisation of feudal ideology or precepts.

Thus the feudal proposition of scholars in explaining early medieval polity is in contrast to the attributes which shaped the 'early historical' period.

'Early Medieval' as a category in the historical time span can be explained by juxtaposing it with the 'Early India'. The historians have tried to define the features of 'Early India' and contrast it with 'Early Medieval'. This exercise has enabled the historians to demolish the myth of the changelessness of Indian polity, economy and society.

The early medieval period has generally been perceived as marked by decentralisation of polity. This view is deduced from the belief that the disintegration of Mauryan empire led to the fragmentation of polity. Historians relying on an important literary source i.e. the Arthashastra, have analysed the Mauryan empire as a 'centralised bureaucratic state'. However, this approach is being reviewed and Mauryan empire is regarded not as a monolithic entity but a variegated structure comprising of different cultural strands within its large spatial and political dimensions. It consisted of the core located in the Madhyadesa and the local peripheral cultural areas. Thus the political formation even in the Mauryan times was not homogenous.

Recently historians have tried to analyse state formation from a perspective which is at variance with the feudal and decentralisation model. According to this view the following factors contributed to state formation in the early medieval period:

- i) The development of state society (represented by ruling lineage formation) resulted in state formation at the regional and local level (nuclear and peripheral regions).
- ii) Transformation of tribes into peasants. Historians suggest that in the early medieval period with diminishing trade and commerce the *Vaishyas* (engaged in commerce, agriculture, pastoralism) suffered a setback. *Shudras* had served as slave labourers in the early historical period but in the early medieval period, aboriginal tribes and foreign ethnic identities permeated the *Shudra Varna*. The cultivating categories were now the tribes who got metamorphosed into *Shudra* peasants who paid revenue.

- iii) On the ideological plane the consolidation of regional cults by the amalgamation of varied doctrines, rituals and customs (brahmanical, tribal etc.). The rise of *Bhakti* and regional cults was thus an important feature of the ideology of this period viz. the Jagannath cult in Orissa was a mechanism to legitimize the king's power.

Scholars feel that historical changes should be studied against the backdrop of regions and localities. Local state formation brought about the convergence of local and regional customs, traditions etc. into the existing patterns of monarchy, *Dharmshastric* social and *Puranic* Hindu religious traditions. These features did not exist in isolation. They were interrelated and contributed to the emergence of regional patterns in polity and culture. Thus recently historians have tried to analyse early medieval not as a period of crisis but a phase when historical changes led to the emergence of regions embodying distinctive political, social, economic and cultural attributes.

The emergence of Rajput lineages such as Guhilas, Chalukyas and Hunas (foreign and native) was a unique feature of early medieval polity. These lineages were spread over Gujarat, Rajasthan, Central India and Uttar Pradesh. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century the medieval state of Mewar became prominent under the Guhila clan belonging to the Nagda-Ahar branch. The expansion of agrarian economy (development of irrigation techniques, etc.) and land grants indicate the proliferation of agricultural settlements. Gurjaras are referred to as agriculturists in the inscriptions. Many ruling families in Western India were offshoots of the Gurjaras.

In Orissa in the period between 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. state formation was characterised by the proliferation of lineages. The most important among these were the Coda-Gangas who emerged powerful in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. The emergence of the ruling families took place in the regions which provided the scope for resource mobilisation as is evident from the land grants of the period.

The viewpoint that disintegration of a centralised state structure led to a crisis or the emergence of feudal polity has been contradicted by some scholars who feel that early medieval period was characterised by the establishment of local and regional states which arose due to the proliferation of local ruling clans and their transformation into local state and regional structures.

The period from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. especially the period after the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. witnessed the emergence of regional and local states. This phenomenon was the characteristic trait of early medieval India. An underlying feature of local state formation was the rise of ruling lineages in different regions. However, the political system was monarchical. Thus, *Brahmanical* ethos validated the monarchical system as essential for maintenance of political order and it also regarded *Varna* system indispensable for preservation of socio-political order. The *Varnasamkara* concept accentuated the process of stratification (vertical and horizontal) and social mobility also took place through dissent or fissioning off within groups and communities etc. The ascription of *Kshatriya* status by social categories was a means to get sanction for political authority.

The three important attributes of state formation in this period were:

- 1) Ideology for endorsement of monarchy
- 2) Appropriation of agricultural surplus
- 3) The emergence of a hierarchical system based on hegemony and subjugation.



The rise of state system had several implications for the localities and social groups. It brought about the disintegration of the social system comprising of non-stratified communities and created distinctive category of ruling groups. Thus the formation of state in a regional and social context was made possible due to the divisions within social groups and regions and the development of a system marked by hierarchical relations based on the elements of authority and subjection.

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### 5.3 MAJOR POLITICAL POWERS : PALAS, PRATI HARAS AND RASHTRAKUTAS

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The decline of the Gupta empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was followed by the rise of a number of ruling houses such as Maukhris of Kanauj and Pushpbhutis of Thanesar. Harshavardhana who belonged to the family of Pushpbhutis of Thanesar became the ruler of Kanauj, filling the vacuum after the death of his brother-in-law, the Maukhri ruler of Kanauj. Ever since Harshavardhana made Kanauj the capital of his empire, it remained the imperial centre of North Indian polities for several centuries, even though its political fortunes changed frequently. This implied a shift in political power from the east to the west. Pataliputra, which was an important centre during the reigns of both the Mauryas and Guptas, was now replaced by Kanauj as the centre of North Indian political dominance.

In this Unit we shall mainly strive to understand the political history of the major regional powers of North India. Later we will discuss the complex processes of formation of polity which have been understood in different ways by different historians. Before engaging with those, it is necessary to have an overview of the succession of ruling dynasties that ruled in these regions during the early medieval period as also the sequence of important battles won and lost by these dynasties. To start with, let us look at Bengal.

Bengal had been part of the Maurya and Gupta empires. For long stretches of its early history Bengal is not known to have played an important role in the political history of India even after the decline of the Guptas. The first significant ruler of Bengal was Sasanka who ruled roughly between 606-637 A.D. Sasanka is considered the first historically known ruler of the area that constituted Bengal. He was also the first in this region to have extended his political sovereignty over areas that lay far beyond the geographical boundary of Bengal. Sasanka had become the master of the whole of Bengal with his capital at Karnasuvarna (near Murshidabad), and had perhaps extended his rule as far as Orissa. He even advanced against Kanauj which was occupied by the rulers of the Maukhari dynasty at that time. Sasanka's military adventures proved successful and this ultimately led to the growth of hostilities between him and the rulers of Thanesar. Harshavardhana, who eventually became king of Thanesar, set out to defeat Sasanka but was unsuccessful. Ultimately, Harsha succeeded in his conquest of Sasanka's empire only after the latter's death.

The death of Sasanka was followed by a period of political decline in the fortunes of Bengal. It was attacked by Yasovarman of Kanauj and Laitaditya of Kashmir and later on perhaps by the king of Kamrupa. It resulted in the weakening of central authority and the rise of independent chiefs. It seems that the prevailing anarchy led the chiefs to elect someone called Gopala as the ruler of the whole kingdom. Gopala, who went on to become the founder of the Pala dynasty in Bengal, consolidated his rule over Bengal and brought the much needed stability and prosperity

to the region. The date of his accession is not known in definite terms but is generally believed to be in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He died in about 780 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Dharmapala.

R.C. Majumdar describes Dharmapala as one of the greatest kings that ever ruled in Bengal and one who raised the glory of the kingdom to great heights. It may be mentioned that in the famous tripartite struggle between the Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas, to establish control over Northern India, Dharmapala played a very crucial role. In fact for a while he managed to attain a supreme position in North India. According to R.C. Majumdar, Dharmapala spent his whole life in military campaigns. After having suffered defeat at the hands of Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas, he went on to establish an empire that embraced a considerable part of Northern India. Details about his reign are known mostly from copper plate inscriptions found at a place called Khalimpur. Apart from his military campaigns, Dharmapala is also known for his patronage of Buddhism. He founded many Buddhist monasteries but, it was the famous Vikramshila University founded by him, that earned him a lot of fame.

Dharmapala was succeeded by his son Devapala who ruled for about 40 years. According to R.C. Majumdar his fame had reached as far as the distant isles of the Indian Archipelago. Devapala also emerged as a powerful king. Devapala was the last among the line of powerful kings of the Pala dynasty. He was succeeded by Vigrahapala, who ruled for a short period. It is said that Vigrahapala preferred an ascetic life to an aggressive military career. He was followed in succession by Narayanapala, whose reign saw the decline of the glorious rule established by the Palas.

Of the Pala kings, both Dharmapala and Devapala, won fame and glory through their victories in the famous Tripartite struggle. This was a struggle amongst the Pratiharas, Palas and Rashtrakutas for gaining victory over the imperial capital of Kanauj and for establishing control over Northern India.

About the same time that the Palas had established a strong monarchy in Bengal, the Pratiharas under their king, Vatsaraja, seemed to have ruled over large parts of Rajputana and Central India. While the Palas were expanding in a westward direction. The Pratiharas were expanding their kingdom towards the East. Conflict between the two powers was thus inevitable. By the time the first encounter between the two took place, the Palas seemed to have extended their kingdom at least as far as Allahabad. It is not clear who the Pala king was at that time. It may have been either Gopala or Dharmapala.

In the meantime, rulers of the Rashtrakuta dynasty, who had already established their supremacy in the Deccan were trying to extend their dominance over North India. The Rashtrakuta king Dhruva having crossed the Vindhyas, first defeated the Pratihara king Vatsaraja and then advanced upon Dharmapala and defeated him. With this encounter which took place somewhere in the Ganga Yamuna doab, began the Tripartite struggle for supremacy between the Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas.

Though the Rashtrakutas achieved complete triumph in the beginning, the death of Dhruva was followed by chaos in the Rashtrakuta kingdom. Dhruva's son Govinda III was engaged in a struggle against an alliance of twelve kings of South India. The Palas and Pratiharas made use of the respite that this development gave them. Of the two, Dharmapala was quick to recover. He took advantage of this and made his

suzerainty to be acknowledged by almost all important states of North India. He managed to capture Kanauj and place his own nominee on the throne. He held a great imperial assembly in the presence of a large number of vassal kings at Kanauj. In this assembly he consecrated himself as the overlord of the whole of Northern India. At this time Dharmapala's suzerainty was accepted in areas covering Central Punjab, and probably extended upto the Sindhu, Kangra valley, East Punjab, Jaipur, Malwa and probably also Berar. This is inferred from the list of vassal chiefs who attended his imperial assembly. With this event, Bengal emerged from oblivion and rose to the position of a supreme power in North India. The king of Bengal became the supreme head of an empire that stretched from the Western part of North India to the East up to Central India.

However, this situation did not last for long, given the ever-changing nature of political control during this period. The Pratiharas managed to recover under the leadership of Nagabhatta, the son and successor of Vatsaraja. Nagabhatta attacked and defeated the nominee whom Dharmapala had placed on the throne of Kanauj, which resulted in a conflict with Dharmapala himself. In a battle fought against Dharmapala, Nagabhatta emerged victorious. After this success, Nagabhatta conquered several territories, including a large portion of the territories under the control of Dharmapala.

In this situation, Dharmapala probably sought the aid of Govinda III, the Rashtrakuta king, to check the advances of Nagabhatta. Govinda III, either in response to this or on his own initiative, undertook a military expedition to North India. Nagabhatta who was unable to resist such an onslaught was forced to flee. His territory was overrun by the Rashtrakutas who then proceeded northwards. However, even after establishing an empire that stretched from South to North Govinda III was unable to sustain his conquests, due to internal dissensions within the empire. In this scenario, Dharmapala managed to gain the upper hand. He seems to have recovered his empire to a large extent. At the time of his death around 815 A.D., his son Devapala became the undisputed ruler of a large part of North India. He is said to have defeated the Dravidas, Gurjaras and Hunas and conquered Utkala and Kamarupa. The court poet described his empire as extending from the Himalayas in the North to the Vindhya in the South and from the Bay of Bengal in the East to the Arabian sea in the West.

We have already discussed how the power of the Palas gradually declined after the reign of Devapala. The Palas henceforth ruled as a local power in Eastern India. They continually faced invasions and occasional raids by the Kalachuris, Chandellas and Rashtrakutas who sometimes conquered portions of their territory. North and West Bengal were occupied by the Kambojas in the later half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Taking advantage of this the Kalachuris advanced against the Palas as far as Mithila. Around the same time, the Chola king Rajendra Chola and a Chalukya king also invaded the Pala territories. It goes to the credit of Mahipala I, the reigning Pala king of the time, to have defended his kingdom successfully against the Kalachuris, Cholas and Chalukyas and also to have recovered territories from the Kambojas. But South and West Bengal were ruled by several independent chiefs and was not under the control of the Palas.

However, Mahipala's successor, Nayapala and his successor Vignahapala III continued to be engaged in a constant struggle against the Kalachuris of Tripuri. Vignahapala III was succeeded by his son Mahipala II whose reign witnessed a lot of upheavals. Some of the vassal chiefs rose against him. Mahipala II tried to resist these vassals,

but was defeated and killed. Divya, an official who belonged to the Kaivarta caste established control over North Bengal. Mahipala II's brothers Surapala II and Ramapala took shelter in Magadha. Surapala II died soon after and Ramapala took over, but by this time practically the whole of Bengal had passed out of Pala control. A dynasty of kings with names ending in Varman, ruled over East Bengal, while Divya the rebel Kaivarta chief ruled over North Bengal. The remaining territories of Bengal were under the control of different independent chiefs who perhaps still nominally acknowledged the overlordship of the Palas.

Ramapala was able to mobilise the support of a large number of chiefs who helped him to defeat and kill the son of Divya and wrest back North Bengal. Ramapala also forced the Varman ruler of East Bengal to submit to his authority. He also conquered Kamarupa and sent an expedition against the Gahadavalas. He also interfered in the politics of Orissa. In short, Ramapala was successful in restoring the strength and prestige of the Pala kingdom to a large extent. However, the Pala kingdom disintegrated during the reign of his two sons Kumarapala and Madanapala.

Even while Madanapala was busy defending his kingdom from invasions, a new dynasty called the Senas rose in West Bengal. The first significant ruler of this dynasty was Vijayasena, who defeated Madanapala and conquered Bengal. He advanced as far as Assam and Mithila and also conquered a part of Magadha, although the Pala king still ruled over a portion of Magadha. Vijayasena was succeeded by his son Ballalasena. Ballalasena who was a powerful king as well as a learned scholar, was succeeded by his son Lakshmanasena. Lakshmanasena whose reign began in 1178 A.D., had an illustrious military career. He achieved some success in Orissa, fought against the Gahadavalas and was able to advance successfully as far as Banaras and Allahabad and was also in possession of a large part of Bihar. Lakshmanasena was also a learned scholar and a patron of poets. With him ended the reign of the Sena dynasty and Bengal passed into the hands of the Turkish rulers of Delhi.

Let us now examine the political developments in the region of Orissa which also emerged as an important regional kingdom with its distinctive regional tradition. We have already learnt about Sasanka's conquest of Orissa. After the death of Sasanka, Orissa, as we already know was overrun by Harsha. Around the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Sainyabhit Madhavavarman, the ruler of the Sailodbhava dynasty declared independence. The Sailodbhavas were a dynasty that ruled over Kongoda, a region extending from Chilka lake to Mahendragiri mountain in the Ganjam district. After Sasanka conquered Orissa, this dynasty continued as his feudatory.

After going through this brief sketch of political events of the early medieval period in North India you may be wondering how to make sense of all these details of dynastic accounts, battles, victories and defeats. After all, the study of history goes far beyond mere listing of political events, and deal mainly with the analysis of political processes and social and economic formations. Of what use, then are these sketches of dynastic histories of the different regions, to a modern day historian. Well, as B.D. Chattopadhyay points out, "Even the seemingly bewildering variety of details of the political history of early medieval India – the absurdly long genealogies, the inflated records of achievements of microscopic kingdoms, the rapidity of the rise and fall of centres of power – are ultimately manifestations of the way in which the polity evolved in the period and hence is worthy, not so much of cataloguing, but of serious analysis."



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## 5.4 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL POLITY

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Early medieval India has been described by historians, largely as a dark phase of Indian history characterised only by political fragmentation and cultural decline. Such a characterisation being assigned to it, this period remained by and large a neglected one in terms of historical research. We owe it completely to new researches in the recent decades to have brought to light the many important and interesting aspects of this period. Fresh studies have contributed to the removal of the notion of 'dark age' attached to this period by offering fresh perspectives. Indeed the very absence of political unity that was considered a negative attribute by earlier scholars is now seen as the factor that had made possible the emergence of rich regional cultures of the medieval period. The existing historiography on the early medieval period has been classified into hypotheses based on broadly two sets of propositions. One of these assumptions is that traditional polity is essentially changeless. Historians relying on this hypothesis have described polity in early medieval India as "traditional" or "Oriental despotic" (originally derived from Marx) Hermann Kulke points out that Marx's model of oriental despotism was an "outcome of occidental prejudice against an alleged oriental despotism".

The other assumption underlying most of the recent works on this period is one that envisages possibilities of change as opposed to the previous approach of changelessness of Indian polity. The first kind of model with the assumption of change is perhaps the "imperial model" or centralised state model. Change according to the historians subscribing to the imperial model, was thus conceived in terms of dynastic change as well as change in size of territory of the empire. It was seen as deviation from the norm set by "imperial rulers down to the time of Harsha who endeavoured to stem the tide of disintegration and fragmentation" (B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*). The early medieval period was therefore understood, within this model as a negative change from the ideal imperial system. In other words, change is seen here as a negative change towards a state of instability as opposed to the norm of a centralised unitary state. This approach is also, therefore not very helpful in gaining insights into the processes involved in state formation during the period under study. This is because, it does not go much beyond a description of military conquests and dynastic history into more crucial structural issues. This approach, which was mainly adopted by nationalist Indian historians is also fraught with dangers of communal interpretations of Indian history since it assumes as its ideal or normative, the "Hindu political order".

Yet another model which is based upon the assumption of dynamism or change is the "Indian Feudalism" model. This model needs to be understood seriously as it represents a turning point in the historiography of the period. This is because change during the early medieval period was explained in this model as representing a transformation of the socio-economic system and the interrelatedness between social and political formation. The emergence of a hierarchical structure during this period, as exemplified in the *Samanta* system, is used by historians following the feudalism approach to explain the hegemony and dominance of the early medieval state through suppression and exploitation.

D. D. Kosambi was the first to provide a conceptual definition of Indian feudalism. In subsequent years the most important contribution towards the understanding of this period through the feudalism approach was in the writings of R. S. Sharma. The



basis of Sharma's arguments was evidence that revealed an ever-increasing number of land grants made to *Brahmins* and religious institutions since the early centuries of Christian era and also to government officials later on. Sharma pointed to the fact that grantees were being endowed with more and more immunities and they increasingly encroached on communal village land which led to the exploitation of the peasantry.

This situation according to him was further aggravated by the decline of urbanism and trade, particularly foreign trade. Another factor was the paucity of coins. Thus economically, this period was characterised by him as one of decay and decline. He described the period, in political terms, as one which saw a continuous process of fragmentation and decentralisation, caused by the widespread practice of granting big and small territories to feudatories and officials who established their control over territories and emerged as independent potentates. The crux of this argument, therefore is that feudal polity emerged from the gradual breakdown of a centralised bureaucratic state system, represented by the Mauryan state. The system of assignment of land, gradually became widespread in the early medieval period and was tied up with the transfer of the rights of administration of the centralized state as well as its rights over sources of revenue. This process gradually led to the corroding of the authority of the state and resulted in the erosion of sovereignty.

This construct drew criticism from scholars like D. C. Sircar who pointed to the scarce amount of evidence for land grants of a secular type with service tenures, as compared to the evidence of a large number of grants made to *Brahmins* and religious institutions. Another proponent of the 'feudal polity' model, B. N. S. Yadava endeavoured to provide new evidence of an increasing practice of land-grants to military officers, during the post-Gupta period and for restrictions on the mobility of peasants. Yadava, influenced by the writings of Marc Bloch and Max Weber, shifted emphasis towards the political aspects of feudalism. For him the most important feature of Indian feudalism was the '*Samanta*' or the independent neighbouring chief, who rose to prominence since 600 A.D., at the royal courts from a vanquished status to a position of reinstalled feudatories and court dignitaries. In the new conception of empire, the territorial aspect or control was no longer important. In its place, the extension of the tributary system became important. According to Yadava, such empires were at best tributary superstructures and therefore lacked solidarity, stability and political unity.

The feudalism model outlined above has met with a lot of criticism over the years. B. D. Chattopadhyay has questioned the theory of urban decay and decline of trade in the post-Gupta period, a very essential premise of the feudalism argument. The sharpest criticism has come from Harbans Mukhia who questioned the very existence of Indian feudalism. He pointed out that in the European context, feudalism emerged due to changes in the society, whereas in India, the establishment of feudalism has been attributed to state actions especially land grants. He raised doubts whether such complex socio-political structures as feudalism can be established through administrative and legal procedures. Mukhia also raised questions about several other essentials in the concept of Indian feudalism, such as serfdom. He argued that Indian peasantry has been characterised predominantly as free. Like Mukhia, B. D. Chattopadhyay also raises doubts whether administrative measures can bring in changes in socio-political formations. He says that if land assignments made by the state weaken the power of the state (because the state surrenders its administrative and revenue rights), then it means that feudal polity emerged because "pre-feudal polity decides to preside over the liquidation of its own power" (B.D. Chattopadhyay,

*The Making of Early Medieval India*). In this sense the situations in early medieval times could be explained as a form of crisis in the pre-feudal system. This leads to the question i.e., was the pre-feudal polity absolutely centralised?

While critiquing the model of feudal polity Chattopadhyay agrees that the existence of landgrants cannot be denied, nor can the presence of the contractual element in these landgrants be negated completely. He also accepts that the system of assignments, wherever it existed, did bring in important changes in agrarian relations. However, he points out that all this does not help to explain the origin of feudal polity. Instead, he considers land grants (secular) as one and not the sole criteria for understanding the structure of polity. While questioning the single line argument for the formation of polity, based on the evidence of landgrants, Chattopadhyay also says that no system can be totally centralised, indicating thereby that the problem should be addressed from another stand point. This leads us to studies, which have analysed the complex interrelationship between socio-economic and political aspects that have shaped the formation of the early medieval polities.

In recent years, new historical works on the formation of polity in early medieval India have taken our understanding of the problem from a macro to a micro-level. The common issue in most of these studies is a focus on structural developments and changes within a micro-level state system. These studies constitute a departure from the existing historiography because unlike the nationalist historians' model and the feudalism model, which have viewed political change largely in terms of fragmentation or the breakdown of political authority, the new group of historians have perceived political changes through integration and interrelationship between socio-economic and political processes.

The process of change, according to these historians, has been a result of the emergence and gradual development of "state society" (formation of ruling lineages). This involved a metamorphosis of 'pre-state polities' into state polities and thus the assimilation of local polities into larger state structures.

B.D. Chattopadhyay explains that the process of establishment of large polities took place in the nuclear areas. These nuclear regions served as a strong resource generation pocket for the state structure. He further points out that large polities emerged in other areas as well as a result of military expansion. In this context he gives the example of the expansion of the Pala power which from South East Bengal penetrated into the middle and lower Ganges basin.

According to Hermann Kulke this process of the expansion of state society, through the transformation of pre-state polities into state polities, was based on and progressed along with certain other crucial phenomena. One of these was the emergence and spatial expansion of ruling lineages. This process was achieved through Kshatriyaisation or Rajputisation. Within the framework of post – Gupta polity state society which was a manifestation of formation of ruling lineages had first penetrated into nuclear regions and expanded into peripheral areas by the end of the Gupta period.

B.D. Chattopadhyay also examines the formation of ruling lineages from the perspective of the process of social mobility in early medieval India. He explains that through Kshatriyaisation, any lineage or segment of a large ethnic group could make an attempt to assume political power and establish a large state structure by an effective mobilisation of force. Ruling lineages owed their origin to the expansion of agricultural settlements (this development was accentuated by the improvement

of agricultural techniques, etc.) and conversion of tribal groups into peasants, which helped in the colonisation of new areas and the emergence of a state structure. Although this period was marked by the emergence of many ruling lineages but they did not become permanently established in a geographical region for long and got eclipsed in course of time. Several other lineages emerged (as offshoots of the same clan) as the political power in another region through expansion into other areas. Sometimes the lineage in a geographical location was replaced by another lineage with the passage of time and established a different type of political formation.

The new group of scholars, working within the framework of “integrative polities”, also linked the process of formation of state polities with economic and social processes like the extension of agrarian society through the peasantization of tribal groups. A very important constituent of this complex and multi-dimensional process of state formation studied by this group of scholars is the religious aspect i.e. the role played by religious institutions in the process of state formation. Whereas within the framework of the “feudalism” and “segmentary state” models, land grants to Brahmins and temples are attributed a “divisive” and hence negative role leading to the process of fragmentation of political authority and strengthening of the segmentary structure of state, the new approaches view this as an aspect of integration.

According to B.D. Chattopadhyaya, such assignments as *Brahmadeyas* and *Devadanas* as administrative measures helped in providing legitimacy to the temporal power in the areas occupied by them. In this respect the temporal and sacred arena were mutually interlinked. Temporal power depended upon the sanction from ‘spiritual authority’ and the latter needed the support from the temporal power for its sustenance.

During the process of spread of lineage society the several cults and practices of the lineage groups were brought into a uniform framework and the precepts of Bhakti provided the basis for this integration. The temple served as the focal point of Bhakti ideology. The religious cults and traditions which were institutionalised and integrated through the temple and the principles of Bhakti were an instrument for legitimising state power.

*Samantas* have been regarded as feudatories who brought about the decentralization of polity which came to be dominated by suzerain – subordinate relationship. However scholars like B. D. Chattopadhyay counter the decentralised polity perspective and while conceding the hierarchical (overlord/subordinate) element intrinsic to “*Samanta*”, they feel that it did not lead to centrifugal tendencies but was an instrument of integration. The expansion of ruling lineages horizontally was brought about due to many factors (expansion of agricultural settlements, transformation of tribes into peasants, etc.). This type of polity could sustain itself only through the hierarchical feudatory (*Samanta*) system in which administrative powers and resources had to be parceled out. A local and regional ruling lineage could get transformed into a supralocal power only with the aid (military etc.) of other ruling lineages and this necessitated a hierarchical system based on gradation. Thus the feudatory system was integrative in character.

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## 5.5 STATE FORMATION UNDER THE RAJPUTS

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The period after the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was characterized by the growth of ruling clans especially in Rajasthan and these have been categorized as Rajput. The rise of Rajputs has so far been analysed in the context of tracing their ancestry through

a study of the genealogies found in the inscriptions and constructing a dynastic and political history. Several theories have been propounded by scholars regarding the origin of the Rajputs. Some consider them to be of foreign stock while others regard them as belonging to the *Kshatriya Varna*. Bardic traditions refer to them as having originated from agnikunda on Mt. Abu. Later heroic poems or traditions suggest that the category Rajput comprised of 36 clans which initially may have been 12 or 24. However recent writings have tried to study the history of the emergence of ruling lineages in early medieval India. Thus the focus in the study of early medieval polity has moved away from the dynastic history of 'Rajput' kingdoms to the analysis of the factors which led to the emergence of state structure comprising of local ruling clans. The formation of ruling lineages is regarded as a 'process' which emerged and was strengthened by the alleged ascription of *Kshatriya* status by these ruling clans. The claims were not merely a manifestation of their desire to trace their pedigree but they represented the means to justify their position as the ruling authority. Thus, the 'Rajput' category and the process of Rajputization through adaptation within the regional and socio-political context, gained ascendancy in early medieval times. This should be studied not in terms of dynastic and genealogical details but as a phenomenon which led to the evolution from 'tribal' to state polity in this period.

The increase in agricultural settlements with the growth of agricultural economy is borne out by the epigraphic and archaeological testimony. The inscriptional evidence from Western and Central India refers to the subjugation of Sabaras, Bhillas and Pulindas by the Rajput clans. The Rajput ruling lineages gained at the expense of the tribal groups. Various traditions mentioned either in the inscriptions or the heroic poems refer to the migration of Guhilas from Gujarat to Rajasthan and depict them as the successors of the tribal chiefdom of the Bhils. The Nadol offshoot of the Cahamana clan established itself in South-east Marwar by displacing the Medas, which has been referred to in the *PuratanaPrabandhSangraha* and Nainsi's *Khyat* (Compiled in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century). The improved agricultural techniques encouraged settlement of new territories and the gradual transformation from "tribalism" to state polity. The mythical bardic narrative contained in the *Pallival Chand* portrays the process by which the Medas and Minas were eclipsed by Rathoda Siha. An important feature of this period was the process of social mobility within *Varna* hierarchy. Medas and Hunas exemplify this process since they acquired 'Rajput' rank from a tribal position. The Pratiharas belonged to the Gurjara clan and became an important ruling power in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. They were originally pastoralists and agriculturists. The Pratiharas as part of the tribal Gurjara clan branched off to emerge as a ruling power. The genealogies 'fabricated' for this period tried to claim high status for the ruling lineage. The Pratiharas of Mandor (837 A.D.) are said to have descended from *Kshatriya* wife of a *Brahmana* thus laying claim to *Brahma-kshatra* status. Guhilas of Mewar (10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) are also referred to as possessing *Brahma-kshatra* status. Cahamanas of Sakambhari (1169 A.D.) are also alleged to be *Brahma-kshatra*. In the records dealing with the 'Rajput' ruling clans they are either referred to as feudatories of Pratiharas, Mauryas or autonomous. Regarding their ancestry it is traced to the mythological figures like Maharaja Karna, Lakshmana, Vedic gods like Indra, Vishnu, Solar race and Ikshvakus of Kṛta age. It seems that *Brahma-kshatra* status was a device used in the late period to further legitimise the new pure *Kshatriya* position as having been obtained from an even more pure and high status of *Brahman*. Thus the genealogies were composed in the period of transformation from subservient to sovereign power. These genealogies were exaggeration although they did contain some elements of genuinity. The Gurjaras of Gujarat were feudatories of the Valabhi



king. The early Guhilas held feudatory positions (feudatories of Mauryas and Pratiharas). The Cahahamana genealogy refers to the term *Samanta* which proves that they were feudatories of Gurjara Pratiharas and the term *naradeva* or *nrpa* (king) indicates their transformation to autonomous status. The above examples illustrate how the Rajputisation process (formation of ruling lineages, emergence of feudatories) took place within the prevailing graded state structure.

An important characteristic of Rajput polity was the distribution of land among the Rajput clans which led to the emergence of large estates. The grouping of villages into blocks comprising of six or multiples of six or eighty four villages led to the emergence of territorial and administrative units. The forts built in this period were an expression of political authority of the ruling clans and these forts drew sustenance from the contiguous landholdings and formed a part of the territorial system of Rajput polity. Marriage alliances among the various Rajput clans also had their impact in the political sphere. The inter-clan marriage networks were confined to Rajputs i.e. ruling elites. Social groups who acquired power in this period and emerged as ruling elites also legitimised their position socially and politically by entering into marriage alliances with established Rajput lineages and through kshatriyaisation.

It appears that by the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Rajputra category indicated not only the political position but it became hereditary. There was growth and expansion of Rajput clan network. The term *Rajputra* encompassed a wide category from son of a king to a small landholder. Epithets like *Rajaputra*, *Rauta*, *Ranaka* became more prevalent after 12<sup>th</sup> century than *samanta* and *mahasamanta*. The terms *Rajputra*, *Ranaka*, etc. are sometimes mentioned along with the appellations like *samanta*, *mahamandalesvara*, etc. *Rauta*, *Ranaka*, titles are also found in the inscriptions of many clans who were probably seeking a place in the socio-political structure which proves that Rajput socio-political system was an assimilative and flexible structure. With the rise of the Rajputs the traditional *Kshatriyas* were probably resorting to other professions and the ruling category was now not analogous to *Kshatriya* but to the Rajput. There are several instances of inter-clan relationship within Rajput polity viz.- In the Cahamana kingdom Guhilas existed as landholding elites. The memorial stones or relics known as *govardhana dhvaj* or *devali* refer to Pratihara, Cahamana and Guhila clans. They also mention appellations like *Mahasamanta*, *Rana*, *Rauta*, *Rajputra*. It appears that military prowess was an important factor which helped these clans in becoming ruling powers. The Rajput ruling clans got proliferated either through segmentation (an important clan got subdivided into sub-clan) or through assimilation with the local elements.

The land assignments were an important feature of the polity under the Pratiharas and their feudatories. Land was bestowed upon the *Brahmins* and temples by the Pratihara kings. These grants were virtually held in perpetuity. However these grants do not clarify the exact nature of economic and administrative privileges. These administrative measures (issuance of land grants) led to the emergence of landed intermediaries between the ruling group and the peasants. Religious endowments were commonly prevalent in the territories of feudatories of Pratiharas. The religious grantees were given the responsibility of maintaining law and order and collection of revenue. In 890 A.D. Pratihara ruler Bhoja I assigned land to a Kalachuri ruler for his meritorious military service. Pratihara kings also gave land grants to senior officials. The grant issued by the Gurjara feudatory of the Pratiharas refers to the territory under his control as *Svabhog-avapta-vamsapotakabhoga*. He was a member of ruling family and had been granted the territory by the Pratihara king but



he further sub-allotted it with administrative rights. However it seems that Pratiharas issued very few secular grants. An important feature of administrative system under Pratiharas and their feudatories was the practice of subinfeudation. The religious grantees made endowments to others by transferring portions of their assignments. Grants were also bestowed upon the *mathas* and teachers by the members of the ruling clans or other feudatories who could make sub-grants even without the approval of the overlord. There is a reference to a land grant made by a high Pratihara functionary to a temple which was recommended by a Cahamana feudatory. The charter of this grant contained the signature of the two royal officials. This shows the importance of royal sanction in the administrative system. However it seems that royal and official sanction was not always sought while making grants.

A unique feature of Pratihara administrative system was the absence of a large centralised bureaucratic machinery. The category of central officials mentioned in the grants are called *Niyuktas*. The territories held by the feudatories and *Mahasamantas* were administered by them through their sub-feudatories. It seems that the administrative rights were further parceled out among feudatories and sub-feudatories. Though the Pratiharas might have exercised control over their feudatories but it seems that the polity was dominated by *Samanta*/feudatory system. The Pratihara kings used appellations viz. *Parmeshwara*, *Mahrajadhiraja* etc. These titles point to the superiority of the king over all other chiefs and princes who had accepted his suzerainty. From the inscriptions we come to know that Madhava (in the period of the Pratihara king Mahendrapal II) who was a governor (*Tantrapal*) and chief commander (*Mahadandanayaka*) was also referred to as *Mahasamanta*. Undabhata who held the position of governor of town (*Mahapratihara*) was also called *Mahasamantadhipati* (head of feudatories). It seems that the officials were bestowed with appellations having feudal connotation. The feudatories of Pratiharas (Cahamana, Chalukyas, Guhilots and Kalachuri) provided military assistance to their suzerain. The relationship was based on the idea of loyalty and allegiance. The feudatories acknowledged their suzerain in the grants. The Pratiharas did not have several seats of power and kept their base mainly at Kannauj. They did not generally make non-religious grants. However in 1036 A.D. the last ruler of this dynasty made a non-sectarian grant to a non-*Brahmin*. Villages under the Gurjara Pratiharas were divided into groups of 12 and 84. This is mentioned in the inscription of 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. of a Chalukya feudatory of Pratiharas. It seems that later the territories were distributed among the leaders of the clans in units of 12 villages or their multiples.

The Gurjara Pratihara empire declined in the later half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Gahadavalas and Kalachuris controlled the territories in UP. The eastern portion of Central India was being ruled by Kalachuris of Tripuri and Chandelas of Jejakabhukti. Later the Kalachuris were divided into 3 groups:

- 1) of Tripuri
- 2) of Ratanpura
- 3) of Gorakhpur

Territories in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Malwa were placed under various Rajput ruling clans viz. Cahamanas who got partitioned into 5 groups:

- 1) Broach
- 2) Javalipura (mid 12<sup>th</sup> century)

- 3) Sakambhari
- 4) Naddula and
- 5) Ranthambhor

The important ruling clans of Cahamanas in the 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. were those of Broach and Ranthambhor. The Guhilas took control of Mewar in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Tomars were in possession of Ajmer and Delhi. Paramaras held Malwa and fissioned off into various branches: Malwa, Abu, Bhinmal and Kiradu in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. However Abu Paramaras were subjugated by Bhima Chalukya in 1062 A.D. and Paramaras continued to function as feudatories of Chalukya as in Abu. Gujarat was brought under the Chalukya rule. However in the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., their feudatories, the Vaghelas emerged as an important ruling power.

The grants inscribed on stone or copper as well as documents like Lekhapaddhati throw light on the practice of land grants to officials and feudatories for their services. It seems that under the Cahamanas, Gahadavalas, Candellas and Kalachuris officers and administrative functionaries were remunerated from the taxes collected from villages. Taxes were set aside as salary for the various categories of officers. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Gahadavala officials were in a position to make exactions for their personal use upon the villages. The Cahamans also exacted taxes from villages for the upkeep of military personnel called Baladhipas. In this period various administrative functionaries were remunerated through fixed levies. Officials like *Purohits*, *Sacivas*, *Pratiharas*, *Mahamatyas* etc. were also remunerated through land grants for the specific services performed by them in the administrative system. Feudatories whether they belonged to the ruling clan or not were however entrusted with all kinds of military, judicial and executive responsibilities. Inscriptions refer to various types of feudatories: *Raja*, *Rajarajanaka*, *Ranaka*, *Rajputra*, *Thakkura*, *Samanta*, *Mahasamanta*, *Mandalikas*, etc. They were compensated for their services in the form of grants of villages.

From the inscriptions we learn that the land grants were initially given to the priests and later this practice became widespread and officials (non-priests) and feudatories were also endowed with grants: *Brahmins*, *Kayastha* and *Kshatriya*. An important feature of the Rajput polity in Rajasthan and Gujarat was that grants were generally given to the members of the ruling family. However those who were not members of ruling clan were also given grants in other areas. The feudatories were generally required to provide military assistance to the suzerain. Military personnel of the Chandellas and Gahadavalas were known as *Rautas* but were called *Rajputras* under the Cahamanas and Chalukyas (who were members of the ruling clan). The appellations *Ranaka* and *Thakura* are frequently used for feudatories in North India.

The earliest land grants were issued in favour of priests and temples. Later the secular grants were also issued on the pattern of religious grants especially to *Brahmins* who enjoyed civil and military positions. Agni Puran (10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) deriving from *Kamandaka NitiSara* (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) advises the *Samantas* “to assuage public feeling to help their overlord in war, to mobilise his (the overlord’s) allies and auxiliaries and to distinguish friends from enemies. They are further asked to protect the people (*janatranam*) like a fort – a function that devolved on them from their sovereign. On the other hand the king is advised to be on his guard against the vassals, whose revolt is considered to be an external danger in contrast to the internal danger caused by the disaffection of princes, ministers and other high

functionaries” (R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*). The *Agnipurana* therefore directs the king to annihilate the rebellious feudatories.

The *Lekhapaddhati* which discusses the situation in Gujarat in the 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century is a legal text which refers to the duties of the feudatories. However, the inscriptions do not clearly state the responsibilities of the feudatories. The Pattalas or charters mentioned in the *Lekhapaddhati* refer to the king and his *Mahamatyas* who are also mentioned in the 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century grants of feudatories of Chalukyas who gave grants to *Ranakas* who in turn sub-allotted land to *Rajputras*. *Manasollasa* a text of 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. suggests that the king should give gifts viz. land to feudatories (*Samantamanyakas*) and the ministers viz. *Mantrins*, *Amatyas* and *Sacivas*. It suggests that the endowment should be made to servants (*Bhrtyas*) and kinsmen (*Bandhavas*). Different types of gifts are mentioned viz. villages, mines etc. The documents relating to revenue collection at village level (*grama-pattakas*) in Gujarat refer to the *Rajputras* who sub-assigned their lands to merchants for revenue appropriation (*Lekhapaddhati*).

The *Prabandhchintamani* of *Merutunga* describes the period of Paramara Bhoj and Chalukya Bhim. *Merutunga* points out, “the lord of the country gives away a village, the lord of the village a field, and the lord of the field some vegetables; every contented person gives away his property”. The grantees were given charters by the king for revenue appropriation and they became the village lords. *Manasara* (12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. text) places the king into a graded structure comprising of 9 categories: *Cakravartin*, *Maharaja* (or *Adhiraja*), *Mahendra* (*Narendra*), *Parsnika*, *Pattadhara*, *Mandalesa* etc. *Aparajitaprccha* of Bhatt Bhuvandev (12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) describes nine types of rulers: *Mahipati*, *Raja*, *Naradhiva*, *Mahamandaleswar*, *Mandalika*, *Mahasamanta*, *Samanta* etc. The grants specifically made to priests and temples are more than the specific secular grants.

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## 5.6 NATURE OF POLITY UNDER THE PALAS

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The Pala kings (referred to as *Parambhattaraka*, *Parameshwara* and *Maharajadhiraj*) gave land grants to brahmins, priests and temples. These grants were permanent. They also bestowed land grants on Buddhist monasteries. The land grants carried with them various economic and administrative perquisites. The Pala grants are specifically related to maintenance of law and order and of administration of justice. A Pala grant (802 A.D.) mentions an official in North Bengal called *Dasagramika* who was given one kula of land as inferred from Manu. Land grants were also given to *Kaivartas* who were peasants. The Pala records (land charters) refer to *rajas*, *Rajputras*, *Ranakas*, *Rajarajanakas*, *Mahasamantas*, *Mahasamantadhipatis*, etc. They were probably feudatories who were given lands in lieu of military services. There is no evidence for sub-infeudation under the Palas. Royal officials are mentioned in the inscriptions who seem to have administered the kingdom comprising of Bengal and Bihar. Some of the titles used for Pala officials are *Maha-daussadhasadhanika*, *Maha-kartakrtika*, *Mahasandhivigrahika*, etc. The Palas operated from several loci of power viz. Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, etc., all located on the Ganga. The victory camps of the Palas were visited by the tributaries. Villages under the Palas were grouped into units of one and ten under the charge of *Gramapati* and *Dasagramika*. They were royal officials responsible for the administration for these units. We have very few epigraphic evidences related to service grants under the Palas.

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## 5.7 SUMMARY

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In this Unit we have discussed the debate relating to the transition from early historical to early medieval period. This would help you to understand the essential characteristics of the socio-political formation of the early medieval period. Tripartite struggle among the three powers – Palas, Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas- was an important political development of this period. The major theoretical models propounded by historians to explain early medieval polity have been discussed. The process of state formation under the Rajputs has been analysed. The nature of polity under the Palas and the Rajputs helps us to understand the characteristic features of the polity of this period. These included land grants issued by the state for religious and secular purpose, emergence of feudatories within the state system and the transformation of lineages into ruling groups who established supra-local state structures.

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## 5.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) Analyse the various approaches to the study of early medieval polity.
- 2) Discuss the process of state formation under the Rajputs.
- 3) Give a brief account of the views of scholars about feudalism in India.

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## UNIT 6 EARLY MEDIEVAL POLITIES IN PENINSULAR INDIA 6<sup>TH</sup> TO 8<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES A.D.

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Early Medieval Polities in  
Peninsular India 8<sup>th</sup> to  
12<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.

### Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 The Major Kingdoms and their Territorial Expansion
- 6.3 Monarchical Polity
- 6.4 Administrative System
- 6.5 Political Processes between the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Exercises

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Peninsular India refers to the region south of the Vindhyas, roughly covering present Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (the Deccan), Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Orissa, which is not included here, was also a regional polity of the post-Gupta period developing as a major political region of the peninsula. The other major polities were those of the Deccan in the Malaprabha-Krishna, Krishna-Tungbhadra and Godavari valleys, viz., the Chalukyas of Vatapi (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta (8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), the Chalukyas of Kalyani (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.), the Hoysalas of Dvarasamudra/Halebid and Kaktiyas of Warangal (12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.). The major powers of Tamil Nadu were the Pallavas of Kanchipuram (Palar-Cheyyar valley) and the Pandyas of Madurai (Vaigai-Tamraparni valleys) (6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.) and the Cholas of Tanjavur (Kaveri valley) (9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.). The Cholas, the most powerful of the peninsular polities, with the Kaveri valley as the nucleus of their power, succeeded in establishing the most enduring regional state in the Tamil macro-region. The Tamil region developed its distinctive politico-cultural features under them. In other words, the Tamil regional state and regional culture evolved simultaneously. Dispersed between the larger states of the Deccan and Tamil region were several smaller lineage polities such as the Gangas, Kadambas, Banas and a host of others owing allegiance alternatively to the more powerful lineages of the Deccan plateau and the Tamil plains. Here we are concerned only with those polities which emerged during the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

The period from the sixth to the eighth centuries marks a significant stage in peninsular India in several respects. It witnessed the emergence of several states, many of them for the first time in their respective localities. Secondly there took place an increase in the migration of *Brahman* communities from North India, thereby encouraging percolation of *Brahmanical* ideology and culture to South India as in Eastern India. Thirdly South India played a leading role in the spread of Indian culture overseas, through maritime contacts.

The sources for the history of this phase are found in the form of inscriptions on stone and copper plates written in Sanskrit and regional languages, namely Tamil, Kannada and Telugu according to the linguistic area. These indigenous sources are to some extent augmented by the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hsien, Hsuan Tsang and I Tsing.



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## 6.2 THE MAJOR KINGDOMS AND THEIR TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

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As peninsular India does not have large plains comparable to the North Indian plains, the states here could not expand very much; they were mostly confined to some core areas centred around certain rivers like the Krishna, Kaveri, etc. In more than one sense, these states paved way for the emergence of distinct regional cultures, which however were not isolated for ever.

The three important ruling lines that became visible first are the Pallavas, who ruled over parts of Andhra and Tamil Nadu, the Pandyas in the Southern part of Tamil Nadu and the Chalukyas of Badami in Northern Karnataka. The Pallavas had an earlier beginning in early 4th century in Southern Andhra, South of the Krishna river and gradually expanded Southwards up to Kanchipuram on the banks of the Palar river in North Tamil Nadu. Their history can be continuously traced from the middle of the 6th century up to the end of the ninth century. During these centuries their territory covered a wider area in the Tamil districts from the northern borders to the banks of the Kaveri river though in Andhra Pradesh it was confined to its southernmost districts only. The core territory in the northern part of Tamil Nadu was called Tondainadu.

Simhavishnu (550-80 A.D.) takes credit to this expansion, even while he was a prince, according to a copper-plate record of his father. It was almost about the same time that the Chalukyas of Badami also started ruling in North Karnataka with Badami (Bijapur District) as capital. The founder, Pulakesin I (543-66 A.D.) converted the hill near Badami into a strong fortress and launched his expansionist activities. The territory of the Kadambas of Banavasi towards the South and that of the Mauryas of Konkan on the West were soon conquered and annexed to their growing territory.

It is however in the reign of Pulakesin II (609-42 A.D.) that the Chalukya territory expanded to a large extent. The Ganga rulers of South Karnataka and the Alupas of the West coast (South Kanara District) were made their subordinates. Thus more or less the whole of Kannada speaking area was brought under one rule. In the North the army went beyond the Narmada river to Malwa and Southern Gujarat, where the Latas, Malwas and Gurjaras became submissive. Crowning all these, the Chalukyan ruler came head on against his greatest northern adversary, Harsha of Kanauj, who was planning to attack the Deccan and won a decisive victory on the banks of the Narmada.

Pulakesin II tried to control the whole of Deccan by undertaking an expedition into the Eastern Deccan and coastal Andhra comprising the deltas of Krishna and Godavari rivers. This brought him into conflict with the Pallavas who had been trying to control the delta for more than one century. Mahendravarman I (580-630 A.D.) the Pallava contemporary was also an ambitious king. In the ensuing encounters the Pallavas suffered defeat and the Chalukya army penetrated deep into the Pallava territory almost up to the capital city, Kanchipuram. Soon after this Pulakesin II put up his brother Vishnuvardhana to rule over the Andhra country and this paved the way for the new long-lasting dynasty called the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi centred in the Godavari-Krishna delta.

The Pallava king Narasimha I (630-68 A.D.) son and successor of Mahendra I proved an equal match to the Chalukyan king and after a series of battles he took his forces into the Chalukya territory and even entered into Badami where he got inscribed on rock an inscription of victory. After this the Pallava king sent two naval expeditions to Sri Lanka to help the Sri Lankan prince Manavarma in succession struggle. The latter had taken asylum in the Pallava court.

The succeeding decades saw more hostilities between the Chalukyas and the Pallavas but with no decisive changes on either side. Then followed a lull in war activities for about three decades. At this time the Chalukya king was Vijayaditya (696-733 A.D.) and his Pallava contemporary was Rajasimha (691-729 A.D.). Several of the earliest structural temples belonging to the Dravida style were built during this time at the initiative of both the rulers in their respective territories. Rajasimha's reign is also noted for the embassies sent to China.

A few years after Rajasimha's reign, there was a crisis in the Pallava kingdom, there being no direct heir to ascend the throne. Hence, a young boy was brought from a collateral line from a far off place by the efforts of officials, chief townsmen of Kanchipuram and *Brahman* scholars and was offered the throne. On becoming king he took the title of Nandivarman II. This young king who had a long reign (731-96 A.D.) had to fight on several fronts, particularly with the Pandyas on the South. The Chalukya rule in Badami was replaced by the Rashtrakutas in about 750 A.D. The Rashtrakutas continued the expansionist policy of their predecessors by undertaking expeditions into the North beyond the Vindhyas and also towards the South.

### **Territory and Society**

The foregoing account may give an impression that the polity of the early medieval centuries was characterised by warfare more than anything else. The basis of this warfare did not result always in territorial expansion for the victorious warrior king. But it would have helped in defining clearly the boundaries of the core territory of each dynasty. Outside this area, the wars were waged to subdue the contending kings and extract tribute and booty. The eulogistic preambles (*prasasti*) of the copper-plate records of this time emphasise this aspect of the warfare. An indirect result of the warfare was the spread of new culture and political ideas into the areas of tribal communities. More and more tribal communities were brought into the political influence of the expanding kingdoms and a network of overlord subordinate relationships, mostly tenuous and flexible, came to be established. In course of time some of the tribal chiefs themselves tried and succeeded in establishing small kingdoms. Another result of the constant warfare was the migration of people seeking opportunities in new areas. This would have aided in the extension of agriculture into forest lands.

From some explicit information, it may be said that during the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. several new *Brahman* settlements called *Brahmadeyas* were created by the rulers for the sake of *Brahmans*. This in one way gave a fillip to the extension of agricultural land with irrigation facilities, generally tank irrigation. Also it introduced new kinds of land relations in those special kind of villages, with *Brahman* landowners at the top and their tenant cultivators under them. Otherwise the society was not much stratified. The *Varna* ideology that had been introduced into the Deccan during the pre-Christian centuries was certainly known to the rulers and most of their copper-plate records tell that the kings were proud of upholding the *Varna* ideology. But whether the society was actually classified into four *Varnas* is doubtful.

Some of the communities that we come across in the inscriptions are found to be just professional groups, like herders, goldsmiths, merchants, etc. Some of the professions like leather-working were considered low and so those associated with such professions were consigned to the lowest level of the society. Some of them were even treated as slaves.

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### 6.3 MONARCHICAL POLITY

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The political organisation of the times was of a simple kind. King was the head of the state. Normally kingship was hereditary and passed on through the eldest son. But there were sometimes deviations from this norm which caused some family feuds and civil wars too. At times the Matras and Mulaprakritis played an active role in choosing a king as it happened in the case of Nandivarman II (731-96 A.D.) the Pallava king who belonged to a collateral line.

The king's image became lofty if he was a great warrior as well as an intellectual, like the Pallava king Mahendra I. Certainly this image was emphasized in the eulogy part (*prasasti*) of their charters. All the ruling families of these centuries were given a long mythical genealogy to create an image of great antiquity of the respective families and also to give them a divine origin. These details were couched in highly ornate Sanskrit poetry. That is, the *Brahman* scholars were the creators of such genealogies. Another related thing was the performance of Vedic rituals by the rulers, for which also the *Brahmans* were necessary. The performance of Vedic rituals such as *hiranyagarbha*, *agnishtoma*, *asvamedha*, etc. was an important avenue to legitimise the *Kshatriya* status claimed by the new rulers. The Pallava rulers actually claimed a *Brahma-kshatriya* status, a status of both *Brahman* and *Kshatriya*.

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### 6.4 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

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There are a few references to *Amatya* which is taken as minister. But scholars do not agree that there was a regular council of ministers to assist the king, in any of these early states. We come across one or two active officials, sometimes referred to as *Amatya* or *Mantri*. These are found to be a combination of military leader (*Senapati*) and civil officer (*Ajnapti* in Sanskrit or *Anatti* in Tamil). For example, in the reign of Nandivarman II Pallavamalla who had a long reign (731-96 A.D.) there were only two or three such officials who combined in themselves both military and civil duties. For example Udayachandra one of the king's few loyal officers was a big warrior too and he helped the king in several battles. These were also highly cultured people. Evidence relating to the *amatya* or *senapati* is found frequently in the eighth century records than in the earlier ones, showing the growth of the south Indian states by that time. Each of the states had some type of standing army, mostly composed of infantry and to some extent elephantry and cavalry. The Pallavas had some kind of navy also which is said to have undertaken expeditions to Sri Lanka in the seventh century. There are also some vague hints regarding conquest of some islands in the eighth century.

There is only scanty information about the administrative divisions of the times under study. There are references to *Ahara*, *vishaya*, *Rashtra*, and *Nadu*. These more or less synonymous terms denoted according to the context either the whole territory of a ruler or just the basic administrative divisions. The designation *Nadu* was

common to all South Indian languages and the other terms were of Sanskrit origin and are mentioned generally in the Sanskrit sections of the royal records. Each of these basic units included in their turn several villages within them. There were some officials in charge of these divisions, called *Vishayapati*, *Rashtrapati* or *Naduviyavan*. These officials are mentioned in the beginning of the royal charters, showing their importance. In the Pallava kingdom there was another division called *kottam* above the *Nadu/Rashtra*. Each *Kottam* therefore included some *Nadu* divisions within them.

Village was the lowest territorial unit of administration. Details regarding the village level administration are available only from the records of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and later. *Gamunda* is found as a village officer in the Chalukya area. Generally it is a corporate body or group of chief inhabitants of a village which was more important in local administration. This group was called *Mahajana*, *Sabha* or *Ur* in different places. The accountant *Karanika* was an important village official.

All the states had some sort of revenue system. The revenue office was called *nilaikkalam* in the Pallava kingdom. Land tax was an important source of state revenue. But it seems taxes on professions were equally important. Taxes on goldsmiths, braziers, oil-mongers, weavers, cattle-keepers, and toddy-tappers are frequently mentioned in the inscriptions. There was a tax on marriages and houses. Sales tax and tolls were collected in markets and along the roads. Salt manufacture was a state prerogative and therefore the salt-makers had to pay rent for making salt to the government. The property of those who died without issue became the property of the government. There was a limited circulation of coins issued by the different kingdoms.

An important activity of the government was to provide irrigation facilities and kings took interest in reclaiming more and more land for cultivation. This information is known from the records relating to the creation of new settlements (*Brahmadeya*) for the sake of Brahman scholars. The Pallavas took pride in reclaiming forest land for settling people and one of their favourite designations was '*Kaduvetti*' in Tamil meaning 'one who cleared forests'. The building of temples and towns may have been in the personal interest of the kings, making their presence more prominent and enhancing their status among their subjects. But it gave a fillip to flowering of art and architecture and provided work to a large number of artisans. There took place mobility of artisans over large distances, for example from Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu to Badami in Northern Karnataka and vice versa. In the field of religion also, the kings had their own predispositions, sometimes there were fanatics who tried to impose their beliefs on unwilling people. Thus we hear of two kings, one a Pallava and the other a Pandya, who are said to have persecuted Jains in the seventh century A.D. But these were only aberrations. Generally kings were eclectic and patronised all religions and cults in the country. Justice was meted out both at the king's court (*Adhikaranam*) and at the local level (*Dharmasana*). According to *Mattavilasaprahasana*, a dramatic farce said to have been written by the Pallava king Mahendravarman (590-630 A.D.), justice was sometimes not impartial; rich people could influence the judges.

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## 6.5 POLITICAL PROCESSES BETWEEN THE 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES A.D.

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Different perspectives exist on the nature of these polities and the emergence of the state in peninsular India. "Traditional" historiography was empirically comprehensive,



but failed to perceive the inter-relationships between political and socio-economic processes, i.e., social formations in the emergence of a state system, and hence presented an inadequate and often incorrect perspectives on the nature of the state. Imperialist and nationalist approaches also impelled them to glorify these polities as empires with all the machinery of a well-developed modern state. Marxist historiography introduced the theory of Indian feudalism to explain a structural change in Indian economy and society based on the early medieval land grant system, representing the first attempt to relate socio-economic processes to the political processes and envisaging the emergence of “a hierarchical structure in the place of the binarily opposed entities of the state and peasantry, a structure of different tiers of intermediaries, which explains the mechanism of exploitation and coercion in the early medieval state”. However, by locating feudal polity at the crisis caused by the breakdown of a centralised bureaucratic state system (Mauryan) or political fragmentation, this view was again derived from European feudalism emerging after the breakdown of the classical regimes. A correction to this view is offered in the alternative explanation given for the diffused polities of the post-Mauryan period as the spread of state society in secondary formation of state and not as a crisis in state power or fragmentation. In the early medieval context, the complex system of land grants has been examined afresh to show how land grants both to the *Brahmanas* and officials as service or secular assignments led to the emergence of the “*Samanta* – feudatory network”. Hence, political integration or integrative polity has been posed as a counter point to the decentralised polity of the feudal model. This view emphasizes the correlation between roles and services and ranking in the *Samanta* hierarchy leading to an integrative polity by transforming the *Samanta* into a vital component of the political structure. Here ranking is seen as the basis of political organisation of both the local and supra-local structures i.e. the intermediate zone, with potential changes in the very formation of these structures, leading to a transformation or reordering of the hierarchy. As an analytical tool the “*Samanta* – feudatory network” would seem to have greater potential for understanding the nature of the Deccan and Andhra polities of the early medieval period, i.e., 6<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., in all of which the “*Samanta*-feudatory system” is very conspicuous as a ranked hierarchy of the intermediate strata.

Monarchy as the major institution of political organisation developed in the Deccan under these dynasties, which followed the Gupta polity of northern India and that of the Gupta contemporaries in the Deccan and Andhra regions such as the Vakatakas, Kadambas, Vishnukundis and Pallavas. Monarchy, hereditary succession and the law of primogeniture were the characteristic features of all early medieval polities, but regional differences between the Deccan kingdoms and the Tamil monarchies exist, based on the nature and degree of influence that the northern Brahmanical Sastric texts and institutions had over the emerging kingdoms and the differences in the pre-existing and region specific non-Sanskritic traditions. Also significant were the geographic and topographic differences in the two major regions of peninsular India, viz., the Deccan plateau and the coastal plains (especially the Tamil plains), which led to significant variations in the resource bases of the kingdoms which emerged in these two zones. The Deccan is marked by relatively less continuous agricultural zones when compared to the large continuous plains of the Tamil region. It was also noted for its trading activities and craft organisation from the early historic times (3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD) and hilly and forested zones with several local and tribal chifships which could hardly be closely integrated into larger territorial regimes for enduring regional states to emerge. Hence the Deccan kingdoms of the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas were polities based on the *Brahmanical*



socio-political order and institutions like the *Brahmadeya* and the temple, but remained a loosely knit *Samanta* type of feudatory states, where crisis was built into the very nature of the feudatory system, with ranking among the chiefships and an authority/power structure, in which the scale could easily be tilted by one or the other chiefship with military capability. Thus there was hardly any scope for a centralised administration to develop through there was a centralised taxation system and a hierarchically organised bureaucracy. There was no proper standing army except the royal troops at the capital and the smaller groups of fighters in the neighbouring regions held under the control of members of the royal family, some of whom were placed at strategic points in the transit zones and buffer zones held by feudatories or smaller powers owing allegiance to the main dynasty, zones leading to more powerful neighbours in the Tamil and Andhra regions.

High sounding titles were used by the rulers to express their very uncertain power, while officers with impressive designations like *Mahasandhivigrahika*, *Mahadandanayaka* and so on were appointed from among the kinsmen of the royal families and even from among the lesser chiefs and feudatories. Government at the local level can be located in regions called the *Vishaya*, *Rashtra* and *Desa*, with their respective heads called *Vishayapati*, *Desadhikari*, etc., while the *Grama* or the village was run by the mahajanas, the big men of the village controlling land, production and redistribution and also local administration. In most cases these divisions were not created by the central authority but were those spontaneously evolved regions which were recognized as such by the ruling powers, the centre of power shifting according to the change in the dynasties which acquired a hegemonic control over certain core regions and territories. Hence these polities may be best understood as loosely knit chiefships under a more powerful dynastic rule/control, with a monarchy supported by the *Brahmanical* order and institutional means. It was a scale of formations, which had the potential of tilting in favour of the mightier among the ruling powers.

The Pallavas of Kanchipuram ruled over the Northern parts of Tamil Nadu, historically known as Tondaimandalam (Palar-Cheyyar valley- Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Pondichery and parts of the Chittoor districts of Andhra Pradesh) and the Pandyas ruled over the Southern parts of Tamil Nadu (Vaigai – Tamraparni valleys – Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts). Both these kingdoms were products of the *Brahmanical* socio-political ideology in keeping with the general processes of political development in the whole of the sub-continent in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The early Pallavas are represented by several branches of the same lineage making land grants in the Southern parts of Andhra Pradesh, mostly from victorious military camps indicating a fluid situation, each of these branches being in search of a more permanent territorial base. A few of these charters mention Kanchipuram as the place of issue. The Pallavas may well have been pastoral chiefs in search of a territorial base, which they found ultimately in and around Kanchipuram.

The Pallavas inherited an administrative machinery with a set of functionaries of the Gupta type such as *Amatyas*, *Rashtrikas*, prevalent in the Deccan under the early *Brahmanical* ruling families of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The positions of the royal preceptor and mantri were held by one and the same person, usually a *Brahmana* or *Brahmasriraja*. Other functionaries included *Vayilkelppar* (one who took the king's orders), *Kosadhyaksha* or *Manikkappandaram Kappan* (head of the Kosa or Bhandara). They were ranked offices, many of which were held by smaller local chiefs chosen by the king and remunerated by grants of land for their

service or chieftains whose authority over specific regions/localities was acknowledged. The Pallava polity emerged by the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. as a system of sharing authority between the kings and chiefs in a virtual hierarchy, the king exercising a hegemonic control and the chiefs acting as his agents and functionaries. It was an expansive kingship in which the king's authority was symbolized through chiefly authority, *Brahmadeya* sabhas and temples. In other words, it was a monarchy with a hegemonic control over subordinate chiefs and institutional means like the *Brahmadeya* and the temple to integrate peasant and pastoral regions into a new socio-political order.

During their early sojourn in Andhra, the Pallavas imbibed the Northern politico-cultural norms based on the Dharma Sastras and other *Brahmanical* texts and the epics. These traditions they carried with them to Tondai Nadu, where they consolidated their power. However, the regional specificities of the Tamil society and economy led to a new synthesis of the Northern normative traditions of governance with the Southern forms of socio-political organisation which were now being integrated into a new polity. The Pallavas had to recognise the agrarian organisation of Tamilakam with local peasant regions like the *Nadus*, their entrenched peasant communities and their assemblies also called the *Nadu*, and integrate them into this new polity, in which the Sanskrit and Tamil forms resulted in a new synthesis. The new legitimating forces introduced by them were the *Brahmadeya* and the *Puranic* temple, both acting as instruments of integration of their territorial base. This was built up in two ways. One was by a subordination of the chieftaincies in this region, presumably by conquest and the other through agrarian expansion and integration with the proliferation of the *Brahmadeya*, which served the dual purpose of bringing new unsettled areas under cultivation as well as integrating pre-existing pastoral and peasant settlements into the new agrarian order. Politically they were bastions of royal power, as the *Brahmanas* in return for land grants provided ideological support to the new ruling family by creating impressive lineage connections in their genealogies and assigning divine origin to the king in their *prasastis*. The chiefly families of the region also adopted the *Brahmanical* ideology and participated as *Vijnaptis* (petitioners) and *Ajnaptis* (executors) in the land grant system, e.g., Udayachandra was a chief, who was also a military functionary under Nandivarman II and created a *Brahmadeya* with royal sanction. Traditional understanding of the Pallava polity characterised it as an empire and a centralised state, an imperialist view and inapplicable to the Pallava polity.

The political processes under the Pallavas mark the transformation of the early historical tribal polities into a more complex agrarian order with a new power structure dominated by monarchy, i.e., a restructuring of the early tribal and uneven socio-economic organisation into an agrarian system based on land grants, creating differential rights in land and a hierarchical power structure. The subsistence level settlements now became surplus oriented settlements through the *Brahmadeya* and the temple, two integrative institutions mobilising and redistributing resources. The *Puranic* ideology introduced the temple as the legitimating device and the innovative focus of all economic activities and social ranking based on the *Brahmanical* caste system.

The Pandya kingdom of the same period was similar to that of the Pallavas in all respects. The major difference lay in the fact that the Pandyas were an indigenous ruling family, one of the traditional trio of the Sangam Tamil polity, re-establishing their power in the traditional region associated with them, i.e., the Pandi Nadu. However, Northern Sanskrit- *Puranic* traditions influenced the development of

Pandya polity. Claiming descent from Siva and the Lunar lineage, the Pandyas also claimed to be performers of Vedic sacrifices, made *Mahadanas* (Great gifts), granted land to *Brahmanas* and built *Puranic* temples. They also achieved a socio-political organisation in which the *Brahmadeya* and the temple acted as integrative institutions in restructuring economy, society and polity.

### Chronological Tables

#### The Chalukyas of Badami

Pulakesin I	543-566 A.D.
Kirtivarman	566-597 A.D.
Mangalesa	597-609 A.D.
Pulakesin II	609-642 A.D.
Vikramaditya I	644-681 A.D.
Vinayaditya	681-696 A.D.
Vijayaditya	696-733 A.D.
Vikramaditya II	733-744 A.D.
Kirtivarman II	744-745 A.D.

#### The Pallavas of Kanchipuram

Simhavarman	c.550 A.D.
Simhavishnu	c.575 A.D.
Mahendra I	590-630 A.D.
Narasimha I	630-668 A.D.
Paramesvara I	669-691 A.D.
Rajasimha	691-729 A.D.
Paramesvara II	729-731 A.D.
Nandivarman II	731-796 A.D.
Dantivarman	796-846 A.D.

#### The Pandyas of Madurai

Kadungon	c.600 A.D.
Avanisulamani	c.625 A.D.
Sendan	c.650 A.D.
Arikesari	c.700 A.D.
Ranadhira	c.725 A.D.
Rajasimha I	c.750 A.D.
Parantaka Varaguna I	768-815 A.D.

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## 6.6 SUMMARY

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In this Unit, we have tried to focus on the nature of state formation in peninsular India between 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In this period the states emerged in core areas centred around rivers like Kaveri, Krishna and their tributaries. The important kingdoms in this period were the Pallavas of Kanchipuram, Pandeyas of Madurai, and Chalukyas of Badami. It seems that the political history of this period was marked by warfare and territorial expansion outside the core areas. Political conflicts led to migration of people which brought about expansion of agriculture. It also resulted in the spread of new cultures, political ideas and development of regional identities in these areas. Thus the tribal chiefs of this period, were transformed into

kings and Varna ideology led to the social stratification and legitimisation of kingship. The political organisation was monarchical in nature. The bureaucratic system was not very well developed and mature which is proved by the few references to *Amatyas* or ministers. Administrative divisions existed but information about them is scanty. The local and revenue administration were important constituents of the administrative system. The state encouraged the creation of *Brahmadeya* settlements and promoted the art and architectural activities. The kings also gave patronage to religion. In this period, the early historical tribal polities, got transformed into a complex, agrarian order dominated by monarchy. The *Brahmadeya* and the temple mobilised and redistributed the resources and *Puranic* ideology provided the legitimating device.

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## **6.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Trace the rise and consolidation of early medieval polities in peninsular India between 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
- 2) Analyse the nature of political processes between 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. in peninsular India.

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## **UNIT 7 Early Medieval Polities In Peninsular India 8<sup>TH</sup> TO 12<sup>TH</sup> Centuries A.D.**

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Early Medieval Polities in  
Peninsular India 8<sup>th</sup> to  
12<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D.

### **Structure**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Historical Background
- 7.3 The Royal Establishment
- 7.4 Landed Magnates as State's Agents
- 7.5 Revenue
- 7.6 Military and Police
- 7.7 Locality Chiefs
- 7.8 Local Groups: The Basis of Power
- 7.9 Ideology
- 7.10 Conceptual Considerations
- 7.11 Summary
- 7.12 Exercises

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### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The “early medieval” in Indian history is characterised, among other things, by the emergence of a number of regional kingdoms in different parts of the subcontinent. A few arose in South India as well. The historical processes and background of these South Indian kingdoms were, however, different from those of their counterparts elsewhere. Thus, the political processes and structures in these kingdoms offer an interesting case study in both conformity and contrast within a general sub continental pattern in early medieval India. In this lesson, we shall take up the situation in the Southern regions of peninsular India, namely in the kingdoms of the Pandyas of Madurai, Cheras of Mahodayapuram and Cholas of Thanjavur. It should not be assumed that these three kingdoms shared a uniform structure; indeed, there were variations despite apparent similarity.

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### **7.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

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The background from which these South Indian kingdoms emerged was somewhat the same. The Southern most region, where people speak Malayalam and Tamil today, constituted more or less a single socio-cultural unit known as “Tamilakam” in the early historical period (c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to AD 3<sup>rd</sup> century) called, rather inappropriately, the “Sangam Age”. An economy and society of uneven development characterised the period. Social stratification had not quite reached a stage that would demand the institution of state. Polity in this period was characterised by what have been described as chiefdom-level organisations, where many chiefdoms, big and small, exercised power and authority. There was no regular exaction of surplus in any form of revenue; nor do we come across anything which would approximate to “officers” or “offices”. There is nothing that compels us to imagine the existence of an “army” of any description, references to fights and fighters notwithstanding. Notions of territory, sovereignty and state did not yet exist in that world. It was a world of heroes, heroism and heroic poetry. The oral poetry of



bards and minstrels, singing in praise of the valour and munificence of one chieftain or the other, together with the esoteric sacrifices performed by a *Brahmana* priest for the chief, provided legitimacy to the patrons.

A transformation of this society came about gradually in the period after third century A.D. There were many factors behind it. They included the expansion of plough agriculture in the river valleys, the emergence of a class of non cultivating intermediaries demanding extra-kin labour in the processes of production, the increased presence of the *Brahmana* groups with their own ideas and institutions, and a whole lot of related developments. In fact, there is a veritable “transition debate” that has grown in relation to this process. In any case, what we see when the curtain rises on the historical scene in the South by the seventh century A.D. is the existence of what could now be described as monarchical states in the Pallava (Northern Tamilnadu) and Pandya (Southern Tamilnadu) territories. Monarchical state appeared in the Kaveri valley under the Cholas and in the West Coast under the Cheras a little later. In this lesson, we shall examine the political structure in these kingdoms.

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### 7.3 THE ROYAL ESTABLISHMENT

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The most visible political organisation in the epigraphical records of this period is the state presided over by a hereditary monarch. In the case of the Pallavas, Pandyas and Cholas, the descent was patrilineal while there is reason to believe that it was matrilineal in the Chera kingdom. The king arrogated, or was accorded, the *Kshatriya* status or caste, with claims to belong to the *Suryavamsa* or *Chandravamsa* being put forward by the dynasts, the only exception being the Pallavas who claimed a *Brahmaksatra* status. The model of the *Chakravartin*, which was tested and found successful in the Gupta state and immediately thereafter in Northern India, was emulated in the polities in South India as well. Elaborate *prasastis* (“panegyrics”), detailing the origin, genealogy, historical antecedents and personal achievements of the ruler, were composed in his honour in all but the case of the Cheras where the nature of state was different from the rest. The literature of the period, both Tamil and Sanskrit, projects a glorious self-image of royalty and a somewhat resplendent royal court, both a means of claiming legitimacy for the ruler. In fact, new techniques of legitimation were necessary for the new political dispensations. A detailed examination of the political structure will show how it was different from the earlier periods.

Although the self-image of the king was perhaps larger than life, he had nonetheless a presence in the kingdom. Most conspicuous was the fact that the inscriptions, seen in their hundreds and thousands throughout the territory of these kingdoms, are dated in the regnal year of the kings. This was so even when the document had no claim of being a royal order or an administrative document. The royal presence was felt through the establishments of the king’s government as well, both at the capital and in the different parts of the kingdom. These establishments included the “civil” and at times “military” aspects of the administration. An illustration is available in the case of the Chola state. Historians in the past such as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri waxed eloquent about the highly bureaucratic and centralised nature of the Chola empire; those of a later generation, such as Burton Stein, rejected this romantic idea altogether. Neither position is supported by the sources.

In the case of the lesser states like those of the Pandyas and Cheras or even the Cholas in the earlier periods, the presence of this government was felt in a feeble

way. For instance, inscriptions of the Pandyas speak of their civil and military functionaries in distant Southern Travancore. The Chera king himself is stated to have presided over an apparently inconsequential meeting of a small Brahmana assembly in Valappalli far away from his capital. Functionaries of the Chola state we present somewhat authoritatively in meetings of village assemblies of distant places like Uttaramerur. All this shows that the king and his establishment were not just matters of interpretation by historians in the nationalist era.

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## 7.4 LANDED MAGNATES AS STATE'S AGENTS

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By the time the Chola state was established in a most concrete manner (AD tenth century), the establishment of the king's government with a large number of functionaries or agents also grew. One interesting feature is that most or all of these functionaries were identified and enlisted from among the notables in society. One major source was the class of landed magnates, who had gained in strength in the period from the tenth century and after. By the middle of the tenth century, the landed magnates emerged in the Kaveri delta and outside in a big way. They bear high-sounding titles like *Udaiyan*, *Velan*, *Araiyan*, *Muventavelan*, etc. These titles indicated primarily ownership of land and also some position in the structure of the state. These titles are more often than not prefixed by the name or title of a Chola king, e.g., Ràjaràja-pallavaraiyan or Ksatriyasikhamani-muventavelan. At least in one case, there is the clear statement that the titles were actually conferred by the state (*Pattam Kattina Peyar*).

All this shows that, when a strong section of landowners emerged following the agrarian expansion in the Kaveri delta, the state was all too ready to recognise them. What is interesting is that, these magnates, so recognised, carry out the functions of the state. Recent studies have shown that most of those who functioned as the agents, or what an earlier fashion of historiography referred to as the "officers", of the state were drawn from among this class of landed magnates. Thus, there are *Adhikàris*, *Olainayakams*, *Dandanayakams*, *Srikaryans*, and a whole lot of similar functionaries of the king's government. It is not without significance that those who performed functions of greater consequence held more impressive titles indicating greater importance in society. These functionaries are described in so many words as carrying out the king's work: as the king himself puts it, they looked after "our work" (*Nam Karumam Aràyum*). They were "our men" (*Nantamar*) for the king and "the king's men" (*Koyirramar*) for others. Among them they carried out the administration of the kingdom, both in the capital city and in places far afield. In fact, there is considerable evidence of the transfer of such agents of the state from one place to another, a clear indication of the existence of something resembling an officialdom. It is also interesting that this pattern of landed magnates being recognised and enlisted as state agents becomes popular in the period of Uttama Chola (last quarter of 10<sup>th</sup> century) onwards and gets elaborated by the time we come to regnal periods of Ràjaràja I (685-1014 A.D.) and Rajendra I. (1014-1044 A.D.). It begins to taper off by the time of Kulottunga II (mid 12<sup>th</sup> century AD).

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## 7.5 REVENUE

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The most clearly identifiable areas where the king's "administration" had scope all over the territory were those of revenue, affairs of temples and military and police. In fact, it is in revenue administration that we see the state in its fullest. We see clear

signs of extraction of surplus in the kingdoms of the Pandyas and Cheras, although the question whether what was extracted was a tax or a rent is very difficult to answer. Annual land revenue of *Attaiikkol* is mentioned in the inscriptions of the Cheras, which was collected from far and near and which went to the king himself. Similarly, there are many revenue terms in the Pandyan inscriptions. But, as in the case of other aspects of administration, it is in the case of the Cholas that we have the clearest information of the revenue system. This is not only because of the elaborate details available in the more numerous and detailed inscriptions of the Cholas; it is also a due to the fact that it was under the Cholas that the state in South India reached its highest level of development.

What is called a whole 'department of revenue' is seen in the *Puravuvurit-tinaik-kalam*. References to this 'department' begin to occur from the reign of Uttama Chola in the second half of the tenth century. It grew into an elaborate affair with various sections each under a hierarchy of officers in the time of Ràjaràja I. Even here, the more important functionaries are the wealthier landed magnates. What begins as a relatively humble affair with a few 'officers' gets elaborated with a hierarchy of them in as many as ten rungs in the period of Ràjaràja II. However, this department becomes rather insignificant by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which is exactly in the same pattern of the rise, performance and gradual disappearance of the "king's men" carrying out functions of the state. It must, however, be noted that this 'department' has no presence in the countryside, its activity being limited only to the royal establishment at the capital. It is, therefore, more appropriate to describe it as a 'revenue board' or a 'revenue secretariat' rather than a 'department of revenue'.

As in the establishment called *Pravuvurit-tinaik-kalam*, so also in the realisation of revenue, we see the same pattern. This throws immense light on the nature of the polities obtaining in the kingdoms under review. In the earlier, less developed, polities of the Pandyas and Cheras, we do see different types of taxes, collected by and on behalf of the state. Most terms indicating revenue are available to us from the list of remissions and relief, given at the time of granting land and other privileges to different beneficiaries. Thus, it is argued that they indicated more a possibility than the actuality. In any case, recent studies making use of a statistical analysis of the revenue terms have brought out certain interesting details. For one thing, although there are several hundreds of terms indicating "revenue" in the inscriptions of the period, only a few had prevalence in the different parts of the territory, the others occurring only once or twice. A closer examination shows that the most important among them was land revenue, called *Katamai*, literally meaning "obligation" and standing for a rent charged on land. A close second was another kind of due called *Kutimai*, which translates as "occupancy dues". There was another, *Vetti* (from *Visti* in Sanskrit) which stood for compulsory labour services. It has been shown that the former was a "produce rent", that is, the fruits of the surplus labour of the producer while the latter was a "labour rent" extracted directly in the form of labour itself. Records show that references to *Katamai* and *Kutimai* went on increasing while those to *Vetti* went on decreasing. There were other exactions, most of which were charged on land. One also comes across taxes on professions.

As regards the administration of justice, there is less clarity. It appears that justice was meted out by community organisations. Thus, *Brahmanical* assemblies dealt with problems of justice among themselves and groups of other communities are found doing the same. We have information about the right of administering justice being given away to organisations of traders, as recorded in the Syrian Christian

Copper Plates from Kerala. Law was a matter of the standardisation of locally accepted practices, on which a stamp of recognition was put, sometimes in the form of quotations from the *Dharmasastra* texts. There are instances where new practices, which deviated from earlier ones, were recognised in this manner. Courts of law as such did not exist, local, communal organisations carrying out their function.

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## 7.6 MILITARY AND POLICE

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In the matter of policing functions, too, we have no detailed information; but records from Kerala show that the “Companions of Honour” of the locality chiefs did the duty of *Kàval* (“protection”). These “Companions of Honour”, known as the “Hundred Organisations” as they were always referred to in terms of certain hundreds attached to particular chiefs (for example, the Six Hundred of Venad), constituted trusted body guards of the chiefs and formed his armed force which they could use in times of need. Such a body, a thousand strong, is seen in the case of the overlord, the Chera *Perumal* at the capital and following him constantly like a shadow. What is more, it is the same body that is found fighting for the suzerain of the chief, namely the Chera and even for the Chola upon the Chera overlord’s bidding. In fact, at least in the case of Kerala, there is no evidence of a regular standing army, these “Companions of Honour” of the chiefs and the overlord constituting the “armed forces”, much in the same way as the Janissaries in the Turkish system. It is probable that such bodies had a considerable role in enforcing the coercive power of other states as well. There are soldiers called *Velaikkarrar* whom we come across in the case of the Pandyas and Cholas; and they shared all the characteristic features of such “companions”. However, there is evidence of what can be taken as military “officers” in the inscriptions of the Cholas in the *Dandanayakams* and *Senapatis*, although there is no way in which their actual function can be ascertained. In any case, the picture of a huge military establishment, with a powerful army of “numerous regiments” and an equally impressive navy of “numberless ships” is exaggerated. Similarly, to deny that there was no coercive power at all which the state enjoyed is to overlook evidence. A system with the bodyguards of the chiefs and those of the king at the capital, supplemented by mercenaries recruited *ad hoc*, and led by local landed elite with high-sounding titles and occasionally specialists in archery, horse-riding and riding elephants seems to be a more realistic picture about the military establishment of early medieval South India.

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## 7.7 LOCALITY CHIEFS

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Such an establishment of royal government at the centre did not wield any absolute power. There were many other nodes of power in the locality and at various levels. Perhaps second only to the king at the centre, whether Chera or Chola, were the chiefs in the localities, known to an earlier style of historiography as “feudatories”. These are not, to be sure, confused with the landed magnates who held chiefly or even feudatory titles such as *Velan*, *Araiyar*, *Muventavelan*, etc. whom we have discussed earlier. These chiefs represented a continuation from an earlier period in many cases, for we hear names such as the *Ays*, *Vels*, *Muvas*, *Adigaimans*, *Malavas*, etc. for the chiefs in what is called the “Sangam” period. There are many new names which we do not come across in the records of an earlier period. All of them, however, recognised the overlordship of the Chera, Chola or Pandya. How exactly this was achieved is not recorded in the documents; the role of a policy of aggrandizement cannot be entirely ruled out. In any case, there is clear



evidence of the acknowledgement of the suzerainty of one of the three major powers such as the Chera, Chola or Pandya. This is expressed in various ways: starting from the dating of records in their territories in the regnal years of the overlords down to the complex network of political and matrimonial alliances among them and with them and the overlords, there is considerable evidence to show this superordinate-subordinate relationship. The role they played in the polities of early South India was crucial.

There were wide variations among these chiefs in many respects. Their territories varied widely in size. While a few claimed authority over vast areas of land, others had their command over a handful of villages. Some of the chiefs flaunted the *Kshatriya* status while most others were not as ambitious. Some had elaborate establishments of 'administration', including what passed for a bureaucracy, while some others were much humbler. All had bodies of "Companions of Honour" which functioned as the military and police force in the territory. In times of necessity, such forces were either offered to, or commanded by, the overlord. Thus we see that there were the soldiers of the chief of Valluvanadu in Kerala, fighting the famous Battle of Takkolan for and on behalf of their Chera overlords, who were themselves subordinate to the Cholas in that period. We see the overlords claiming and taking a part of the revenue from the territories of the chiefs. The famous Syrian Christian Copper Plates speak of the one-tenth share of the Chera overlord. There are many instances where the proceeds are distributed in the 2:1 ratio between the overlord and the local chief, showing also the hierarchy between them. There is a rich material giving information regarding the matrimonial relations between the chiefly houses and the house of the overlord, which strengthened this kind of a relation of subordination/superordination. This relation is also seen in the fact that the chiefs were required to attend the court of the suzerain when occasions demanded. Thus we have the attestations of all the major chiefs of Kerala in the Jewish Copper Plates of the Chera king, Bhaskara Ravi Varman (AD 1000), and the presence of nearly all of them in the Chola court as mentioned in the *Kalingattup-parani*.

There is a peculiar pattern that we see about these chiefs in the case of the Chola state. They function more or less in the same way as in other situations, showing allegiance in the multiple ways mentioned above. By the time we come to the period of Ràjaràja I, all these chiefs disappear mysteriously from the records as rulers of their traditional territories. They appear, instead, as functionaries of the state, along with the landed magnates who held high-sounding titles. It is significant that they are now seen in areas far away from their former home territories. They were integrated into the state system, which was made stronger by Ràjaràja. In about a little more than a hundred years, the chiefs start reappearing, once again in their old role and assert themselves with a vengeance. Interestingly, this is exactly in the same pattern of the increase in the number of royal functionaries, the strengthening of the establishment of land revenue and the greater power that the military arm of the state had acquired.

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## 7.8 LOCAL GROUPS: THE BASIS OF POWER

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The local groups, which constituted the real basis of power in early medieval South India, played a somewhat unique role in these polities. They have been subjects of endless discussions and debates in modern historical writings, although not exactly as the foundation of power in these polities. Of these, the one body about which there is a plethora of writings is the *Sabha*, the assembly of *Brahmanas* controlling



vast extent of property in agricultural land both in their own name and the name of the temples around which they were settled. But this richness of information is only a result of the records: it is in such *Brahmanical* villages and their temples that we have the largest number of inscriptions. However, the population of the *Brahmanical* groups was comparably less than that of the rest and the landed wealth that they enjoyed, albeit out of proportion to the population. The agrarian settlements of the former, called *Brahmadeyans* in the Tamil speaking regions and *Gramams* in Kerala, were much less numerous than the non-*Brahmanical* villages, called the *Vellanvakai* (“of the *vellalas*”) in the Tamil country or simply the *urs*. It is true that the information regarding the *Ur* is much less; but that should not give the impression that they were less important. In fact, it will be a mistake not to realise that they were much more numerous and thus had greater influence on the economy, society and polity. Records of the more literate sections of society are always apt to be more numerous and elaborate, and self-assertive, than those of others.

Unfortunately, the information regarding these groups in the Pandya and Chera situations is much less than what is available about the Chola situation, obviously owing to the fact that there are more numerous records for the Chola than in the two former cases. Perhaps the non-Brahmanical section of the land-owning groups was better organised in the Chola country. In any case, their existence and vitality are not to be doubted. By the time we come to the age and region of the Cheras, we have much more copious information regarding the *Ur* settlements of these non-Brahmana groups. Of late, there have been refreshing studies of the constitution and functioning of these groups in the Chola country. Physically, they constituted habitation sites, cremation grounds, drinking water sources and irrigation channels, cultivated land, pasture land, etc. The residential areas consisted of the quarters of the landowners (*Ur-nattam* or *Ur-irukkai*), that of the artisans (*Kammanacceri*), that of the agrestic labourers (*Paraicceri*). This demonstrates the stratified nature of society and its necessary adjunct of social distancing. The *Kutis* or households constituted the basic unit; the labourers and artisans formed the primary producers in South India in this period. The landowners, called *Ulukutis*, held different superior rights over land, and members, or elders, of such *Kutis* formed the title-holding magnates or the agents of the state mentioned in an earlier section. These landowners met in their assemblies of the *Ur*, known also as *Urar* and *Urom*. These assemblies, although they did not have the kind of restrictive qualifications which characterised the *Brahmanical Sabhas*, were still exclusive groups of the elders of families possessing landed property and commanding authority in the countryside. They deliberated, and decided, on matters of property and other interests of the whole community in the village. It related itself with the state, functioning also as a channel of communication between the king’s government on the one hand and the bottom layers of the political structure on the other. However, this should not be confused with the colonial construction which gives centrality to “the village” in the political economy of pre-modern India.

In discussing the local groups in early medieval South India, the *Nadu* has a place of great importance. Till recently, historians had only recognised this as just another local group. It is only in recent years that they have taken up a systematic study of the *Nadu* as “the basic building block” of the political structure of South India under the Cholas. The expression *Nadu*, like *Ur*, denoted both the locality and the assembly of its spokesmen. The constituents of this assembly, which was also known by the terms *Nattar* or *Nattom*, were the dominant landed magnates of the locality, exactly as it was in the case of the *Ur* assembly. The *nadu*, as territory, was a grouping of the *Vellanvakai* villages, i.e., the non-*Brahmanical* agrarian

settlements. Statements in inscriptions, mentioning particular *Urs* as belonging to particular *Nadus*, help us identify the territory of the *Nadus*. They had no natural boundaries – there are even cases of *Nadus* lying on either side of the Kaveri, demonstrating the fact of these being spontaneous groupings of agrarian settlements. They were widely disparate in size, varying from a handful of square miles to a few hundreds and comprising *Urs* varying from one to forty. Even the nomenclature of *Nadus* is a strong indication of the spontaneity of their origin. The *Nadu* was named after one of the constituent *urs* mostly the first clan settlement to emerge, and that was generally a toponym. This contrasts with the artificial units called *Valanadus* which were clearly administrative divisions of an artificial nature: they had natural boundaries, they were more or less comparable in size and most of all, they were given the name of a Chola ruler or his title.

The situation in other regions conforms to this pattern. In the Pallava territory, the *Kottam* was a larger unit, within which *Nadus* emerged. It was mainly pastoral in its origin but with the increase in agricultural regions it became an agricultural-cum-pastoral region. But they had a greater pastoral content about them. Otherwise they answered to the *Nadus* in every respect. In the case of the Pandyan kingdom, too, the *Nadus* had comparable nature and functions. It was, however, different in Kerala under the Chera kingdom, where the term *Nadu* was used for the territory of the locality chiefs. Even in the case of the Cholas, the number of *Nadus* went on increasing as time progressed – a result of the expansion of the agrarian order and an endorsement of the thesis that the *Nadus* were groupings of agrarian villages.

The *Nadus* being groupings of agrarian villages and the *Nattar*, its dominant agriculturists, the prime concern of the body was agriculture itself. They took care of the management of irrigation and other arrangements related to agriculture. It was the *Nadu* that paid the tax to the king's government. Revenue items such as *Nattuppuravu*, *Nattuvvari* etc. are mentioned in the documents. There are also suggestions that the *Nadus* maintained some functionaries of its own. In any case, the role of the *Nadu*, in carrying out the royal orders regarding the delimitation of boundaries of fields, resettling land and effecting grants of land, collection and remittance of tax, managing temples and their endowments on behalf of the royal establishment, and so on, was important. It follows that the *Nadu* was thus recognised by the state as its agent in the locality, exercising power and authority for and on its behalf. The *Nadu* was an inseparable part of the state system, evolved from below but integrated organically within the larger system.

There were other groups at the local level. The best known of these were the *Brahmdeyams* or *Brahmanical* villages. Corporate bodies known as the *Sabhàs*, of which the members were Brahmanas who owned property and had sufficient knowledge of the Vedas and *Sastras*, managed the affairs of the *Brahmadeya* villages. The constitution, functioning and other details of these bodies show that they followed the prescriptions in the *Dharmasastras* to the last letter. The highly disciplined way in which these bodies conducted themselves points to the solidarity they had as groups comprising of non-cultivating intermediaries with superior rights over land placed between the cultivating peasantry and the state. This solidarity was maintained, as thousands of inscriptions recording the proceedings of such assemblies demonstrate. Celebrated records such as the Manur inscription (9<sup>th</sup> century) of Pandya Maran Cadaiyan or the two Paràntaka inscriptions from Uttaramerur (10<sup>th</sup> century) amply demonstrate this unmistakable class and caste interest of the *Brahmanical* groups. To look upon them as instances of democracy at grass-root levels is not only an anachronism created in nationalist approaches or historiography

but also opposed to facts. The idea of democracy cannot be linked to a society based on caste, and habitually conscious of the principle of hierarchy, where power and control were in the hands of those who owned property.

There were similar bodies called the *Nagarams* where traders organised themselves. The ways in which they were constituted and they functioned were similar to the corporate bodies of other groups. We have detailed information in relation to the Syrian Christian trading settlement in Kollam in Southern Kerala. There is information of a comparable nature from other parts of South India as well. Administrative, fiscal and judicial rights were given away to the trading groups in such *Nagarams*. It is interesting that, apart from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups of a West Asian origin, there were similar groups of local origins as well. The way in which trade and trading groups influenced statecraft in these polities was quite decisive.

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## 7.9 IDEOLOGY

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No discussion of polity can be complete without considering the social parameters which made it possible and the ideological props that it had. We have seen in the section on historical background that, following the opening up of river valleys and the expansion of rice culture, a stratified society had emerged and got consolidated in this part of the country. This stratification expressed itself in the institution of *Jati*, with innumerable gradations in it according to economic, social and ritual status. In fact, state in South India had developed as a consequence of the emergence of a stratified society with its multiple hierarchy getting its sanction from the principles of *Varnasramadharma*. The acceptance of the graduated hierarchy and its organising principle, which had clearly a North Indian origin, was not easy. This was achieved in a complex way. One of the most effective means was through religion and the ideology it represented. It is significant that temples had emerged as veritable landed magnates in this period and this meant that a major section of the population had come to depend on the temple as tenants, sub-tenants, servants of different descriptions and so on. This took the temple a long way, apart from being an institution catering to the ‘spiritual’ needs of the public. It is in this context that a major popular movement known as the “*Bhakti* Movement” acquires importance. Historians in recent years have brought out the way in which the “*Bhakti* Movement”, which had been perceived at best as a religious and a literary phenomenon, reflected and legitimised the new order of things in economy, society and polity. It sanctified the ties of dependence in society; it made suffering and surrender sweet. What it really achieved was a smooth acceptance of a new form of society and polity through the ideological prop it provided. It is quite another matter that the temples, which were so popularised and strengthened in one of the most dynamic and forward-looking movements in the history of South India, became bastions of orthodoxy and centres of obscurantism in the centuries to follow. But then, that is the way of history.

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## 7.10 CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

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In concluding our discussion, it may be useful to look at how such a polity was conceptualised by historians from time to time. In the beginning of the twentieth century, when historians, who were heavily under the influence of the romantic tradition of Western historiography and participating vicariously in Indian National Movement, put together information regarding the Pandyan and Chola kingdoms for

the first time, they were regarded as so many “empires”. Thus the chapter headings of Nilakanta Sastri’s *Pandyan Kingdom* (1929) speak about the “first empire”, “second empire”, etc. He represented the Chola state as a highly centralised empire, presided over by a “Byzantine royalty” and comprising of a “numerous and powerful bureaucracy”, supported by a coercive power consisting of an impressive army of “numerous regiments” and an equally impressive navy of “numberless ships”, an elaborate revenue mechanism, but also with vital local bodies with considerable autonomy. What Sastri wrote became a model for other historians to follow; and historiography in South India acquired a conventional quality about it with a heavy resistance to change. The picture continued without any major alteration till the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Burton Stein exposed the contradictions in this construction, showing that a strong centre and autonomous local groups do not go together. Using the impressive findings of Y.Subbarayalu in relation to the political geography of the Chola country, Stein sought to explain evidence from medieval South India in terms of the model of “segmentary state”, which A.Southall had used to explain the situation in the East African society of the Alur. Accordingly, South India in this period was characterised by a multiplicity of centres, a political centre being identified in each of the 550 *Nadu* divisions, a dual sovereignty of the actual political and a ritual variety, specialised administrative staff in each of the centres and a pyramidal segmentation. This model is not quite acceptable for various reasons, the most important among which is that it was first constructed to explain a tribal lineage society in Africa and does not suit a highly stratified society with widespread literacy and impressive monumental architecture that is found in medieval South India.

The much-debated model of “Indian feudalism”, too, has been tried in the context of early medieval South India. M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat argued that the *Bhakti* Movement in South India was actually feudal in its content. Veluthat has argued further that the entire political structure in early medieval South India had a feudal character about it. The general criticism against Indian feudalism are valid in this case also. Noboru Karashima and his associates have taken up a quantitative analysis of the information contained in the epigraphical material of early medieval South India. The results of such a systematic work replace the speculation of an earlier period, making it possible to test the different thesis with greater confidence. At the end of the day, the result of the entire enterprise is the considerable clarity that has been achieved in relation to the understanding of the polities in early medieval South India.

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## 7.11 SUMMARY

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In this Unit we have discussed the political structure of the South Indian Kingdoms which emerged in the early medieval period. The important kingdoms of this period were: Pandeyas of Madurai, Cheras of Mahodayapuram and Cholas of Thanjavur. The political organisation of this period was based on hereditary monarchy. The king and his establishment was an important constituent of the political formation. Under the Cholas landed magnates functioned as state agents and constituted the officialdom. The Cholas had developed an elaborate revenue machinery. The administration of justice was conducted by local communities. The military establishment comprised of bodyguards of kings and chiefs and mercenaries led by landed elite. Apart from the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings the realm was ruled by several chiefs who recognised the suzerainty of Chera, Chola and Pandyas. In

the later period, these chiefs got transformed into state functionaries like the landed magnates. They were absorbed into the state system. The political aspirations of the local groups were articulated through the assemblies; *Sabha* (assembly of *Brahmins*) and *Ur* (assembly of non-brahmans). The *Nadus* comprising of the *Urs* were the building blocks of south Indian polity in this period. The nagarams (corporate body of traders) and *Brahmadeyas* (*brahmanical* villages) and *Sabhas* were the important local bodies of this period. In South India the emergence of state is attributed to social stratification derived from the principles of *Varnashramadharam*. Religion and its ideology also helped in providing legitimacy to the state. Various perspectives related to the study of political organisation of the South Indian kingdoms help us in critically analysing the nature of polity of this period.

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## 7.12 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the nature of political organisation at the local level between 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in peninsular India.
- 2) Analyse the nature of royal establishment in the political structure of peninsular India (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.).



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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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## UNIT 8 STATE UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

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18th Century Successor  
States

### Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Understanding the State
- 8.3 Textual Sources on Statecraft
- 8.4 Modern Historians on the Nature of the State
- 8.5 Summary
- 8.6 Exercises

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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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 writes, '...the state was not a theocracy. .... because *shara* as defined by the clergy was hardly the core concern of the sultans. It was formally Islamic in character, but was based not on social equality, but on hierarchy. In practice, there was little distinction between the lives of the ordinary people, Hindu or Muslim'. (Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Delhi, 1999). In the absence of any written law or constitution the state in the Delhi Sultanate functioned according to wisdom and political pragmatism of the rulers. It is important to understand that the concerns of the state at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century when it was at its formative stage were different from the concerns of the state in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when it got consolidated. So it is suggested that the state under the sultanate needs to be understood as a process rather than a monolithic structure imposed from above. In this Unit we will explain the nature of the state mainly on the basis of two contemporary authoritative texts on state craft- *Adabul Harb Was'h Shujaa't* and *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*. We have also analysed the views of modern historians on the nature of the state. All these should help you to understand the characteristics of the state under the Delhi Sultanate.

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### 8.2 UNDERSTANDING THE STATE

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To study the state under the Delhi Sultanate we need to bear in mind the means of acquiring and maintaining power at that time. While it is true that power could be wrested by a group of people, usually with superior military skills, it is not as if this was enough for the rulers to rule. Rulers felt the need to legitimise their authority through various other means. Legitimation included not just patronage of important groups of people like the nobles or religious classes [in the Delhi Sultanate, the *ulema*, i.e, theologians], architectural constructions, etc. but also by instituting various other systems of administration and control which would allow the ruling classes to demand and extract levies [in the forms of various taxes, for instance] which in turn would allow them to maintain their position of dominance. These administrative structures [which you will read about in Block 6] allowed the rulers to make their presence felt in areas that were far away from the central/political capital of the kingdom. To put it simply, these acts of legitimisation give the state a dominant position in society.

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

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

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

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

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### 8.3 TEXTUAL SOURCES ON STATECRAFT

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While studying state in ancient India in Block-1 you must have noticed that our main source for the Maryan state was the *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft in ancient India, written by Kautilya or Chanakya, the famous minister of the Mauryan king Chandragupta. In the case of the Delhi sultanate there are few sources which deal directly with the state in the early times. This was so because the Sultanate at this time was at a nascent political stage and was grappling to become stable and strong, a process which could take many years, if not decades. Also, texts and chronicles were usually written as products of patronage for the court; in other words, a scholar would need to seek approval from the Sultan to write about the kingdom, and would in return be given remuneration in various ways. Before we proceed further, it needs to be mentioned that these textual sources are only the views of individuals and may or may not represent the prevailing realities of the times. However, since this is all that we have as evidence, it is useful to know what they say with regard to the state. Two names stand out in the Delhi Sultanate in this matter.

**Fakhr-i Mudabbir's** *Adab ul harb wa'sh Shujat* ['Customs of Kings and Maintenance of the Subjects'] is the first of these texts. It is generally believed that it was written in honour of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish [r. 1210-1236]. This text is organised in 40 chapters of which the first 12 deal with the virtues, qualities and duties of the sultan, and of details of the qualities that he should look for in his officials. The other 28 chapters concern various aspects of war and how it should be waged.

Mudabbir's text needs to be situated in the context of the Delhi Sultanate which was, at this time, in its infancy. He is therefore eager that power remains in the hands of the ruling classes and the text reflects this concern. Also, there was the threat of the Mongols from Central Asia at this time, and all this together created a sense of insecurity amongst the court intelligentsia. Information provided by him for our study of the state is aplenty, and the two following points are illustrative of the immediate concerns which determine the contents of his text.

- He is clear in his suggestion that before attacking or invading an enemy territory, the sultan must formally invite the opponents to either accept Islam [and thus his superiority] or agree to pay *jizya*, a tax payed by non-Muslims to the Muslim rulers. (Quoted in Aziz Ahmad, 'Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval India', *Studia Islamica*, 17, p.122, 1962).
- At another point he mentions that if a Muslim city is besieged by non-Muslims then Muslim women can march to its defence without the permission of their men, and slaves [who were employed in large numbers both by the sultan and the nobility at that time] without the permission of their masters. (Quoted in Ahmad, Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India', p.112).

Both these examples show that the 'state' and its ideologues were concerned about how to rule over a vast non-Muslim population in the subcontinent, and were trying to articulate various ways of doing so. While the first example is one which suggests peaceful negotiation, the second one is more militaristic and aggressive.

A few chapters of the book are also devoted to the theme as to how the state should govern its domains. As mentioned earlier, while the initial chapters advise the ruler on the virtues and qualities of rulers and administrative governance, the majority of the text is engaged with the idea of warfare. Considering that the text was presented to a sultan its dominant concern with warfare surely hints at the need for such advice at the time.

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

What is important to remember is that at this point there seems to be no definite, given structure called the 'state'; what we have [as gleaned from this and other evidence] is a process at work to attain administrative and political coherence through proper, effective functioning. Towards that end, Mudabbir's concerns are with ways in which this may be achieved and power be retained in the hands of the ruling classes.

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

Barani was a counsellor in the court of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq [r. 1324-1352]. He has written a number of texts, but what concerns us here is his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* ['Precepts on Governance'] which he wrote sometime between 1352-57 A.D. This text is arranged in the form of 24 'advices' thus underlining the didactic nature of the text. It speaks of the proper ways of governance, and the text has been considered by many modern scholars as the first systematic enumeration of the art of governance in the Delhi Sultanate, and the only known text to do so.

The central point of Barani's ideas on state and governance is also justice, the proper administration of which he considers to be the main duty of the ruler. He too is concerned with the maintenance of power for the ruling classes; in fact, he is far more emphatic than Mudabbir in his ideas about the virtues and vices of the high- and low-born people respectively. Contradictions are evident in his writings as well, although he was writing at a time when the Sultanate was much better grounded in its role as the state in the subcontinent. Thus, on the one hand he speaks at length about the virtues of the Muslims and the importance of giving high-born Muslims important state offices and speaks vociferously against the employment of Hindus, and the low-born people by the state; on the other hand, his idea of justice transmutes to clemency and mercy such as in the suspension of *jizya* when crops fail, or the distribution of state charity to the needy among the non-Muslims. His idea of a good 'state' therefore is one which would take the interests of both the ruling elites and the subjects into consideration.

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

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

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



**Map 1: Delhi Sultanate**

**Source:** After A.B.M. Habibullah: The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India

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## 8.4 MODERN HISTORIANS ON THE NATURE OF THE STATE

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Modern scholars have used these texts and various other sources of evidence to opine about the nature of the 'state' under the Delhi Sultanate. It has been the focus of a lot of debate especially because it is generally believed that the Delhi Sultanate laid the groundwork upon which the Mughal Empire was later able to build its might and splendour. In his *Economy and Society*, Max Weber remarked in passing that the Delhi Sultanate was a 'patrimonial state'. In explaining this concept, Jakob Rösel says that such a state is one in which the rulers are dependent upon a small number of trained and loyal state officers to exert control over the kingdom, and are involved in specialised administrative functions such as collection of taxes, control over trade and commercial activities, law and order, etc. In most other matters, it vests power in the hands of local power-groups and intermediaries at various provincial and regional levels. This idea, however, requires much investigation for which sufficient evidence may not be available at present and has therefore not been very popular in later characterisations of the Delhi Sultanate although it has been applied more successfully to the Mughal empire.

Historians like Stanley Lane-Poole, Ishwari Prasad, A.B.M. Habibullah, Muhammad Habib, K.A. Nizami, etc. and, more recently, Peter Jackson have characterised the Delhi Sultanate as a 'centralised state'. This needs to be explained. The Delhi Sultanate was established after the second battle at Tarain in 1192 A.D. One of the important reasons why the Turks were able to establish a base in the subcontinent — first in Lahore, and after 1206 A.D. in Delhi which served as the capital of their kingdom thereafter with a brief interregnum between 1324-27 A.D. — was, according to Simon Digby (*War-horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Problem of Military Supplies*) because of their superior military strength and organisational capabilities. On the other side, as Romila Thapar has argued (*Early India: From the Origins to A.D. 1300*) that disunity and in-fighting among the local [especially Rajput] power-blocs, along with inferior military tactics led to the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192 A.D. The kingdom that emerged thereafter was one which showed relative stability and was able to expand and consolidate its political base in course of time. This was in large measure because they were able to harness various resources available to them — a plan that would not have been possible without a centralised, authoritarian state which controlled the various organs of the state to control its resources for its benefit. To paraphrase Hermann Kulke, these models place the state under the Delhi Sultanate at the end of a continuum of pre-modern state formations. They depict the post-1200 medieval ('Muslim') state as a polity headed by a strong ruler, equipped with an efficient and heirarchically organized central administration based on a religiously legitimated monopoly of coercion in a (more or less) clearly defined territory.

However, more recent research has shown that while it is true that political rule of the Turks survived and consolidated itself consistently, it was not a smooth process which was unchallenged. The degree to which the state was 'centralised', i.e., how far the central, political power-group of rulers and court nobles could exert actual power and control in the wider kingdom has been much debated and there is as yet no consensus about it. Such studies suggest that the state at this time was only slightly bureaucratized, and there is no agreement about the degree of political fragmentation or segmentation on the one hand, and temporally and spatially fluctuating unitary tendencies within these states on the other. Central political power was constantly being challenged by various local power groups, and the sultan at the centre spent precious time and resources trying to subjugate such forces. Opposition also came from other nobles who were posted in different parts of the empire [as *'iqtadars*; officers assigned territories in lieu of salary, the revenue returns of which

were enjoyed by the officer with surplus going to the state] and wanted to carve out their own independent principalities.

It may however be said with some surety that there was a certain degree of centralised authority at work in the empire, and even where local powers were dominant they were expected to acknowledge the court and the sultan as their superiors. This is obvious from the fact that often the sultan would need to wage wars against ‘rebellious’ groups, be they state officials who had turned against the centre, or other local powers. Also, the centre was present in various parts of the kingdom through activities viz. tax collection, building roads, architecture, mosques, giving charity to religious foundations and individuals, and so on. An important feature of the presence of the state was the constant movement of the army from one part of the sultanate to another as it expanded its domains or tried to suppress uprisings. Often, local areas had to extend hospitality — in the form of providing food and shelter — to the central armies as they passed by. It should be mentioned here that in many cases [in the Delhi Sultanate] the local areas were governed by local chiefs, and even everyday administration continued according to local custom. The central presence in local areas did not necessarily upturn all existing structures at work, and they often worked in unison. A uniform administration across the empire would occur only with the maturation of political and administrative rule under the Mughals, which would be more than 200 years later.

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

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

But the suggestion that religion was the touchstone of medieval politics in the subcontinent — that the Delhi Sultanate should thus be termed an ‘Islamic’ state — is not fully supported by the available evidence. They may have sometimes used religion as a means to mobilise people or to explain certain actions, but all actions were in their essence political, and the ‘state’ under the Delhi Sultanate never took any special action for the glorification of religion if there was no attendant political gain.

As mentioned earlier, the 'state' also manifested itself through a variety of other actions in the larger realm. Chief among them were acts of building, and charity. As part of the dominance of the state, as also a physical marker of its presence, the state often encouraged construction of buildings, mosques, or canals and wells, etc. These would be physical, visible reminders of the presence of the state all over the realm, as also, manifestation of the glory of the state. Finally, the state also gave charitable endowments to the needy and to the intellectuals as part of its, patronage of its subjects.

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## 8.5 SUMMARY

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In a way of summing up it may be said that the state under the Delhi Sultanate was not a unified entity which existed from the beginning to the end as a singular category. Rather, it was the coming together of various actions of the ruling classes as part of their act of effective governance. Some of its components were universal, such as taxation; others were variable, and there were still others which grew with the passage of time and according to need. Obviously, the immediate concerns of a newly emerging 'state' at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were different from those of a more mature and confident political 'state' at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. So, while the category of 'state' may still be employed as part of studying political governance under the Delhi Sultanate, it needs to be understood as a process rather than as a composite bloc that was superimposed upon the people. The 'state' was an organic entity whose primary exercise was to ensure political dominance and effective rule, and this was possible only by addressing the ambitions of the ruling classes and the needs and demands of the ruled; towards that end, through its many actions and offices it aimed to integrate the diverse components of the kingdom into one unified, governed whole. Any action was good as long as it achieved this desired end. It must therefore be seen as a continuing process of governance which, at particular points of time, could be identified as 'state', but when seen over a larger period, would emerge as a process at work. This governmental scaffolding was, of course, organised around the central person of the ruler whose own authority was enhanced by a skilful combination of effective rule, charismatic authority complemented by religious sanction from the *ulema*, and the bureaucracy as its main structural expression.

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

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## 8.6 EXERCISES

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- 1) Write a note on the features of the state under the Delhi Sultanate giving reference to Fakhr-i-Mudabir's and Ziya Barani's texts.
- 2) Analyse the views of modern scholars on the nature of state under the Delhi Sultanate.

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## UNIT 9 VIJAYANAGARA, BAHMANI AND OTHER KINGDOMS

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18th Century Successor States

### Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Major Trends in the Historiography of Vijayanagara
- 9.3 Foundation of the Vijayanagara Kingdom
- 9.4 Nature of the State
- 9.5 Resources of the Realm
- 9.6 Continuity and Change
- 9.7 The Bahmani Kingdom
- 9.8 The Kingdom of Bengal
- 9.9 The Kingdom of Malwa
- 9.10 Summary
- 9.11 Exercises

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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Decision of the Delhi Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq to shift the capital back to Delhi from Daulatabad in the early half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was followed by the rise of a number of independent territorial states in different regions. Most prominent among them were the kingdom of Vijayanagara in the region to the south of the river Krishna, the Bahmani kingdom in the Deccan and the kingdoms of Bengal, Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur, etc. The creation of new kingdoms shows the weakening control of central political authority over the provinces and the tendency among provincial chiefs to proclaim their independent political authority in their respective areas of influence. Regarding the nature of polity and the mechanism of governance of these states we find broad similarities with the state under the Delhi sultans. However new experiments were also made by these new territorial states depending on the local needs and traditions. The major challenge before the rulers of these states was to maintain balance among various groups of nobles who were always a threat to the throne. The rulers used religious ideology to legitimise their rule. Till the emergence of the Mughal state these powers were successful in enjoying independent political authority in their respective regions. Thrust of this Unit is to familiarise you with this major trend of medieval polity during 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries giving examples from the Vijayanagara, the Bahmani, Bengal and Malwa kingdoms. Comparatively more historical researches have been conducted on Vijayanagara, so you will find more details about it as compared to other three kingdoms. Let us first start with the Vijayanagara kingdom.

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### 9.2 MAJOR TRENDS IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF VIJAYANAGARA

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In view of large number of researches about the history of the Vijayanagara state it is not possible to analyse every work and comment on it in this Unit. What is attempted here is to identify major trends in the historiography of the Vijayanagara state and we hope this will help you to understand diverse views on this state.

Sporadic writings of Mark Wilks and Colin Mackenzie inaugurated in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century an exercise which was to attract several scholars in the next century. A volume on the history of Vijayanagara appeared in the year 1900 and its author was Robert Sewell, a British official of the Madras Civil Service. The work



was entitled *A Forgotten Empire*. It has been rightly observed by Burton Stein, another historian on Vijayanagara, that Sewell's work was not for the sake of pure knowledge but for the purpose of controlling a subject people whose past was to be so constructed as to make the British rule a necessity and a virtue.

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

Aiyangar's works were followed by the studies of B.A. Salatore and N. Venkatramanayya. Aiyangar and B.A. Salatore viewed the Vijayanagara history from a regional perspective focusing on Karnataka as the home of the founders of Vijayanagar kingdom whereas N. Venkatramanayya and N. K. Sasthri presented it from an Andhra perspective. Salatore presented Vijayanagara as an expression of Karnataka nationalism while N. Venkatramanayya challenged this view emphasizing the point that the Vijayanagara rulers had adopted the Kakatiya method of administration. He referred to the '*Nayankara*' system as an example of Kakatiya influence.

Working under K.A. Nilakanta Sasthri, T.V. Mahalingam studied the administrative and social aspects of the Vijayanagara history. As stated by Nilakanta Sasthri, the work of Mahalingam was meant to focus on the Tamil region especially the social and administrative studies dealing with the third dynasty. According to Burton Stein, 'Mahalingam remarkably treats the routine post classical age in south India as a vast undifferentiated period with evidence of political usages from widely disparate times and places taken as elaborations upon some single structure of power relations'.

Nilakanta Sasthri's '*A History of South India*' has a full chapter and a portion of another chapter on the Vijayanagara having maximum weightage on political history. However it has been suggested by scholars that his major contribution to the Vijayanagara history is the three-volume work entitled *Further sources of Vijayanagara History*, edited jointly with Venkataramanayya. For a long time K.A. Nilakanta Sasthri and his followers dominated the scene of Vijayanagara history in particular and history of South India in general. Their models and methods were accepted uncritically until Burton Stein wrote a very strong critique of the existing model.

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

Recently Karashima – Subbarayalu- Shanmughan team has attempted to analyse the Vijayanagara history and their method of study is based on details of Vijayanagara inscriptions in Tamilnadu. This team of scholars rejects Stein's Segmentary state model and tries to explain the Vijayanagara polity by applying the feudal model with significant variations. Introducing the results of the new study Karashima suggests that 'the strength of the state control over *nayakas* seems to have made Vijayanagara feudalism rather similar to the Tokugawa feudalism of Japan'.

Burton Stein's work has however stimulated a new interest in the study of South Indian history in general and the Vijayanagara history in particular. A number of

studies are done in various centres in India and abroad and these studies are expected to open up new vistas in the study of transitional stages in the society and polity of pre-modern South India.

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### 9.3 FOUNDATION OF THE VIJAYANAGARA KINGDOM

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The foundation of the Vijayanagara state towards the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century is generally attributed to a group of five brothers, namely, Bukka, Harihara, Kampana, Mudappa and Marappa. The founding figures of the kingdom are also known as the Sangamas, after their father's name. The kingdom takes its name from its capital Vijayanagara, 'the city of victory', which was built on the southern bank of the river Tungabhadra.

The emergence of the Vijayanagara state is explained as a "Hindu" resistance against the "Muhammadan" invasion. This theme of the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy was introduced by Robert Sewell who is the author of the first standard work on the history of the Vijayanagara empire. The literary sources and the epigraphical records of the early Vijayanagara period identify the invaders as the *Turushkas* or *Turkiks*, an ethnic or political identity which was replaced by the idea of Hindu-Muslim rivalry and this semantic perspective is significant in the context of imperialist historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has to be noted in this connection that as observed by some early historians, 'Muslims had been part of South Indian society for a long time before Vijayanagara was founded. Moreover, they were employed in the native military forces by the Hindu Kings such as the Hoysala king Jagadekamalla'. (Stein)

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

In the initial years of the kingdom, the Sangamas were involved in incessant fights against not only 'Muhammadans' but also 'Hindu' rulers. They defeated Rajanarayana Sambuvaraya in 1357, won the war against the Sultan of Madurai in 1370 and thus, by about 1377, at the time of the death of Bukka I, Vijayanagara was the largest regional kingdom in the whole of south India ever to have existed. Bukka's successors continued to extend the empire to the north east by fighting the Kondavidu Reddies of the coastal Andhra and the Velamas of Warangal and even the Gajapati kings of Orissa. Their fight with the Gajapati's continued for about a century. These military operations were possible because Vijayanagara could mobilize resources which were essential for the maintenance of the army and for the project of expansion.

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

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## 9.4 NATURE OF THE STATE

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

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

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

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

Nilakanta Sastri described the Vijayanagara state as 'the nearest approach to a war state ever made by a Hindu Kingdom'. He was following the characterization of Mahalingam. Recently some European scholars have also described the Vijayanagara polity as military feudalism (Kulke and Rothermund). However Burton Stein has vehemently denied that this system could be called a feudal one due to the reason that some of the salient features of feudalism such as homage and vassalage are not found in the Vijayanagara system. Further he sees no tributary relationship either. Stein opines that the Portuguese writings on feudalism should be studied with caution in this respect because their use of the term feudalism must be understood in the context of their own experience and their desire to explain Indian affairs to their European readers in words which were familiar to them. Stein described the system as segmentary in which the king enjoyed a ritual sovereignty which is in contradiction with actual sovereignty. The segmentary model introduced by Stein was challenged by Herman Kulke and others showing that in many parts of India kings enjoyed actual sovereignty over their territory, giving examples of the Suryavanshi kings of Orissa. More recently Karashima, after studying the Tamil epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara empire in Tamilnadu, has argued that "the strength of the State control over *nayakas* seems to have made 'Vijayanagara feudalism' rather similar to the Tokugawa feudalism of Japan. He adds that if we do not accept the feudal interpretation, we have to find some other logical explanation for the difference between the Chola and the Vijayanagara regimes.

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## 9.5 RESOURCES OF THE REALM

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

Trade and commerce had developed even prior to the Vijayanagara period at three levels- local exchange networks, long distance inland trade and overseas trade. Documents from Tamil country bear testimony to the increase in markets (*pettai*), fairs (*sandai*) thereby implying an increase in the local exchange networks. Karashima's study has maintained that compulsion was used to increase production of cash crops such as sugar, pepper etc. indicating linkage between local production and long distance trade, both inland and overseas. The role of coin-money was a notable feature of the trade and commerce under the Vijayanagara rulers. Travel accounts of Chau Ju-Kua, Marco Polo and Iban Battuta all document India's participation in the world trade. These travellers' accounts refer to the situation in the territories of Vijayanagara Kingdom too. They took notice of the development of interior urban centers whose consumption demands buoyed up the coastal emporia. Another stimulus for the trade and urbanization in the empire came from the Brahmanical temple complexes which functioned as pilgrim centers, military centers, political capitals and commercial centers. Contemporary epigraphical records and literary sources document that cash revenue was collected from trade and from the production of textiles, metal goods etc. "Customs collections at major trade centers were let on rent agreements or gutta from powerful state level magnates" (Stein). According to Nuniz, the Portuguese chronicler, the annual collection of customs from one of the gateways of Vijayanagara was rented for twelve thousand gold coins. It has been observed by historians that customs or tribute paid by merchants in port towns in the time of Devaraya II could have provided the means for him to pay for horses imported from Ormuz and elsewhere as well as providing a surplus to pay for the skilled horsemen to use them. Nilakanta Sastri observes that the proportion of produce claimed as revenue varied from the traditional one sixth to as much as half the gross yield. In additions to the income from agriculture and trade, the Vijayanagara state collected taxes from professionals and houses. Fee for various kinds of licenses, transit and market dues and judicial fines were other sources of income of the state. Tax farming was very common, as we have seen in the case of income from one of the gateways of the capital city. A big share of this income was spent for the upkeep of the army. Another share went for the charitable endowments. Regarding the state expenditure, the ideal was that half of the income should be set apart for military. From the remaining portion half could be spent for the palace maintenance. The rest was to be deposited in the reserve treasury. However, this ideal apart, the practice depended on current exigencies.

The number and variety of tax-terms found in the epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara rulers clearly show that every possible source was tapped to enhance the income from revenue. There are instances of popular revolts against the high rate of taxation though they are rare. Such a resistance was staged in the year 1429 in the Vellar river valley in South Arcot. The unrest was caused by the introduction of a land measure which was very inconvenient to the cultivators. The royal authorities must have made more demands because the artisans and petty merchants also joined hands with the cultivators in revolting against the authorities. Karashima informs us



that the Vijayanagara rulers tried to adopt effective measures for better administration and that they were successful since we have epigraphical records of the sixteenth century which shed much light on the measures adopted by rulers that gave tax concessions to the common people.

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## 9.6 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

**18th Century Successor States**

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## 9.7 THE BAHMANI KINGDOM

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The basis of sovereignty was 'force'. The kingdom originated due to the revolt of the amirs of the Delhi Sultanate. The nobility played an important role in the political sphere, especially, in the process of assumption of power by the ruler and providing legitimacy to the ruler. The support of the nobility was important for the king to assume and maintain power. The Sufis and the ulema also played an important role in legitimising state power through religious and philosophical ideology. After the establishment and consolidation of Bahmani rule kingship was confined to the royal house of the Bahmanis. Sultan ascended the throne through either nomination by the entrenched king in which sometimes primogeniture was followed or through a process of selection by the ruling king, nobles and theologians. At times when a minor was declared as sultan the actual power was wielded by the nobility as regent of the king.

Source material for reconstructing the history of the Bahmani Kingdom consists of contemporary writings in the forms of historical narratives, travellers' accounts and works written immediately after the period. *Futuh – us – Salatin* by Isami is the only extant contemporary work on the history of the Bahmani Kingdom. The author attached himself to the first sultan of the dynasty and started writing his work in 1349 and completed it the next year. After a description of the Delhi Sultanate up to the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq the author writes about the foundation of the Bahmani Kingdom and the political disturbances in the Deccan. He gives valuable information on various aspects of history of the Deccan and south India. There are some late compositions also on the Bahmani Kingdom, which were written after the decline of the dynasty. Among these *Burhan – I – Maasir* of Sayed Ali Tabataba deserves mention. The author was a contemporary of Ferishta. He was a member of the court of Nizam Shahis of Ahamadnagar. While writing about the Nizam Shahi sultans, Bahmani rule is prefixed as an introduction to it. Ferishta, whose name was Muhammad Kasim, was perhaps the best known historian of the period. He wrote *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi* in which he has discussed Bahmani rule. *Tazkirat – ul – muluk* is another work of the period written by a merchant from Shiraz and therefore he is better known as Shirazi.

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

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

What we have noted in the case of the Vijayanagara empire is equally applicable to the territory of the Bahmani sultans also. The general trend of an expansion of cultivation from the plains to the upland zones was also an important feature of Bahmani period. Special mention should be made about Golconda which later emerged as an important kingdom in the Deccan on the eastern Coast between the Krishna and the Godavari. Golconda was an agricultural zone where several food grains and cash crops were cultivated due to a well developed network of canals. Weaving and craft industries flourished in the region due to the encouragement and patronage extended by rulers of the region. Golconda was famous for a particular variety of fabric and also for fine steel. Swords and arrowheads were exported from Golconda

to distant places as a result of the superior steel technology of the area. Above all Golconda mines were famous for their diamonds. Thus the realm of the sultans was to some extent rich in certain resources but it also comprised of arid zones with no yield of any kind. The economic resources of the region especially the agrarian produce were not plentiful and therefore for sustaining the kingdom wars had to be waged for resource mobilisation from rich tracts. The physiography and economy of the realm is a determinant factor in shaping the political history. The regions of Deccan and the semi arid uplands of south India were not favourable for cultivation. Therefore the dynasties were not blessed with abundant fertile arable land. Almost all dynasties of the period under discussion suffered from acute shortage of resources due to several reasons including the luxury of the nobility and the need for maintaining an army for security and expansion of the territories of the kingdom. The incessant battles and massacres of the period should be understood against this background instead of explaining the conflicts among the states in terms of religious rivalries.

The Bahmani Kingdom made its appearance on the political horizon of Deccan due to the revolts towards the end of the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The sultan became suspicious of amiran-i-sada posted in the Deccan. The sultan had ordered that the 'amirs of the hundred' to be taken to Broach under the escort of the governor of Daulatabad. The amirs were aware of the fate which earlier befell the amirs in the neighbourhood of Malwa, who were butchered. So they decided to revolt against this 'prejudiced attitude' and imprisoned the weak governor of Daulatabad and assumed power, proclaiming one among themselves the king of the Deccan under the title Nasir-ud-din Shah. An imperial army led by Muhammad himself rushed to Daulatabad and defeated the rebels and shut them up in the fort. Somehow, a few of them including the brothers of the newly appointed king managed to escape to Gulbarga under the leadership of Hasan Gangu who was also known as Zafar Khan. After three months Zafar Khan gathered an army and reached Daulatabad. Zafar Khan could easily defeat the imperial army and the new king Nasir-ud-din readily abdicated the throne in favour of Zafar Khan who proclaimed himself sultan under the title Alauddin Bahman Shah. This was the beginning of the Bahmani line of Kings. At the height of its power, the Bahmani sultans held sway over a vast territory from the river Tapti in the north and Krishna and Tungbhadra in the South from Arabian Sea in the west to Orissa in the east. The territory of the Bahmanis was encircled by hostile neighbours both in the north as well as in the south. In the south the Vijayanagara rulers were a constant threat to the Bahmanis who had an eye on the fertile Raichur Doab. The political history of the Bahmani Kingdom was actually marked by conflicts and rivalries with various powers of the region and within the Bahmani state system itself. An important rival was the Vijayanagara kingdom which was fast increasing its control over a vast territory to the south of Krishna river. The other problem was the internal fissiparous trend between two groups of Muslim nobility. These Muslim groups were the Deccanis who were the descendants of the Muslims who had been staying in India for a long time and the *Paradesis* who were foreigners who had recently arrived. The Deccanis were mainly the Sunnis whereas the *Paradesis* belonged to the Shiah sect and this aggravated their rivalry.

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

The hostile group conspired against the prime minister. There are stories about the connivance of the Deccani section against Gawan. Once they managed to get a blank sheet of paper with Gawan's seal affixed on it. The enemies wrote a letter, purporting to be from Mahmud Gawan, to the king of Orissa and told him that the people of the Deccan were weary of Muhammad's tyranny and urged him to invade the country.

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The sultan came to know about the letter and he immediately sent for Gawan. However, some friends advised Gawan to flee to Gujarat, but he presented himself before the Sultan who asked him about the punishment for treason against the Sovereign. Gawan replied that death was the punishment to be given for such treason. In spite of Gawan's explanations he was ordered to be beheaded and the order was executed immediately. The story continues that after realising his mistake the sultan drank himself to death before long. This was the beginning of the end of the Bahmani kingdom. It was during the lifetime of Mahmud Gawan that the Russian merchant Athanasius Nikitin visited Bidar. Nikitin records that the nobility in the kingdom enjoyed all sorts of luxury and led an extravagant life while the common people including cultivators, artisans and service groups lived in utter poverty.

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## 9.8 THE KINGDOM OF BENGAL

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Bengal being far off from Delhi on a number of occasions tried to assert its independence from the Sultanate of Delhi. Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji's invasion of Bengal at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the flight of Lakshman Sen, the ruler of the Sen dynasty in Bengal, from Nadia, the capital of the Sen rulers, marked the beginning of Muslim rule in Bengal. Starting from the reign of Iltutmish to the rule of Muhammad Tughlaq, at different points of time the rulers of Bengal tried to come out from the control of the central authority. The Delhi sultans either by direct military intervention or through negotiation were able to retain their control over the province of Bengal. During the reign of Delhi sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq Bengal was divided into three independent administrative divisions with their capitals at Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon in order to keep a check on the rebellious rulers of Bengal. But Muhammad Tughlaq's preoccupation in the affairs of Delhi gave opportunity to one Bengal noble Ilyas Shah to establish his control over the entire province of Bengal around 1345 A.D. and he declared himself as an independent ruler under the title of Shams-ud-din Ilyas Shah. He was successful in extending the boundary of his kingdom from Tirhut to Champaran, Gorakhpur and Banaras. Being alarmed by the growing power of Ilyas Shah on the eastern front of the Delhi Sultanate Firuz Tughlaq tried to restore the lost power of Delhi sultan over the province of Bengal. Initially Firuz was successful in his military campaign but Ilyas did not relent. Ultimately Firuz left Bengal for Delhi and friendship was established between the two rulers. It is said that Ilyas exchanged gifts with Firuz but did not make himself subordinate to the Delhi ruler. After the death of Ilyas Shah his son Sikandar Shah ascended the throne and during his time Firuz made a second attempt to recover Bengal. This time again the Delhi sultan failed in his mission. Thus the dynastic rule started by Ilyas Shah continued in Bengal for more than a century without much interference from Delhi. However taking advantage of dissension within the ruling dynasty, Raja Ganesh, a Hindu zamindar of Bhaturia and Dinajpur and an influential official of Ilyas Shahi rulers, declared himself the ruler of Bengal. References to Raja Ganesh's rule are found in *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* as well as in Ferishta's writings. A section of local Turkish nobles and Muslim theologians approached the ruler of Jaunpur to assist them in capturing the lost throne of Bengal from Raja Ganesh. Victory of the Jaunpur ruler over Ganesh was short lived as the ruler of Jaunpur got engaged in a conflict with the Delhi sultan. However Raja Ganesh could not rule over Bengal for long because of his old age and was succeeded by his son who embraced Islam. However Bengal continued to be unstable till the accession of Ala-ud-din Husain Shah to the throne of Bengal in 1493. Ala-ud-din marked the beginning of a new dynastic rule in Bengal which continued for about half a century. He extended his territory in the south-west towards Orissa and in the south-east towards Chittagaon and Arakan and invaded the Ahom kingdom of Assam and captured Kamatapur in Kuch Bihar. His successors ruled over Bengal till 1550s.

The above narrative shows that from the very beginning of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate there was always a tendency on the part of the provincial rulers of Bengal to assert their independence. In terms of financial and natural resources the province was very rich. So the Delhi sultans were keen to maintain their hold over the province. But geographical distance of Bengal from Delhi and poor communication system and humid climatic condition of the province made it difficult for the sultans of Delhi to maintain proper check over the nobles deputed in Bengal. Although Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi dynasties were able to establish independent political authority in Bengal but at no point they could completely ignore the imperial authority in Delhi. In matters of governance there was much resemblance between the Delhi sultanate and Bengal. Religion no doubt played an important role in legitimising the political authority but in administrative practices secular considerations were more important. Particularly during the reign of Alauddin Hussain Bengal witnessed the



emergence of Vaishnavite movement under the famous saint Chaitanya. The Vaishnava literature speaks about harmonious relations between the Hindus and the Muslims.

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## 9.9 THE KINGDOM OF MALWA

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The geographical location of Malwa was strategic since it was placed on a plateau between Narmada and Tapti rivers. It served as a link to the routes between Gujarat and north India and also north and south India. The control of Malwa was a pre-condition for establishing a large empire. The independent kingdom of Malwa was established by Dilwar Khan Guri in 1401-02. It emerged in the wake of the decline of the Delhi Sultanate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Timur's attack in 1398 precipitated the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate. The absence of a centralized authority in the empire gave opportunity to the nobles to carve out their independent spheres of influence.

The geographical distance of the provinces from the centre and the local problems of each region showed that it was not possible to control provinces by military power alone. The independent kingdoms which emerged lent support to this view. Therefore these independent kingdoms basically reflected the local aspirations which could not have been checked by the central power on the basis of its military prowess.

Dilwar Khan Guri, the founder of the independent kingdom of Malwa was succeeded by his son Hoshang Shah. During this period the ruler of Gujarat invaded Malwa. Hoshang Shah realised that to bring stability in his kingdom he would have to seek the support of all groups and sections of society and follow a policy of accommodation towards his subjects to remain in power. He therefore relied on the advice of the sufi saint Ashraf Jahangir Samnani (who advocated the principle of *Sulah-i-kul*). Deliberations and consultations with the nobles and officers were adopted as a policy on all important matters of governance and for initiating new projects. Almost all the sultans of Malwa followed the practice of seeking advice and approval of the officers of the state before arriving at any decision. Thus the prestige of the nobles was also enhanced by involving them in matters relating to governance. It seems that though a popular assembly did not exist for deliberations but the tradition of consultation with officers through a council was a democratic procedure followed in Malwa. It was quite different from the notion of the sultan as an unapproachable being. Mahmud I undertook an expedition against sultan Muhammad Gujarati to help Rai Gangadas of Champaran. This suggests that the Sultans of Malwa helped Hindu rulers against Muslim rivals.

An attempt was made to establish a definite law of succession in Malwa. Heredity and nomination were the basic guiding principles of succession. While making nomination primogeniture was practiced. Hoshang Shah declared his eldest son as his successor in a general audience where all the important officers together with their staff were present. Mahmud I went even a step further by bestowing the title of sultan upon the prince who he had chosen to succeed him. This practice became firmly rooted in Malwa. Ghiyas Shah, Nasir Shah and Mahmud II were also given the title of sultan by their respective fathers who had selected them to succeed to the throne. There were instances when an attempt was made to violate the practice of nomination. However the principle of nomination could not be set aside and continued to be practiced with greater vigour. Shihabuddin who had been nominated as the successor by Nasir Shah rebelled and therefore Mahmud II was nominated in his place. This decision was approved by the nobles.

Ashraf Jahangir, the sufi saint, had suggested that the king should be merciful and ruthless conduct on the part of the king could lead to problems. The sultans of Malwa viz. Dilwar Khan and Hoshang Shah were aware that they exercised authority over a region where the majority of the subjects were Hindus and therefore they

were wise enough to follow a broad minded and liberal policy towards all subjects – Hindu or Muslim. The sultans assigned *jagirs* to Rajputs in Malwa and thus paved the way for strengthening the foundation of the state based on liberal and tolerant traditions.

The generous attitude of the sultans is reflected in the policy of accommodating Hindus in the administrative system. The Hindus also found a place in the advisory council of the sultan. Hindus served the sultans in various capacities viz. Naradeva Soni and Sangram Singh were treasurers, Rai Siva Das was the army commander, Punja Raja supervised the *khalsa* lands and Medini Rai was appointed as Wazir and Salivahan was his subordinate. The non-partisan attitude of the sultans can also be judged from the fact that they led campaigns against the Bahmani ruler and other Muslim rulers who were their rivals.

Religious toleration was an important feature of the state of Malwa. Several Jain temples existed viz. at Mandasore, Hoshangabad, Mandu, Dhar etc. Several religious traditions co-existed in Malwa. Many Rajput chiefs who had been subjugated by the sultans in the course of territorial conquest were given the status of tributaries who owed allegiance to the sultan and paid tribute to him. The sultans as suzerain power never failed in their duty to protect the petty chiefs from the threat of outside power. Rai of Parhar, Rai Bhanu of Baglana were offered defence against the attack of Sharqis of Jaunpur and the ruler of Khandesh. At times the sultans also intervened in the conflicts amongst the Hindu chiefs viz. Rai Bhoj of Sarguja and chiefs of Raipur and Ratanpur. The policy of favouring the Rajputs by giving them *jagirs* played an important role in strengthening the base of the state. The Rajputs in return for the generosity of the sultan towards them offered their unflinching loyalty to the state of Malwa. This faithfulness served as the linchpin of the state. Hoshang Shah was helped in his military campaigns by various Hindu Chiefs viz. Narsing Rai of Kherla, Lakhan Rao of Matangpuri, chiefs of Bundi, Dewara Hindu Rai, Maldeo Chouhan and Samai Singh. Mahmud I appointed Khem Karan the younger brother of Rana Kumbha of Mewar as *jagirdar* who helped him to deal with the Mewar problem.

The sultans of Malwa were interested in promoting the welfare of the subjects by giving encouragement to various public works or activities viz. building hospitals, protection against crime such as theft, robbery etc. They tried to boost agricultural production by keeping the revenue demand at a moderate level and protecting the cultivators in the event of crop failure or loss.

From the above account it is clear that the independent state of Malwa was based on political expediency and the sultans were aware of the need to adopt a broad-based policy by seeking the support of all subjects through various measures viz. religious toleration, accommodation of all categories in the administrative system and welfare policies.

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## 9.10 SUMMARY

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The above narrative of four important kingdoms that ruled over a period of two centuries preceding the establishment of the Mughal state throws some light on the broad features of the polity of this period. It is characterised as a polity headed by a strong ruler, supported by a hierarchically organised administrative machinery and legitimised by the authority of religion. The new territorial states for all practical purposes declared their independent authority but the relationship with the Sultanate was not necessarily completely cut off. Although one cannot completely ignore the religious dimension particularly in the case of conflict between the Vijayanagara and the Bahmani kingdoms but it was mainly for considerations like control over the Tungbhadra doab for economic resources which had a major contribution in

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precipitating conflicts between these states. Despite constant wars and dissensions amongst the ruling elites the period in no way can be portrayed as a period of political decadence, rather this period showed the remarkable strength and stability of regional polity.

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**9.11 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Write a note on the features of Vijayanagara polity.
- 2) Analyse the kingdoms of Bengal and Malwa in the context of medieval state.

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## UNIT 10 THE MUGHAL STATE

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### Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Evolution of Theory of Sovereignty
- 10.3 Imperial Ideology under Akbar
- 10.4 Nature of State: Various Interpretations
- 10.5 Decline
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Exercises

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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We have explained in earlier Units-8 and 9 the nature of polity existing under the Delhi Sultanate and in the kingdoms that emerged following the decline of the Delhi Sultanate. In the analysis of state in medieval times the major landmark is the establishment of the Mughal state by Babur in the early half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The task initiated by Babur was further carried forward by his successors, particularly Akbar. The Mughal empire lasted for over two centuries and in the process of its expansion and consolidation it left a lasting impact on the polity of the Indian subcontinent. The extraordinary longevity of the Mughal imperial structure and the control that the emperors developed to rule such a vast empire make it more important to understand the dynamics of the Mughal state. We have large number of historical works for understanding the Mughal state. Starting from the writings by early British writers till recently we come across scholarly debate among historians around whether the Mughal was a conquest state or a highly centralized bureaucratic empire or a patrimonial state or a state to be understood in terms of its fiscal management, etc. In this Unit we will first explain the basis of imperial ideology tracing it from the central Asian tradition and the innovations made by the Mughal rulers. After this you will be introduced to the various interpretations on the nature of the Mughal state and the debates regarding the decline of the Mughal empire. This should help in making your assessment of the Mughal polity.

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### 10.2 EVOLUTION OF THEORY OF SOVEREIGNTY

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After the decline of the Mongol empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Timur, a Chaghtai Turk, established a large empire covering central Asia, west Asia and parts of south Asia. The Mughals were the direct descendants of Amir Timur. The Timurids, the Ottomans in eastern Europe (Turks), the Safavids (in Persia) and later the Mughals in India, though Islamised did not consider it essential to obtain the formal sanction from the *khalifa* whose power was waning. It is interesting to note that although these powers had gradually been Islamised but their political ideals were not based on purely Islamic principles. The Timurid polity combined the attributes of the Yassa of Chingez (Mongol Traditions), Turkish traditions and the principles of *shara*. Therefore the Mughal state can be understood by a close examination of the Timurid polity and can be categorized as an admixture of Islamic, Persian and Turko Mongol practices. Timur's empire or the Chaghati Khanate was transformed from a loose structure to a close knit system which was a blend of divine precepts and Chingez Khanid decrees. The divine proclamation aspect was given priority over the mundane Chingez Khanid regulations (partitioning of tribes). The divinity related aspects imparted legitimacy to the state more than any other type of law or decree. It is argued by some scholars that the Timurids did adopt the bureaucratic system (largely based on

Persian traditions) however, their principle of shared sovereignty could lead to partition and decentralization of empire.

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

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

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

Timur had imbibed Islamic ideals and therefore his conception of kingship, at least theoretically, could not be simply political and military. According to the *Malfuzt-I-Timuri* through a letter (*maktub*) Mir Sayyid Sharif bestowed upon Timur a title depicting him as the champion and reformer of Islam. Here Timur's name is found with the names of Umayyid and Abbasid *khalifas*. It is also mentioned that Timur read the *khutba* in his name in the mosque in the manner of some of the earlier *khalifas*. An important change took place under the Timurids since the Mongol practice of splitting the tribes and placing them under the princes. was now replaced by territorial partition of the empire among the princes. Timur adopted this policy and this tradition was carried further by his successors.

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



Sultan and Mirza though he did try to break the hegemony of the Great Mongol Khan.

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

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

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

The pious caliphs had carved out a special niche for themselves as heads of Islamic religious and political system. However, the Timurids had never accepted the *khalifa* as their suzerain. When Babur invaded India even the semblance of authority of the *khalifa* of Egypt had been erased. The authority of the Ottomans (who conquered Egypt, Syria, Arabia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and got the title of Sultan of Rum (Asia Minor) from the caliph at Cairo and adopted the title of Padshah-i-Islam) could never be acceptable to the Timurids as higher.

The accession of Babur and Humayun as the eldest sons established a positive tradition for the Mughal state. The legitimacy and sanctity which the Mughal Emperors Babur and Humayun provided to the principles of heredity and especially the faith reposed in the eldest progeny provided the foundation to the principles of sovereignty as operational in the Mughal state.

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

Humayun's personal beliefs played an important role in the formulation of an ideology which found articulation in various ways. He was interested in transcendentalism, astrology and like a devout muslim he regarded the king as the 'shadow of god on earth'. He maintained that the sun was the pivot of the physical world and the king

being comparable to the sun was the focus of the mortal (human) world. He organized the servants of the state into 12 parts and placed himself at the centre. This philosophy was derived from the Timurid legacy. Humayun also laid down novel court procedures and ceremonies which enhanced the status of the monarch. The belief that king was the shadow of god on earth was manifested in the official history of the period written by Khwand Mir. The historian refers to Humayun, his majesty the king, the shadow of god (Hazrat Padshah Zill-i-ilahi). Humayun's perception of the sovereignty implied that kingship was the 'personal property' of the king which he could confer on whomsoever he desired. Humayun's ideas of kingship also incorporated the ideal of abject submission of the nobles to the will of the *padshah*. However, in reality Humayun was not able to command total loyalty and subservience from his nobles. Although he was regarded as a 'personification of spiritual and temporal sovereignty' and the Mughals considered themselves superior to the other contemporary political powers viz. Uzbeks, Safavids, Ottomans, etc. but the Timurids did not possess a dynastic and religious ideology to enforce total submission of the populace to the crown.

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### 10.3 IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY UNDER AKBAR

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Under Akbar a framework of power and hierarchy was developed buttressed by symbolic and ritual elements. The rallying together of the nobility including the military cum civil personnel i.e. the *mansabdar-jagirdar* category, *zamindars* especially the chieftains and the *ulema* in the state machinery was brought about due to the sharp acumen of Akbar. He had to combine the task of expansion of territory with the creation of an administrative structure based on a delicate equilibrium between the different ethnic, religious and social groups which were accommodated in the imperial service as *mansabdars*. This category (military cum civil administrative elite) became the crux of the administrative system and gave adequate opportunity to the various ambitious rajas (chiefs), Muslim migrants etc. to rise in social and economic status. In Block 6 we will separately discuss the organization of nobility as reflected in the *mansabdari* and *jagirdari* system of the Mughals. The elite or nobility relied upon the Emperor for obtaining a position in the Mughal administrative system. Remuneration was accorded to those employed in Mughal administrative system for services rendered by them. The composition of the nobility was based on a variegated category comprising of various groups viz. Indo-Muslim, Persian, Brahman, Khatri, Kayastha etc. The *khanzads* (Muslim sons of the house) who were related to the Mughals by descent, family and heredity and the Rajputs proved to be the most trustworthy and reliable props of the Mughal state. The principle of authority and subordination in a hierarchical pattern was stressed which helped in sustaining the state in the midst of all kinds of challenges. This was achieved by the formulation of an imperial ideology under Akbar.

Akbar's authority was reinforced by a systematic unfolding of a dynastic ideology by Abul Fazl. This ideology combined the Timurid traditions of hereditary monarchy and ascribed spiritual status to the emperor through symbols and metaphors. The emperor could now command unflinching loyalty from his subordinates. In this respect Akbar's period represented a major shift from the earlier pattern of division of empire and of power, which hindered the process of centralization and cohesion. As mentioned earlier the Mongol appanage tradition was based on the fragmentation of tribes, which resulted in division of sovereignty and therefore decentralisation.

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

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

This document was submitted to the Emperor in 1595. It represents a masterpiece containing not only useful information but decorated with miniature paintings and calligraphy which enhance its significance. *Akbarnama* may be placed in the category of Indo-Islamic court panegyric however more elaborate than many others. This official chronicle was based on contemporary records, no longer available, and discussions with contemporary observers and those associated with the contemporary events. The details mentioned in the work contain an underlying ideology of power and validity. The eulogy is intended to illustrate covertly or overtly with hyperbolic tools the personality of Akbar as superior to ordinary men. Abul Fazl tries to demonstrate that Akbar’s authority over the populace did not emanate merely from the principles of coercive power, suppression, conquest and force but it was based on veneration which Akbar’s personality commanded.

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

It was considered that Akbar’s mystical and spiritual accomplishments surpassed the authority and wisdom of interpreters of *sharia* (Mujtahid of the age), the sufi saint (pir) or the charismatic saviours (*mahdi*). According to J.F. Richards ‘Akbar’s assertion of the right of final judgment between the various interpretations of the sacred law resulted from his long struggle with the conservative *ulema* holding state positions in the 1560s. The final resolution of this appeared in the much discussed testimony (*mahzar*) of 1578. This document signed under duress by the chief Qazi and the *sadr* of the empire stated that the rank of the sultan is higher in the eyes of God than of a mujtahid.’

Akbar imbibed in his person lustrous power which had been bestowed upon him by the creator of the world. Thus Akbar incorporated in his personality the supernatural and complex traits which shaped his foresight and idealism, the source of his dominance and authority.

The manuscripts of *Akbarnama* are adorned with beautiful miniature paintings, the contribution of artists who had lent support to Abul Fazl in building up the pictorial image of Akbar which corresponds to his description in the text. The miniature paintings of Akbar depict him as a divine, forbearing, balanced, enlightened personality at variance with the vast, undisciplined, unmanageable masses. The techniques used by the painters do not project flamboyance or grandeur. Simple colours and dress together with definite, identifiable features (curves, lines etc.) presented Akbar as an infallible patron who guided his subordinates and subjects.

Abul Fazl in his *Akbarnama* devotes several passages explaining Akbar's lineage and ancestry. He starts with Adam, the ancestor of mankind and refers to fifty-two human generations before illumination dawned upon Akbar. He describes Akbar's forefathers as having come from heaven as 'kings, kings of kings, kingdom bestowers and king makers (who) governed the world by god-given wisdom and true insight'. Abul Fazl mentions nine Mughal (or Mongol) kings and Mughal Khan, the son of a Turk, is considered by him as the founder of the dynasty.

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

The Timurid kings (especially Babur) established the tradition of beginning the dynastic pedigree with Amir Timur. The *tughra* (engraved iron seals with calligraphy bearing the Emperor's titles) and the symbolic gold coins of the dynasty were an expression of dynastic authority. Abul Fazl describes Babur as 'the carrier of the world illuminating light'. Humayun's failures are projected as predestined and pave the way for the impending arrival of Akbar. The exaggerations and metaphors applied by Abul Fazl were drawn from the myth of the origin of the Mongols and the illuminationist theosophy of Suhrawardi Maqtul, the Persian mystic and philosopher. Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* is an important source which Abul Fazl used for his dynastic account of the Mongols. The *Tarikh-i-Hukama* of Shamsuddin Muhammad Shahrazuri is an Arabic biography of pre-Muslim and Muslim mystics and philosophers. This account includes the biography of Shihabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul the teacher-philosopher of Shahrazuri who had established the eastern or Ishraqi school of Persian philosophy. The central theme in Ishraqi school of thought is that life and reality is light created by god. Abul Fazl uses the Sufi philosophy for eulogizing the Mughal emperor. Akbar's esoteric and mystical knowledge combined both love and strictness and it found clear expression or manifestation in the doctrine of *sulh-i-kul* or peace for all. This belief is contained in the *Akbarnama* and was not merely meant as a device to bridge the chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims but it was conceived as a broad ideology of governance for the imperial power to ease the strained relations between the subjects and the rulers.

Akbar's spiritual urge led him to search for a liberal and broad religious order. His inclination towards sun worship fitted well with the dynastic ideology of the Timurids which laid stress on illuminating light. This religious aspect of sun adulation found acceptance among the official personnel, the landed aristocracy (zamindars) and other local chiefs. Generally Akbar's religious views have been explained in the context of their affinity to the Zoroastrian, Sufi, Nath yogic or Brahmanical faith. His divine faith has been regarded as an amalgamation of a myriad of beliefs and practices. To understand Akbar's religious ideas it is important to explain how Akbar deviated from the conventional Islamic tradition and gave up the public prayer mode and adopted a rational and reasoning attitude towards religious practices. Sun worship before a sacrificial fire and the chanting of Sanskrit name for sun, religious discourse with the mystics and saints of various creed and sect, restraint and self-denial in social practices were to some extent based on Hindu belief of metempsychosis. Blochmann who has translated the *Akbarnama* describes Akbar's religious propensity



as Divine faith which was able to enlist as its followers a number of nobles and courtiers. S.A.A. Rizvi disagrees with Blochmann and feels that the Divine faith served a more constructive purpose than simply creating a coterie of Emperor's favourites. It was able to mobilize the Imperial Disciples or votaries through the ideological formula of Emperor's connection with the sun and light. This methodology (ideological training) was adopted to create a loyal and sincere group of nobles who would strengthen the political foundation of the empire. Rizvi refers to four types of devotion which were meant 'to unify the new Mughal elite around the ...throne.' The four category of devotion were: the willingness to surrender one's life (*jan*), property (*mal*), religion (*dar*), and honour (*namus*) for the sake of the Emperor. Babur's nobility was bound by ethnic, hereditary, family bonds but Akbar was faced with the problem of unifying the motley group of nobles of varied ethnic background and religious persuasion. The diverse groups in the nobility had to be appeased and balanced which could be attained by tying them to the imperial ideology. Emperor was portrayed as possessing divine attributes. According to Richards 'Popular understanding of the Emperor's assertions of divinely sanctioned ancestry, illumined wisdom and spirituality clearly permeated among the populace of the court/camp and other major urban centers of the empire. Ultimately this understanding became so pervasive that a continuing memory of Akbar's powers was even absorbed into the folk culture of rural society within the various regions of the empire.'

It has been pointed out by scholars that Akbar's administrative and political initiatives were closely linked to his personal traits or characteristics. Akbar's public image was shaped by the contemporary 16<sup>th</sup> century chroniclers, nobles at court, agents of *mansabdars* sent to court, agents of rajas or merchant houses and secret agents of the regional kingdoms. His approachable and open personality did not deter the possibility of the creation of the halo of unbridled power. After 1580 when Abul Fazl became a close associate of Akbar the unrestrained power of Akbar was justified through an ideology which was a blend of dynastic traditions and religious beliefs hinged on philosophical principles. Akbar's decision to establish his capital at Fatehpur Sikri and the large scale construction activity undertaken in his period was also a manifestation of his desire to assert his power. The shift of the center of power from Delhi (under Humayun) to Agra meant that Akbar did not wish to inherit the previous stronghold of imperial power but desired assertion of a new dynastic authority by building a new capital. The palace fortresses built by Akbar at Agra, Allahabad, Lahore, Ajmer and the new capital (Sikri) were manifestations of a new political order and statement. The choice of Sikri was also related to Akbar's close association with the Sufi mystic Shaikh Salim Chisti. Akbar's capital had the mosque and tomb (dargah) of the sufi saint the twin symbols of Indian Islam with mystical overtones. Akbar's despotism were reflected in the audience chamber (*Diwan-i-khas*) meant for limited court audience and (*Diwan-i-Aam*) Hall of Public audience and the pillar and platform in the hall of public audience. Mysticism was also a means to impart an aura of greatness to the Emperor, which further helped in legitimizing imperial authority. His close relations with Chishtiyya sufi order enhanced his charisma in political life. Akbar's esoteric proclivities were an asset in his ideological debates with the obscurantist *ulema*. These debates were a pre-requisite to make the state broad-based. As J.F. Richards points out 'Thus by 1590 when Abul Fazl began a systematic affirmation of Akbar's claim to universal authority in the Akbarnama, he included an anecdote which indirectly stated Akbar's superiority over even the most famed Chistiyya saint'.

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## 10.4 NATURE OF STATE: VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

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Historians have given different interpretations for explaining the nature of the Mughal state. The theory of sovereignty or kingship has been discussed which is indispensable for an understanding of the Mughal state. A voluminous collection of historical works is available on the Mughal state. W.H. Moreland's study of the agrarian



system of the Mughals represents a major contribution towards the study of the Mughal empire. The most important school of historical analysis in so far as the Mughal state is concerned is the Aligarh school. Historians belonging to this school have tried to evaluate the state mainly in the context of its economic organization. According to the scholars belonging to the Aligarh school the main features which characterized the Mughal state were its monetary (silver rupiya, gold muhr, copper dam and paisa) and fiscal system, the Mughal ranking system (*mansabdari*) and system of revenue assignments (*jagirs*). The flourishing overseas trade is also considered as a hallmark of the Mughal period especially the development of ports such as Surat, Thatta, Goa, Hughli, Balasore and Masulipatnam by historians like J.F.Richards. According to T. Ray Chaudhury 'the uncomplicated desire of a small ruling class for more and more material resources explains most of the Mughal state's actions; in the case of the Mughals, he asserts 'their' economism was simple, straight forward and almost palpable...there was no containing it until it collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions'. A logical inference which can be drawn from the above mentioned interpretations is that the state obtained the surplus from the agrarian economy as land revenue which constituted a definite part of the produce and the revenue demand varied from 1/3 to 1/2 or more of the produce. The essence of the perspective of the historians like Habib, Raychaudhuri and Richards is that during the period of Akbar (1556-1605) a cohesive and uniform or standardized agrarian system came into existence and this view was largely drawn from the earlier work of the British administrator historian W.H. Moreland. However, Habib's postulates are at variance with Moreland's because of following:

- 1) The first is apparently the use of Marxist tools of analysis.
- 2) The second is greater use of Persian sources, Moreland's application of theory of Oriental Despotism was replaced by class antagonism, struggle and exploitation postulate.

Irfan Habib regards the "Zabt system" (method of revenue assessment based on measurement) which got its final shape in 1580 as the epitome of the unified administrative system under the Mughals. He points out 'In 1574-75 Akbar took a series of important measures, which involved among other things, a new attempt to work out revenue rates. Information on yields, prices and the area cultivated was collected for each locality for a period of 10 years; 1570-71 to 1579-80. On the basis of detailed information the revenue rates were now fixed directly in cash for each crop. The provinces of Lahore, Multan, Ajmer, Delhi, Agra, Malwa, Allahabad and Awadh were divided into revenue circles, each with a separate schedule of cash revenue rates (*dastur-ul-amals*) for various crops...(These) sanctioned cash rates were to be applied year after year with such revision only as might be decreed by the administration in these rates from time to time'. On the basis of the sources of the period it was suggested by these historians that the *zabt* system was operational through the agency of a military cum bureaucratic system in the entire region from the Indus to Ghagra and state demand fluctuated between one third and half of the yield. A re-examination of the important contemporary sources on which the argument is based brings forth certain lacunae in the interpretation of the sources used by the historians. *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl contains revenue related information in a concise form. A detailed survey of field is not given. Therefore, on close scrutiny it appears that the system was not applied to all the territories uniformly. Scholars like Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam point out that towards the close of Akbar's reign many *subas* have no data on *arazi* (measured) land therefore in about 1600 about one third of land revenue collection under the Mughals was done by methods other than *zabt*. The subas where *zabt* was implemented were Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Multan. In 1600 in Malwa and Gujarat *zabt* was not adopted in totality or even on a large scale and was seldom practiced. In Ajmer too a large portion of land was with the chieftains who must have adopted methods other than measurement for revenue fixation. It appears from the above discussion that the analysis of the Mughal state as one based on uniform and unified administrative apparatus on the

basis of the compendium of revenue data of *Ain* is now being questioned by scholars. The studies on population, urbanization and external trade are all based on the interpretation of the concise data given in the *Ain* and therefore they too are being scrutinized afresh by scholars. The postulates of the Aligarh school are as follows :

- They lay stress on the period from Akbar to Aurangzeb (1556-1707). Akbar and Aurangzeb's reigns are given more importance and *Ain-i-Akbari* is regarded as the most reliable source. It is suggested that the Mughal institutions were established by Akbar, they continued to function under his successors but developed cracks in Aurangzeb's period. The pre-Akbar period and the post-Aurangzeb period are neglected in their historical writings.
- The state is regarded as an extremely centralized and bureaucratized system. This characterization is explained on the basis of the uniform revenue, *mansabdari/Jagirdari* and coinage system etc.
- State is portrayed as an 'insatiable leviathan' which levied taxes and appropriated revenue from the peasantry.
- The parasitic elite of the empire to a large extent consumed the surplus and did not use it for productive purpose by adopting scientific techniques.
- Ideology is regarded as insignificant for analysis of historical texts and attitude of various social groups especially the elite.
- Trade is considered relevant only in the context of providing imports for elite use. The flow of precious metals (bullion) through trade is regarded as a cause which brought about the price revolution or inflation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century which had a negative impact on the economy.
- 18<sup>th</sup> century is regarded as a period of anarchy and decline especially by Athar Ali and Irfan Habib. They feel that *jagirdari* crisis in Aurangzeb's reign led to peasant rebellions and anarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and inflation aggravated the crisis.

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

Studies on Mughal institutions have failed to focus on the continuities which existed between the structures laid down by the Afghans and the Mughals. If such a comparison is drawn it would be possible to delineate the similarities and contrast between the Afghan and the Mughal system. It is interesting to note that the Lodi Afghans believed in the concept of distribution of power and sharing of sovereignty. Bahlul Lodi in pursuance of the tribal ideas of egalitarianism treated his nobles or aristocracy as equals. However under Sikandar Lodi the loosely knit conglomeration of tribal chiefs was made subordinate to the authority of the king without antagonizing the nobles. This practice was pursued with greater rigor by Ibrahim Lodi who crushed the power of the nobles and tried to establish indivisible sovereignty, which would not disturb the unity of the empire. The social and tribal traditions based on fragmentation of authority and egalitarian clan and kin ties also initially influenced Afghan polity. However, these had to be set aside for establishing a strong state. The analysis of Afghan fiscal system by Moreland, Nurul Hasan and I.A. Khan suggests that the pioneering efforts in the sphere of fiscal and land revenue administration

were the contribution of Afghan rulers particularly Sher Shah. Reference to *rupiya* as a coin is initially found in Sher Shah's period (1538-45) and the *rai* (schedule of crop rates) prepared by Sher Shah was the harbinger of the Mughal revenue reforms. An important contemporary source material for Sher Shah's period is Abbas Khan Sarwani's *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi* written in Akbar's reign. The territories where *zabt* system prevailed in 1600 were those which had been in the possession of the Afghan leader Sher Shah and the newly annexed territories of Gujarat, Bengal, Berar and Khandesh continued with their separate revenue system. Another important contribution of Sher Shah was in the sphere of construction of roads. Sarwani points out '(Sher Shah) built road sarais (rest houses) which commenced from the fort that he had constructed in the Punjab and it ran upto the town of Sonargaon which lay situated on the edge of the Bay of Bengal (*dariya i-shor*). He built another road that ran from the city of Agra to Burhanpur on the borders of the Deccan. He made another road which ran from the city of Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor. He then built still another road with Sarais which ran from the city of Lahore to Multan. In all he built 1700 sarais on the roads which lay in various regions and in every sarai he built apartments for both Hindu and Muslims.' The sarais served as commercial centers and the road construction activity of Sher Shah played an important role in integrating the economy of Bengal with other parts in north India. The Afghans state under Sher Shah was created due to the availability of 'military labour market' in the 16<sup>th</sup> century India. Loose confederacies comprising of ethnic identities such as Rajput and Afghans were bound together in a complicated network of alliances which were necessary for rulers like Sher Shah and Humayun for state formation. The basis of Sher Shah's power was the peasant retainer who formed an important part of the armed contingents. Discipline, proper recruitment, branding of horses, regular pay and loyalty were the pillars of military power under Sher Shah. The seizure of power by Sher Shah is attributed to his army organization (consisting of various ethnic groups viz. Rajputs, *zamindars* and Afghans) and the subsequent consolidation of power under him was on account of the organization of the revenue resources of the territories under his control which provided a regular source of revenue for sustaining the empire. On the ideological level he kept himself at a distance from *ulema* and believed in heterodox eclecticism. Sher Shah's kingship was not based on horizontal alliances with Afghan chiefs and other groups but on a vertical hierarchical relationship between king and the loyal retainers. Treasures he had acquired as soldier/commander or otherwise also helped him in his political ambition.

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

- 1) Illuminationist theory (*Farr-i-izadi*) and the *Tauhid-i-ilahi* (kind of royal cult). These formed the crux of the Mughal theory of kingship and sovereignty.
- 2) This notion of sovereignty made it possible to deviate from the orthodox *shariat* principles and also to counter the orthodox *ulema*.

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

In Shah Jahan and Jahangir's period there was a shift in ideology and the 'divine faith' received a setback. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a Naqshbandi sufi saint, tried to promote Islamic revivalism in Jahangir's period. He believed that *Shariat* principles should be strictly followed. The Naqshbandi, Shattari, Chisti and other sufi sects

were resorting to Islamic revivalism and orthodoxy in the period of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Sufi ideology was permeated with orthodoxy and it tried to influence politics by enlisting nobles as disciples and encouraging Islamic revivalism.

Growth of fiscal system and expansion of trade was an important characteristic of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. An important development which took place in this period was the growth of the agency of bankers to remit revenue from the provinces to the centre and the integration into the economic system of the trade related and monetary aspects. The 17<sup>th</sup> century was also marked by the involvement of the nobility and the rulers in commerce and trade. Scholars like Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam are of the opinion that 'Shahjahan's trade was part of an implicit bullionist orientation in Mughal state policy in the period'. As the Dutch Company employee Gerard Pelgrom writes in 1655, 'Were the king not to constrain his subjects to go through with the said passage with force there would be few or perhaps even no traders to be found who would willingly risk their goods therewards, all merchants being made by his majesty by a certain order to send a specified number of packs (of textiles) perforce to Mokha, even though the king very well knows that the owners will thereby gain but little interest, trying by these means to keep his view on increasing the textiles that one made in Gujarat and Hindustan (where most of his subjects live) and by the same means to bring a considerable sum of Spanish reels and ducats into his realm, as he otherwise has no gold or silver mines, on account of which it is also deemed necessary that the Moors continue in this trade, for otherwise the artisans will be impoverished'. In the period of Jahangir and Shahjahan fiscal dispatches were conducted through the medium of bankers and *hundis* (bills of exchange). These were used for financial transfers although cash transfer (coin and bullion) by the imperial agents and armed bearers also continued to be practiced.

Many *dasturul amals* or the revenue documents which were used by historians as source material and evidence of the centralized character of the Mughal state are dated to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It needs to be emphasized that Shahjahan's and Aurangzeb's reigns are also noted for the efforts on the part of the imperial authority to bring more and more land under *khalisa*. Several changes were introduced in the time of Shahjahan in the sphere of *mansabdari*. We have already referred to the systemic postulate propounded by the Aligarh scholars who feel that the administrative system (agrarian structure, *mansab, jagirdari*) was initiated and made impeccable by Akbar but this has been questioned by other scholars. It seems that these administrative arrangements developed and grew in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and reflected to some extent a continuation of the earlier institutional arrangements and ceaselessly evolved into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore it is important to stress the evolutionary aspect with regard to the development of administrative structures. No single ruler can be credited for perfecting these institutions.

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

The increasing compilation of *dastur ul amals* in Shah Jahan's and Aurangzeb's period reflect the greater stress on formalism and emphasis on procedure and propriety with focus on measurement (by inspection and survey). The *Akhbarat* (news letters of the imperial court) were used as a medium to ensure the smooth communication between the centre and the provinces. Aurangzeb's official position is reflected in the



corpus of royal letters, orders and communication to his officials. The bulky corpus of views of Arabic legal experts contained in the *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* and the *farmans* issued to Muhammad Hashim and Rasikdas (Mughal officials) were a clear indication of Aurangzeb's efforts to delineate a definite legal procedure (based on Hanafite law) for the provinces or territories under the Mughals. The 'canonization' efforts of Aurangzeb might have contributed to the insurrections and revolts but the crisis which took a definite shape in the period of Aurangzeb was also a consequence of the problems confronting the economic and bureaucratic system and also reflected the desire of the local and the regional elements for a greater share in political power and greater autonomy (self determination). The nature of Mughal religio-legal scheme has to be analysed and the role of the *Qazi* and the other judicial officials in the settlement of religious and other types of discord have to be studied. *Sharia* served as a reference point (to some extent especially in judicial matters) in governance but it continued to be interpreted in accordance with the political needs.

R. P. Tripathi suggests that the Afghan polity and the Timurid polity were basically decentralized. The Mongol features inherent in the Timurid polity especially the decrees of Chingez Khan laid stress on division of sovereignty through division of tribes which encouraged creation of an appanage system. This did not allow the emergence of a bureaucratic system and a strong ruler which were the essential prerequisites of centralization. It is argued by scholars like I. A. Khan that Humayun had to contend with the power of the nobility and his brothers but Akbar was able to avoid this obstacle and adopted the practices of the Turkish rulers of 13-14<sup>th</sup> centuries and was able to establish a strong absolutist state. D. Strusand also accepts this view. However on the basis of recent evidence (Jean Aubin's work on Timur) it is suggested that the Timurid polity was transformed from a not so cohesive system to a tightly knit despotism. This is deduced on the basis of the belief that Timur based his empire on the combination of divine sanction and Chingez Khanid traditions. More emphasis was placed on divine aspect which gave legitimacy to despotism. Strusand contends that the Persian bureaucratic traditions were adopted by the Timurids which further disproves the decentralized contention of scholars. Sanjay Subrahmanyam suggests that it is important to study Mirza Hakim's (Akbar's half brother) position and the threat posed to Akbar by him. This would enable us to understand that succession always posed a problem, whether in Humayun or Akbar's case or in the time of Aurangzeb and after his death. Partition and appanaging was an issue in succession and the idea of 'linear succession' could not always be easily implemented. Scholars feel that partition and appanage formation tradition counters the centralization perspective.

Some scholars feel that the institutions which were established under Akbar, paved the way for centralization. However it is important to note that the *jagir* or *mansab* had their origin in the earlier periods (similar to the *wajah* of Lodis, *tuyul* of Babur and Humayun) and they represented an evolutionary institutional system and were not the creation of Akbar's genius. M. Hodgson's 'gun powder empires' proposition lays emphasis on the role of fire arms in the establishment of centralized empires like Mughal. Strusand regards the Mughal state as an admixture of Islamic (at the center) and Hindu (at the periphery) ideals. This view is quite close to Burton Stein's segmentary state theory. It is suggested that though it was centralized in Akbar's period, but in the post Akbar period, several factors viz. (crisis in *jagir* system) contributed to decentralization.

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



**Map 4: The Mughal Empire in 1601**

**Source :** An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, Irfan Habib

Contemporary Europeans like Dutch merchant Francisco Pelsaert (1595-1630) and French physician Francois Bernier (1620-1688) refer to the Mughal state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as having its own limitations. Bernier refers to the 'agrarian crisis' due to the problems in the *jagirdari* system. This view was adopted by W. H. Moreland and later M. Athar Ali and Irfan Habib. The non-existence of private property in land in this period is mentioned by Bernier. He divided the Mughal state vertically into two parts: the overarching super structures headed by the Mughal tyrant and the other part dominated by the native princes placed below the absolute Mughal sovereign. Recently scholars like Chetan Singh have tried to assess the Mughal state in the context of the various regions embodied in it. The study of regions enables us to understand their dynamics separately and helps us to understand the Mughal state not as a monolithic entity but as a variegated whole comprising of several regions which had their own peculiarities.

It would be reasonable to assume that the centralized perspective of the historians needs to be reassessed in the light of researches which have brought forth new ideas and perspectives on the basis of fresh evidence.

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## 10.5 DECLINE

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

'From these works it is possible to draw a diagram of tensions between monarch (padshah), military or service noble (mansabdar), landholder (zamindar) and peasant (raiyyat) which when maintained in equilibrium were creative of order and stability but which if allowed to pull free were creative of disorder and impotence. Such a free pull occurred when the Marathas as zamindars forcibly jerked against the bit of Mughal control and resisted domestication with the Mughal system. The efforts of the Mughals to muster the resources in revenue and men to overcome the Marathas led to strains within the nobility and insupportable pressures upon both zamindar and peasant who if they did not revolt actively at least resisted the Mughal revenue collector passively. A combination of over lavish appointments by the emperor and the military success of the Marathas created a shortage of assignments (jagirs) of areas of land productive of income for the nobles. Thus resources wherewith to support the military contingents which were the condition of receiving appointments were rendered inadequate. Consequently the number and effectiveness of the Mughal forces fell off and the Mughal military machine (which was essentially an instrument for the internal military occupation of India) became progressively incapable of controlling the autochthonous military and rural aristocracy (the zamindars of various degrees) of the subcontinent'.

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

J.F. Richards is of the opinion that due to the extension of *khalisa* the land to be assigned in *jagir* decreased. However he feels that this problem could have been overcome by consolidating the southern frontier of the empire. He also argues that Aurangzeb did not provide backing to or promote the Hindu warrior aristocracy in the Deccan (Maratha, Gond, Bedar or Telegu chiefs). Earlier traditional interpretations of decline gave a central place to Aurangzeb's policies (bigotry) which were regarded as a reversal of Akbar's endeavours. Peter Hardy summarises the arguments of Richards and Pearson as follows: 'the progressive inability of the dynasty to assure its agents a competence if not wealth to control the terms of service by those agents and to control the manner in which the elite extracted the resources of the empire from the producer so that in the end the dynasty was unable to withstand the Marathas, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali'. Hardy suggests that this problem could have been countered and solved by adopting the model of "Weberian bureaucracy" which entailed the principles of direct administration and cash payments. The other factors responsible for weakening the military cum administrative edifice was the difference between estimated revenue (*jama*) and revenue actually collected (*hasil*) and therefore the inability of the mansabdars to sustain and support the requisite armed contingents. (The *mansabdars* were supposed to maintain the specified troops on the basis of the estimates of revenue (*jama*). However in actual practice the *hasil* or actual realisation was much less.) The economic and administrative crisis posited by the Aligarh school is acceptable to Pearson and Richards also. This postulate is based on inferences arrived at after a detailed study of the writings of contemporary writers viz. Abul Fazl, Mamuri, Bhim Sen and Khafi Khan.

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

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

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## 10.6 SUMMARY

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

### State in Medieval Times

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

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## 10.7 EXERCISES

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- 1) Analyse the important features of the Mughal theory of sovereignty.
- 2) Explain the nature of the Mughal state giving references to the views of different historians.

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## UNIT 11 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SUCCESSOR STATES

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18th Century Successor  
States

### Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 18<sup>th</sup> Century Debate
- 11.3 Bengal
- 11.4 Hyderabad
- 11.5 Awadh
- 11.6 Summary
- 11.7 Exercises

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### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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The 18<sup>th</sup> century has been a subject of historical debate among scholars. It represents a phase of transition between medieval and modern periods. The decline of Mughal power in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the rise of autonomous states in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier the historians regarded this period as crisis torn but recent researches have tried to study 18<sup>th</sup> century states as separate entities possessing elements of dynamism and growth.

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### 11.2 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DEBATE

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It is important to study the 18<sup>th</sup> century debate among scholars for understanding the nature of successor states which emerged in this period. 18<sup>th</sup> century has been largely analysed in the context of the Mughal empire. However, recent writings focus on 18<sup>th</sup> century as an epoch in which certain trends emerged which were not wholly governed by the presence of Mughal empire. Therefore, an attempt is being made to study 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period in which many positive features existed thus demolishing the 'bleak-century' postulate. This phase represents a transitional era between the medieval and modern period. The earliest interpretation of 18<sup>th</sup> century is contained in Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar's *History of Bengal Vol. II* and *The Fall of Mughal Empire Volum IV* in which the 18<sup>th</sup> century was categorized into pre-British period and the British period. He subscribes to the dark age postulate of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Historians like Athar Ali refers to the rise of successor states in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but feel that these should be analysed within the frame work of Mughal decline. Hermann Goetz in his lecture on the crisis of Indian Civilization in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century laid emphasis on the cultural development in India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was a marked departure from the 'overall decay' theory of 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, deviating from these approaches recently historians have tried to analyse the successor states and emergence of new states in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These comprised of Awadh, Hyderabad, Bengal, Mysore, Marathas, Sikhs etc. These polities are analysed as preparing the ground for the metamorphosis from the Mughal imperial system to the British system. The 18<sup>th</sup> century polities should also be seen in the context of continuity with the Mughal political system and also changes introduced to suit the new political situation. Thus the 18<sup>th</sup> century reflected the political transformation from Mughal decline to British colonialism but the socio economic forces at the local level continued to operate as before but the local groups shifted their political allegiance. With the decline of Mughal empire the virtually independent zamindars performed the task of collection of revenue and the local rulers used these resources for sustaining court and armies. This income also penetrated into towns and urban centers which thrived continually. Several types of political formations emerged in this period ranging from successor states to zamindaris which later got absorbed into the category of Princely states under the British.



However, the early British writers of Indian history (Elliot, Haig etc.) painted the 18<sup>th</sup> century in dismal colour since they wished to demonstrate that their predecessors were incompetent. The contemporary Persian works also portrayed the period as anarchic. The Persian writers were patronized by the nobles and with the decline of the Mughal empire their position was adversely affected. The contemporary historians were either lower officials or 'prebendaries'. However, some of them like Ghulam Husain Tabatabai in Bengal who wrote *Siyar ul Mutakhhirin* or Shah Nawab Khan in Hyderabad who authored *Maasir ul Umara* or Ghulam Husain Salim of Bengal the writer of *Riyaz us Salatin* documented for the purpose of instructing the British officials and laboured under British auspices. This was a part of the broader project of recording colonial knowledge. The erosion of the traditional power and the adversity and the reversals which the older regime suffered were mirrored in these works. Recently scholars like M. Alam suggest that the 18<sup>th</sup> century was caught between the grandeur of the Mughals and the indignity of colonial rule.

The author of *Maasir ul Umara* writes: "That Nadir Shah's invasion resulted in a setback to the prosperity of Delhi, but in a short while it returned to normal and in fact in every thing it is now better and shows progress...its industries and manufacturers are flourishing." The Urdu *Shahr Ashobs* (Ruined cities) of the contemporary poets Mir and Sauda have been analysed by Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam. The poets lament the destruction of Delhi and Agra and the degeneration of the ethics and principles. The *Ashob-I-Zamana* of Jafar Zatalli written in 18<sup>th</sup> century refers to the decay of a pattern of life and setback to a group of people (umara) who gave protection to creative classes (poets, writers) and gains of the 'lower' categories (weavers, butchers etc.) from the changed social milieu. It seems that the British historians of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were not guided by any bias or prejudice towards the Muslim rulers of the previous regime. Col. A. Dow and Col. Kirkpatrick the historians cum officials (in Lucknow and Hyderabad) of 18<sup>th</sup> century represent the above mentioned category. Dow in his *History of Hindustan* refers to company rule as mercantile misrule and desired the reverting back to Mughal practices. Dow's glorification of Akbar made Warren Hastings to order the publication of Francis Gladwin's pioneering English translation of *Ain-i-Akbari* or the institutes of Akbar. Kirkpatrick believed that Mughal rule was based on a variegated set of laws and customary traditions which found favour with Lord Cornwallis too. The concept of Mughal maladministration was propounded by British officials of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century viz. Sir Henry Miers Elliott in his *Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohammadan India*. This view point was carried further by British as well as Indian historians like Sir Wolseley Haig, Sir Jadurath Sarkar and Dr. R. C. Majumdar.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar propounded a dark age postulate of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which has been refuted and challenged by scholars like Athar Ali, Satish Chandra and Muzaffar Alam. It is based on an untenable premise focusing on degeneration which eroded the political organization which was a consequence of incompetent kings and nobles and their extravagant lifestyles. The 20<sup>th</sup> century ideology of polity also influenced the perceptions of writers of this period who regarded a centralist system as imparting stability as opposed to the regional or local assertion of authority and power which brought about destabilization.

Athar Ali's fresh interpretation of Mughal decline in an article in the *Modern Asian Studies*, provided new insights into the understanding of the problem of degeneration of Mughal empire and the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The focal point shifted from the study of personalities held responsible for the catastrophe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the analysis and evaluation of the administrative structures of Mughal empire. He tried to understand the decay of Mughal power in the wider context of socio-economic and political vibrance in North western Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and regarded the decline as a form of cultural degeneration.

Satish Chandra is skeptical regarding economic deterioration in the *riyasats* or successor states, which emerged in the form of political formations from the erstwhile Mughal system and were later integrated into the British colonial system. He refers to them as possessing a vibrant political ethos. Muzaffar Alam's work suggests "that in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Indo-Gangetic *subas* of the North, from Allahabad to Lucknow and Multan to be precise, experienced multivariate manifestations of crisis rather than a positive linearity of decline." He regards Awadh as being a picture of progressive activities with scope for emergence of a regional political system but in the Punjab suba he finds few indications, which testify to modifications in the Mughal system in the sphere of polity and economic growth.

Athar Ali adopts J. N. Sarkar's periodization paradigm with regard to establishment of British colonialism and places it at the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Barun De in his presidential address to the Indian History Congress in 1989 tries to unentangle the complicated web of historical perceptions regarding 18<sup>th</sup> century. He points out "Prof. Athar Ali identifies transition with the collapse of Mughal empire and then with the apparent chronological gap in which transitional regimes intervened (with) the rise of British power." Athar Ali puts the 18<sup>th</sup> century polities in the middle phase of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Satish Chandra studies the 18<sup>th</sup> century in totality placed between the indigenous and exogenous imperialism represented by Mughal and British respectively. Therefore, the 18<sup>th</sup> century regimes are studied in the context of their continuity with earlier regime and the changes subsequently introduced and their final subordination by the British system.

Sarkar's understanding of 18<sup>th</sup> century is clearly reflected in the following paragraphs from *History of Bengal* (Dacca University) *Vol II*: "On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1757, the middle ages of India ended and her modern age began. When Clive struck at the Nawab, Mughal civilization had become a spent bullet. Its potency for good, its very life was gone. The country's administration had become hopelessly dishonest and inefficient and the mass of the people had been reduced to the deepest poverty, ignorance and moral degradation by a small selfish, proud and unworthy ruling class. Imbecile lechers filled the throne.... the army was rotten and honeycombed with treason. The purity of domestic life was threatened by the debauchery fashionable in the Court and the aristocracy.... Religion had become the handmaid of vice and folly.

On such a hopelessly decadent society, the rational progressive spirit of Empire struck with resistless force. First of all an honest and efficient administration had to be imposed on the country and directed by the English if only for the sake of the internal peace on which their trade depended and the revenue by which the necessary defense force could be maintained.... In the space of less than one generation in the twenty years from Plassey to Warren Hastings (1757-1776) the land began to recover from the blight of man's handiwork and political life, all felt the revivifying touch of the new impetus from the west. The dry bones of a stationary oriental society began to stir, at first faintly under the wand of a heaven sent magician."

Satish Chandra produced his magnum opus '*Parties and Politics at the Mughal court 1707-1739*' in 1959. According to him the end of Aurangzeb's reign represented the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century and this late medieval period was marked by transition brought about by the break down of the Mughal imperial system. He analysed the disruption of the socio-political system as follows: "social problems which no mere devices for expanding cultivation could solve .... What was really required was the rapid expansion of industry and trade based on the introduction of new technology and the removal of old barriers hindering that expansion.... the existing social order encompassed trade and industry in too narrow a sphere. Hence a basic improvement in the situation was beyond the competence of any one king."

In a number of articles published in the next twenty years, Satish Chandra laid stress on the inability of the ruling class to find new avenues when the tripolar relationship between the center, the zamindars and the Khudkasht (resident cultivator who cultivates with his plough and bullock) was under stress. In 1982 the earlier view held by Satish Chandra which regarded the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a dead end was modified by him. He was now receptive to the idea of the Western Scholars (Sociologists and Indologists) that the 18<sup>th</sup> century was teeming with opportunities and though the old system was tottering but the possibility of growth existed for worthy people.

Another important work was written by Irfan Habib titled *'The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707'*. Habib refers to the Maratha "plundering and warfare" activities which he thought were responsible for ravaging the countryside and causing ruination of the peasantry. He cited Aurangzeb's letters as evidence of the Maratha pillaging in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: "there is no province or district where the infidels have not raised a tumult and since they are not chastised they have established themselves everywhere. Most of the country has been rendered desolate and if any place is inhabited the peasants have probably come to terms with the 'robbers' ashqiya, official Mughal name for the Marathas. According to Habib "... the Mughal empire had been its own gravedigger." The crisis in the agrarian economy was reflected in the peasant rebellions which took place frequently and led to the collapse of the imperial system. Habib is of the opinion that the political forces which emerged subsequently on the debris of Mughal empire represented "reckless rapine, anarchy and foreign conquest." The state's appropriation of the agricultural surplus was based on oppressive practices since those who subsisted on peasant's produce continued to increase the demand and a large part was utilized by the parasitic ruling class in urban areas for extravagant purposes but there was no corresponding increase in the agrarian production which resulted in agrarian distress.

Satish Chandra and I. Habib characterized the Mughal ruling elite as possessing a narrow class disposition. They feel that it was not broad-based. The absolutist character of the state is reflected in the authority of the racially and hierarchically organized ruling class. Barun De opines that "...medieval imperialism.... of the Mughals in South Asia .... was more sterile like the despotism of Bourbons....finally replaced by an equally authoritarian and absolutist colonial imperialism." Therefore 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of transition anterior to the modern period. Periodisation presents a complex problem. Should 1707 marking Aurangzeb's death be regarded as the beginning of modern period? Or should the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century be merely regarded as a period of transformation till the beginnings of the British colonialism in 1757?

Athar Ali is known for his writings on administrative history of Mughal India. He too like I. Habib and S. Chandra lays emphasis on economic factors which caused the weakening of the Mughal state edifice and paved the way for the establishment of colonial rule. The Mughal imperial structure is considered by Athar Ali as analogous to a pan-Indian structure though peripheral (marginal) areas such as Kerala, Dakshin Kanara, Madura Nayakdom in Southern Tamil Nadu, North East fell outside the pale of Mughal hegemony. They were later absorbed into the colonial state. 1700 onwards impediments and obstacles (peasant revolts, parasitical urban populace) hindered economic growth, which was considerably stifled. Therefore for many scholars (Athar Ali, I. Habib) the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century was crisis torn. The reasoning offered by these historians was in contrast to the exaggerated account of J. N. Sarkar depicting 18<sup>th</sup> century as a dark age.

Athar Ali mentions three categories of state formations in 18<sup>th</sup> century India:

- 1) Successor states like Hyderabad, Awadh and Bengal which were part of the Mughal empire and emerged due to the disintegration of Mughal empire. Their administrative structure was a continuation of the Mughal model.

- 2) The Maratha confederacy, Jats, Sikhs and Afghans rose to power as a consequence of the crisis which had weakened the Mughal imperial structure.
- 3) South Indian state of Mysore under Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sultan.

Athar Ali describes the distinction between the successor states and other states especially Maratha thus “while they might use certain Mughal administrative institutions for their own purposes their model of government was by and large antithetical to the empire and could not be reconciled with it.” Though the Aligarh school regards the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period of crisis on account of Mughal decline and emergence of colonialism but this argument is replete with many loopholes. The focus of Mughal empire as representing pan-Indian aspirations and neglect of the peripheral polities is unwarranted. The centralization aspect of Mughal Empire is equated with stability and growth to the extent that the regional polities, which emerged with the decline of Mughal empire are regarded as anarchical. This proposition of the Aligarh school has been challenged in many writings recently (Cohn, Wink etc.)

In the 1983 Calcutta Deushkar Lectures Satish Chandra was able to discover possibilities for economic growth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He refers to the elasticity and adaptability especially in the sphere of cloth production, long distance trade, *dadni* (term of agreement for providing means for production to artisans), cash crop, insurance, banking and other categories of rural fiscal mechanisms which led to the emergence of *sahukari* class to a position of economic and social prominence. He referred to the categorization (of rural society into two groups – the *riyasati* or privileged and the *raiya* or others) The *riyasati* class was the rural aristocracy comprising of the upper strata, the customary holders (*malik*) of village lands (*khud kashta*) and those who held official positions at the village level. These constituted the core of the rural gentry (elite) and they played an important role in the new state structures which emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Satish Chandra suggests that “there were greater possibilities for upward social mobility for the rural privileged sector than in the earlier period but within the broad framework of feudal society”. He finally infers that “the 18<sup>th</sup> century was thus pregnant with possibilities.... The old mould was cracking and there was a possibility of growth in various areas. Everywhere capable, ambitious people were pushing forward. What was lacking was direction.”

Bernard S. Cohn in his important article, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, titled “Political systems in 18<sup>th</sup> century India: the Banaras Region” deviates from the earlier position of scholars who analyse the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the context of the crisis which developed in the Mughal administrative and economic system. He attempted to study the political system which developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century especially the micro system i.e. the Banaras zamindari as an autonomous domain under the *Nawab* of Awadh which was finally subordinated to the control of British East India Company. Cohn did not contest the proposition of the pan-Indian imperial structure which developed cracks. His originality lay in the attempt to find resilience in the political configurations and the process of building up of power and dominance in the society of that period. He followed the systems approach. According to this approach political structures comprise of not only the centralized states, which lie at the pinnacle of the graded and hierarchical system, but also consist of clan dominated villages, bands, groups, associations etc. at the local and community level. The latter too played an important role in the policymaking and implementation. Cohn argued that political control in pre-modern times was organized along vertical lines (hierarchical). The dominance of the hierarchically superior powers was sustained through antagonism among the different categories in society. Although state power was legitimized through traditions, rituals etc. but it could be maintained only through rivalry and balance among the various groups in society. On this premise Cohn was able to formulate four types of political systems in pre-modern India: 1. Imperial 2. Secondary 3. Regional 4. local. The Mughal power represented the imperial category



with an all embracing umbrella system. Successor states which emerged as a consequence of the decline of Mughal power are regarded as secondary states. Regional category comprises of petty rulers who owe allegiance to the superior (imperial) power and who are often engaged in internecine conflict among themselves. The local category were the kin-based groups, local leaders, chiefs or adventurers who were accountable to the secondary level power.

Cohn studied the micro-level polity of the Mughal successor state, Awadh especially, the Banaras Raja's position vis a vis the Nawab of Awadh and the Rajput *biradaris* at the *taluka* and *tappa* level were analysed. Earlier the political changes which took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century have been explained as a transition from one empire to another or in the context of agrarian or economic crisis. However, Cohn's system approach and the conflict and consensus paradigm inherent in it offer a different explanation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century state formation. Herman Goetz (*The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century*) was the first scholar to deduce positive features in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and he felt that the 18<sup>th</sup> century ought to be studied as separate entity and though it was a period of decline in the political and moral sphere but this period was marked by an aesthetic sensitivity and contributed to the growth of cultural development in India.

Satish Chandra refers to the decline of empires in Asia when the nations states got strengthened in western Europe and modern science and technology gave rise to Industrial Revolution. These ideas had been explored by Marshall Hodgson and Athar Ali earlier. Satish Chandra emphasizes that the political decline manifested itself in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. He points out that in most of the areas there was no sharp fall in agricultural production, land revenue demand did not decrease, agricultural distress was much less as compared to British rule. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the weakening of the power of the regional and local elites in the face of British challenge the economy was marked by destabilization as a consequence of British policies. It is a significant point referred to by Satish Chandra that in the *Riyasati* politics a negative feature emerged in the form of the emergence of large *zamindars* or *talluqdaris* which tried to thrive on the labour of small landholders and *khudkashta* peasants. In this sense the Mughal tripolar balance between the *jagirdar*, *zamindar* and the peasants was replaced by a more exploitative system.

An important point which has been raised by scholars is that the polities which emerged as successors to Mughals or as an outcome of challenge to the Mughal imperial power could not survive for long. It is necessary to analyse the state systems of these polities to understand why they were not able to withstand the British onslaught. Another pertinent issue is the fact that most of the historians till 1970 perceived the 18<sup>th</sup> century as merely an interregnum or a period of transition which marked the fall of Mughals and the rise of British. The 18<sup>th</sup> century has not been studied in terms of changes in the economy and society of the polities of the different regions or localities. However, even the studies which have been undertaken from this perspective by Cohn, etc. are not able to rid themselves of the imperial paradigm.

One of the earliest interpretation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a dark age propounded by historians like Jadunath Sarkar has been seriously questioned by later scholars. Instead of attributing Mughal decline to personalities of rulers, scholars like Irfan Habib, Athar Ali and Satish Chandra try to analyse it in the context of the crisis in the Mughal administrative system. However all these historians perceived the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period of crisis though J. N. Sarkar exaggerated it to the extent of analyzing it as a dark age. J. N. Sarkar emphasizes on personalities of rulers and characterizes the period as crisis torn, whereas Irfan Habib, Athar Ali and S. Chandra lay emphasis on the economic crisis. Herman Goetz was the first scholar who saw positive traits in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He analysed it as a period of cultural achievements. Recently S. Chandra and various other historians (C.A. Bayly, Frank Perlin, Andre Wink etc.) have tried to assess the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period which was replete with opportunities



for growth. Some scholars like Muzaffar Alam, Chetan Singh and others have tried to study various regions of Mughal Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and point out that new political alignments developed as a result of the decline of Mughal power which did not necessarily in all regions imply chaos. On the basis of the evidence from the various regions analysed by scholars the nature of 18<sup>th</sup> century is recently being reassessed.

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### 11.3 BENGAL

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The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 was marked by the decay of Mughal Empire especially the central power in Delhi. This was followed by the emergence of successor states which represented the *subas* of Mughal Empire. Let us examine whether the provinces were undergoing a phase of decay or decline.

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

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the weakening of the central government the provincial government in Bengal also underwent transformation. The power of the *mansabdars* in Bengal weakened and the size of imperial contingents was reduced. The *mansabdars* found it difficult to send remittances to Delhi due to the declining military capabilities. Now a new phenomenon emerged in the form of an alliance between the representatives of Mughal power in the province (*Subedar, Diwan*) and the *zamindars*. This collaboration later incorporated the commercial and the financial groups in Bengal. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Aurangzeb was confronted with the Maratha problem. He needed to mobilize resources for meeting the Maratha challenge. Irfan Habib in his *Agrarian System of Mughal India* points out that in comparison to the 1580 the revenue demand did not increase much in Bengal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although in other provinces of northern India the increase was higher as compared to Bengal. Due to devaluation of silver coinage (influx of metal due to European traders) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century agricultural prices soared but correspondingly the *jama* did not increase in Bengal.

Bengal in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was quite prosperous. Evidence shows that on account of extension of cultivation, growth of trade and influx of silver the province of Bengal was economically quite stable. We have pointed out that inspite of economic prosperity the revenue demand in Bengal did not increase. The evidence of the administrative document (*Risala-i-Ziraat*, written in about 1760) informs us that the revenue demand had continued to be the same since Akbar's period and it had not been subject to revision on the basis of actual measurement. The officials responsible for revenue collection i.e. the *mansabdars* who possessed *jagirs*, the *zamindars* and other intermediate groups (collectors) remitted the revenue to the center in accordance with the official rate of demand whereas the actual collection was much higher. Therefore the *mansabdars*, *zamindars* etc. were amassing huge amounts at the cost of the centre. Hardpressed for funds to finance wars against the Marathas Aurangzeb decided to streamline the revenue administration in Bengal since its *jama* was low and it remitted only a small sum to the central treasury. Therefore in 1700 he sent

Murshid Quli Khan from the Deccan to Bengal as *Diwan*. He had earlier demonstrated his skill in revenue administration in the Deccan. In Bengal he proved to be an adept revenue administrator who was initially appointed as *Diwan* but later combined the office of *Diwan* and *Nazim*. His revenue reforms prepared the ground for increase in *jama* (estimated revenue) and *hasil* (revenue collected) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bengal.

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

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

Although surveys and investigations were conducted by the *Nazim* through his officials to get information about the revenue paid by the *zamindars* but it seems that these could not have been done at the village level as mentioned in the contemporary evidence (chronicles) and the efforts of the provincial government were directed to make the *zamindars* and the lower intermediate landholders accountable for proper revenue assessment and collection. *Zamindari sanads* (documents relating to revenue records) refer to assessment only upto *zamindari* level and not village level. Thus, the *Nazim's* policies were aimed to control the *zamindar* and the lower intermediate land holders and affected the peasants only indirectly. In such a situation a *zamindar* who was not able to pay the state demand was deprived of his holding and it was either taken over by the government or money lender or given to a capable and loyal *zamindar* who would be able to fulfill the government's demand.

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

The *Risala-i-ziraat* refers to the *mahajans* who gave money to the *zamindars* as loan for making revenue payments to the *Nazim*. In many cases the *zamindars* got into the debt cycle especially since the *Nazim* was stern and strict in dealing with defaulters (*zamindars*). The banking house of Jagat Seth benefited immensely due to the revenue policies of the *Nazim*. They were able to establish a big and powerful banking house and became the custodians of the fiscal transactions of the provincial government by the 1730s due to the support of the *Nazim*. They provided loans to *zamindars* who were defaulters in payment of revenue and on these loans they charged interest and thus made huge profits. They also provided surety on behalf of the big *zamindars* to the government that the revenues would be paid in time irrespective of the actual collection and financial situation. A hierarchically stratified landholding system existed with big *zamindars* at the top and smaller at the bottom. Similarly in the case of moneylenders, there were small moneylenders catering to small *zamindars* and bigger ones catering to bigger *zamindars*.

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

Murshid Quli was able to establish a firm foothold in Bengal. He was interested in handing over the *Nizamat* which he had created to someone in his family. This was the first manifestation of the autonomy gained by Bengal since the centre had little real role to play in the important provincial appointments henceforth.

During the period of Shujauddin (son-in-law of Murshid), the successor of Murshid Quli the bond between the centre and the province was further undermined. Although he did not possess his father-in-law's acumen, but he was an efficient administrator and imperial revenues continued to be transmitted to Delhi in his period. The fact that Bengal now relied mainly on its own resources (mobilizing troops) for maintenance of law and order meant that he had to seek the support of *zamindars*, bankers and local militia in Bengal. The military support from the center could not be sought (due to the decline of *jagirs* and removal of *mansabdars*) in the context of independent policies pursued by the *Nazim*. Shujauddin initiated measures to win the loyalty of *zamindars* and bankers. The *zamindars* who had been defaulters earlier and had been punished by Murshid Quli were pardoned and an advisory council was established which had as its member Jagat Seth Fateh Chand. Shujauddin tried to secure his position by sending huge amounts to Delhi.

Thus in the 1730s the provincial administration in Bengal was carried out through the cooperation between *Nazim*, *zamindars* and bankers. This was not in accordance with the Mughal system. Thus it seems that the administrative link between the centre and province had been loosened and it was on the verge of being cut. Under Shujauddin taxes (*abwabs*) were imposed on the basis of the prevailing *jama* as a fixed percentage. It seems that a comprehensive assessment below the *zamindari* level (pargana level) was not carried out. During Murshid Quli's period surveys of *zamindaris* had been conducted to get information about the productivity and efforts were made to arrive at assessment, which was based on field investigations. In Shujauddin's period this policy was given up and therefore we find that revenue records of the period after Murshid Quli till 1757 were fewer and less comprehensive.

The emergence of big *zamindars* in Murshid Quli's time enabled the provincial government to increase the *jama* and *hasil*. In the subsequent period (Shujauddin's)

these *zamindaris* posed a problem. Murshid Quli being a stern administrator was able to control the big *zamindars* but his successor was not able to put a check on the growing power of the big *zamindars*. The imposition of *abwabs* further aggravated the problem as it led to peasant distress. The *zamindars* however continued to benefit. In the 1730s the banker and the *zamindar* category emerged powerful vis a vis *Nazim*. In 1739 the *Nazim* Sarfaraz Khan was removed due to the connivance of the Jagat Seth and the *zamindars* who installed a military commander Alivardi Khan as *Nazim*. Thus the coup of 1739 marks a new phase in the history of the province of Bengal. It shows the complete alienation of the province from the centre which was now virtually being controlled by *zamindars*, bankers and the ambitious military men. Alivardi was raised to the position of *Nazim* on the pretext that Sarfaraz was inefficient and Alivardi would provide better governance to the province.

Thus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a province of Mughal empire, Bengal was able to move on the path of autonomy. But independent Bengal did not witness a crisis in administration but a transformation of the Mughal pattern and many new features were introduced in its political system, which have been discussed at length in the Unit on administrative and institutional structures in Block 6.

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## 11.4 HYDERABAD

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As a Mughal province of the Deccan, Hyderabad in the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed frequent transfers of the officials which were at times a consequence of the political activities at the Delhi court. Rivalries and hostilities at the imperial court had the impact on the appointments and postings of officials at Hyderabad. The emergence of Marathas in the western Deccan as a major contender for power further aggravated the problem. In this situation Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah I strengthened his power in the Deccan and gained autonomy for the province in 1724. His initial appointment as *Subedar* took place in 1713. He was summoned to Delhi by the Mughal Emperor many times between 1719 to 1737. In 1719 he was called upon to confront the Marathas, in 1722 he was made *Wazir* of the Empire and in 1737 he was deputed to fight the Marathas and was again made *Wazir*. He came back to the Deccan as *Subahdar* in 1719 and in 1724 by forcing the Emperor to grant him the governorship. The year 1724, was a landmark since he was able to establish his superiority over the entrenched Mughal *subedar*. By 1740 the position of the *Nizam* was secure in the Deccan. He made appointments and also removed officials without reference to the imperial court. This was a sign of independence acquired by Hyderabad under the *Nizam*.

The *Nizam* maintained merely a pretension of allegiance to the Mughal emperor. Karen Leonard points out “Nizam-ul-mulk conducted war, made treaties and conferred titles and *mansab* appointments himself.” The *mansabdars* appointed by the *Nizam* were known as ‘Asafia’ *mansabdars* to maintain the distinction with the ‘Padshahi’ *mansabdars* appointed by the Mughal Emperor. In this period the symbols of imperial authority which illustrated the subordination of the province to the Mughal Emperor were replaced. The ‘Padshahi Diwan’ whose function was to confirm the land grants and supervise the revenue assessment and collection ceased to exist. Certain practices which served as the basis of link and bond between the centre and the province and which also emphasized the subordination of the province to the centre were discontinued. Gestures such as gifts to Mughal Emperor, festivities related to regnal year and ceremonies observed when *farmans* were received were practiced comparatively to a lesser degree. Although for practical purposes the *Nizam* had emerged as an independent ruler but he continued to rely on the outward manifestations of owing nominal or symbolic allegiance to Mughal power through mentioning the Emperor’s name in the *Khutbah*, inscribing his name on the coins, and procuring his orders (*farmans*) for imparting legitimacy to the appointments.



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

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

The *Nizam* and the nobles in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the strength of the revenues from the *jagirs* could support a large administrative, military and household apparatus. The nobles gave employment in their personal capacity in the form of administrative appointments or made cash payments for services rendered. They could also procure positions for their clients in the *Nizam's* estate. The Noble's position was reflected through the patronage extended by him to various clients, relatives, employees, artisans, poets, etc. These patron-client ties were not based on clan considerations but rested on individual relationships. The *vakils* or intermediaries played an important role in the Hyderabad political system. The nobility maintained its ties with the *Nizam* through the *vakils* who performed the role of diplomatic agents of the noble and all kinds of exchanges and transactions (official, personal, ceremonial) were conducted through them.

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

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

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



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

The categories comprising of the nobles, *vakils*, military and financial groups played an important role in the political set up in Hyderabad. The nobles exercised power on account of their military capability and diplomatic acumen. The external *vakils* also played an important role as agents of other local powers and they together with the local *vakils* also performed the function of patrons. The civil administration was not centralized. Power was dispersed since the administrative offices were largely hereditary which accounted for the fragmented nature of the polity. The most important feature of the administrative system was the emergence of specialized hereditary offices related to record keeping. They played an important part in Hyderabad state under the *Nizam*. The administrative system though derived from the Mughal pattern was strikingly different in many ways. The most noticeable difference was with regard to the maintenance of financial records and land revenue administration. The *Nizam* as *subedar* of the Deccan was the supreme authority in the state. The next important officer was the *diwan* appointed by the *Nizam*. His function was to look after the administration of revenue, to conduct diplomatic relations and to appoint *talukdars* (revenue contractors). Another important functionary in the administrative hierarchy was the *daftardar* (record keeper). This office was hereditary and though the *diwan* was the head of the matters related to revenue administration but in Hyderabad real power of supervision of finances was vested with the *daftardar*. The two offices: *Daftar-i-diwan* and *Daftar-i-mal* were created in Hyderabad around 1760. The officers were responsible for record keeping in various areas and their jurisdiction was divided region wise viz. Marathwara region, Telingana region etc. The task of record keeping entailed the work of maintaining statistics related to income and expenditure. They performed the role of registering the revenue assignments viz. *jagir*, *inam* and grant of *mansab* rank. The important appointment orders viz. those of *talukdar* were formally issued by this office. Though the officers associated with these offices were subordinate to the *diwan* but in practice they subverted the power and position of the *diwan*.

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

Under the Mughals revenue farming was deliberately avoided since it was not considered a proper method of revenue collection though it came to be extensively practiced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In Hyderabad direct control of the centre over the *parganas* and villages could not be established. The *talukdars* were not subordinate to the centre and functioned according to the terms of the contract. At the *pargana* level the hereditary intermediaries (*deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*) negotiated with the *talukdars* as representatives of the local village officials.

The *mansab* and *jagir* system in Hyderabad also differed from the Mughal pattern. The composition of the nobility in Hyderabad was also at variance from the organisation of the nobility under the Mughals. In Hyderabad *mansabs* (ranks) represented merely a ceremonial and military honour whereas in the Mughal system the *zat mansab* determined status of the noble. In Hyderabad the category of noble was characterized as possessing hereditary *jagirs*. However, the most important feature of the nobility was its hereditary character (especially of the jobs) i.e. administrative or military positions held and the personal relations with the *Nizam*.

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## 11.5 AWADH

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

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

Through an analysis of the Persian sources we find reference to *zamindar* or rural resistance, which was a consequence of their desire to obtain a share in power and authority. They tried to organize armed resistance against the central power by mustering their clan and kin support. The rebellions were mainly planned and executed by the big and strong *zamindars*. These insurrections could be quelled by the Mughal officials through playing one group against the other or appeasement of these powerful local groups. At times these uprisings were not directly aimed at the imperial power but sought to enhance the power of the local groups through acts of defiance. However they did succeed in weakening the central power. In this situation, the bond which existed between the emperor and the local groups and provincial officials began to weaken. The nobles and officials at the provincial level relied less on the Emperor and more on the nobles at the court for dealing with the problems at the provincial level. This paved the way for the emergence of the new *subedari* in Awadh. To deal with the local situation several measures were adopted such as creation of loyal *zamindars* and *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan*. The practice of *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* undermined the imperial power since they were a deviation from the classical Mughal *jagir* system. The power of the provincial officials was strengthened and the foundation of the autonomous state was laid.

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

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

The failure of the local groups to unite against the Mughals enabled the provincial governor to mobilize those groups to his own advantage and emerge as an autonomous power in the region. The independent region of Awadh continued to pay allegiance to Mughal Emperor for a long period of time. The Mughal institutions continued but were transformed to suit the local purpose. In Awadh the new *subedari* emerged on the basis of new alignment with the *zamindars* and *jagirdars*. During the Nawabi period the office of the governor was confined to the family of the Nawab and it was called the *suba-i-mulki* (home province) of the governor. The symbolic link with the imperial power was not broken and the *subedars* maintained their connections with the nobles at the court.

A pertinent point to be noted is that inspite of autonomous ambitions the provincial governor continued to pay allegiance to the Mughal imperial power. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century though the central power was weakened but the realignment with the groups in the region was made possible within the Mughal institutional system. Though the central power was waning but it was not possible for regions to break their ties totally with the centre. The regions were linked to each other and depended on each other for trade and money transactions. Decentralisation did not imply that the political powers which emerged as autonomous in the regions were in a position to command the loyalty and support which the Mughals enjoyed. They needed the sanction of the Mughal imperial power for legitimizing their authority.

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

Thus the periphery tried to maintain its links with the centre for furthering its regional aspirations. But the Mughal prestige was unchallenged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the autonomous regions had to seek the allegiance of Mughals for legitimacy.

The problems related to the disintegration of Mughal empire were manifested in the *zamindar* rebellions and for countering them, the provincial officials sought greater authority which the emperor perceived as a threat to the central structure. Thus the balance between the emperor, nobles and local groups was disturbed. Since the reign of Farukhsiyar the provincial governor had tried to arrogate greater power by ensuring an extended tenure, bringing provincial finance under his purview, etc. In 1716 the governor opposed the conferment of military and executive powers on the provincial *diwan* by the imperial power. In this period the powerful nobles themselves took

decisions regarding the administrative affairs. Giridhar Bahadur was appointed *subedar* of Awadh in 1719, a position he had himself asked for. The emperor was dependent on the nobles for support. He permitted the governors to exercise greater powers in order to keep them away from the centre. At the court he generally sought the support of the faction which was comparatively less ambitious to maintain his power. Farukhsiyar initially depended on Sayyid brothers (nobles) but later the relations between the two became strained and gave rise to factional politics at the court.

The provincial governor's attempt to get wider power also suited the interests of the other categories of ruling groups in the province. The weakened centre was not in a position to provide guidance or security to the province. Thus the provincial authorities themselves tried to resolve their problems by forging alliances with the local groups. The central power itself was ridden with factional politics at the court and this percolated down to the provinces and brought about instability and confusion.

The governor emerged as powerful and the classical Mughal system of checks and balances received a set back. The politics at the court (nobles vs. emperor) also permeated into the provinces and the provincial appointments were affected.

An important feature of administration in Awadh in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the transformation of offices into hereditary positions. The *qazis* as holders of *madad-i-mash*, which was granted to them in lieu of their services, tended to treat them as hereditary. The *jagirs* also got metamorphosed into hereditary domains of *zamindar* and non-*zamindar mansabdars*.

The imperial power found it difficult to control the provincial administration when the local officials defied the agents of *jagirdars* or *amils* in *khalisa*. The *waqianavis* were ineffective and did not get the support of the *jagirdars* for obtaining information.

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

The Mughal system was poised on the delicate equilibrium between the local groups and the emperor, his nobles and *mansabdars*. The local groups led by *zamindars* could never emerge supreme because they were organized on caste and community basis and had a parochial character. Sometimes the *zamindars* allied with the Mughals against their own king groups. Mansa Ram, a Bhumihar *zamindar* of Gangapur, forged an alliance with the Mughals against the Rajputs and established the Banaras Raj. To further their aspirations the mutinous *zamindars* were hostile to the symbols of imperial power like *qazi*, *kotwal* trade and urban centres.

The provincial authority thus had to contend with the power of the *zamindars* and the *madad-i-mash* grantees. To meet the challenge the governor tried to augment his power. Thus the governor tried to combine the powers of *diwan* and *faujdar*, which brought him into conflict with the other officials posted in the province who acted as a check on the power of the governor. In this way the Mughal model of equilibrium among various groups was disturbed. The governor's desire for extended tenure also emanated from the need to re-organise the political alignments in the region. Burhan-ul-mulk was transferred through imperial order to Malwa. He however defied the imperial directive and laid the foundation of Nawabi rule in Awadh. His sister's son



Safdar Jang succeeded him in Awadh. The governor's political and administrative initiatives were based on securing his position in the province and at times were in conflict with the position of the imperial power in Delhi. Though the position of governor was independent of the centre yet the aura of imperial centre and emperor still persisted and the imperial symbols were not totally abandoned. In 1739 during Nadir Shah's invasion Burhan-ul-mulk came to the aid of the Emperor. However, at times the governor defied the imperial *farman*.

The functioning of the *jagir* administration also created problems for the governor. The *jagirs* in Awadh were assigned to nobles posted either at the court or in other provinces. The agents of the *jagirdars* along with the other rural and urban groups posed a challenge to the governor. The emergence of *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* (See Block 6, Unit 22) and the practice of giving *faujdari* rights to *jagirdar* also served as a threat to the governor therefore, further changes were introduced in *jagir* administration.

The formal links with the Emperor helped the governor to legitimise and further strengthen his position and also to obtain favours from the Emperor. Burhan-ul-mulk and Safdar Jang kept themselves informed and aware of the court politics.

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

Various local groups (*shaikhzadas* and Afghans) were inducted into the provincial administration and the army by the governor. The *shaikhzadas*, Afghans and Hindus constituted the local ruling groups in Awadh. The *madad-i-mash* holders were also appeased by conversion of their grants into *zamindaris*.

The conciliatory move with regard to the *zamindars* (esp. Baiswara) through the *taahhud* (a contractual system which permitted the *zamindars* to collect revenue and pay a fixed sum to the government in lieu of military, administrative powers) arrangement led to the emergence of *talluqdaris* in 18<sup>th</sup> century Awadh. The decline of *faujdari* is attributed to the combining of governorship with *faujdari* rights and the appointment of local men as *naib* and *nazim* or the governor's subordinates entrusted with executive and financial authority.

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## 11.6 SUMMARY

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This Unit critically examines the 18<sup>th</sup> century debate regarding the political formations which emerged as a result of the decline of Mughal power. Historians have categorized these states to three distinct groups: successor states, states which emerged as a result of rebellion against Mughals and new states. In this Unit we have tried to explain the nature of successor states, which emerged autonomous from the position of *subas* or provinces of the Mughals. This account enables us to enumerate the continuities with the Mughal system and also the changes introduced in the autonomous states.



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## **11.7 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Write a critical note on 18<sup>th</sup> century debate.
- 2) Discuss the nature of the autonomous state of Hyderabad under the Nizams.

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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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# UNIT 12 THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POLITIES

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## Structure

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Emergence and the Consolidation of Power of New Local Magnates
  - 12.2.1 The Marathas
  - 12.2.2 Bengal
  - 12.2.3 Awadh
  - 12.2.4 Hyderabad and Mysore
- 12.3 Economic Basis of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Polities
- 12.4 Regional Basis of Political Power through Rebellion and Autonomy
  - 12.4.1 Awadh
  - 12.4.2 Bengal
  - 12.4.3 Hyderabad
  - 12.4.4 The Maratha and Sikh Polities
- 12.5 Administrative Set-Up of the New States: Continuity and Change
- 12.6 Legitimising Authority
- 12.7 Summary
- 12.8 Glossary
- 12.9 Exercises

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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A large number of independent and semi-sovereign states such as Awadh, Maratha, Bengal, Hyderabad and Mysore emerged in India after the authority of the Mughals declined. These states arose either through the rebellion of the powerful local landed gentry or through a gradual step-by-step realisation of autonomy by the powerful Mughal nobles. You have already read about some of these successor states in Unit 11. Local landed gentry who prospered in the Mughal service and commercial men and merchants who thrived in the Mughal tax-system, combined together to provide a solid base to the new regional powers. These powers gained political ascendancy in the form of new secondary state-formations. They were still in the process of establishing the legitimacy of their rule when they were unsettled by a more powerful alien power in the form of East India Company.

This Unit starts with a discussion on the emergence of new local powers and the efforts made by them for consolidation. Further, it analyses the economic and political basis of these powers and the process of legitimisation of their authority. The Unit also takes into account the continuity and change in the administrative structures of these powers.

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## 12.2 EMERGENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF POWER OF NEW LOCAL MAGNATES

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In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the *umara* group of **mansabdars** began to lose their predominant political position. This was because the system of assignment of revenues on which these administrative elite of the Mughals subsisted began to break down. Local revolts cut into their earnings from rents obtained from the

jagirs. As a consequence, new social groups began to emerge and consolidate their political position. They were acquiring proprietary rights over lands and converting non-hereditary into hereditary rights. They also started to realise tax from the markets and commerce. Some of them such as the Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats took to insurgency to consolidate their hold on localities. They made use of strong kinship links at the pargana level to carve out their own sphere of political influence. Mughal intervention in the continual conflicts between the Deccan Sultanates greatly benefited the autochthonous Hindu zamindars or gentry. Different Muslim sovereigns sought to conciliate the gentry to use them against their opponents. The rise of the Marathas in the Western Deccan can be traced to this process. During the process of the expansion of the Mughal Empire, many of indigenous rajas and zamindars were incorporated into the Mughal system which mutually benefited the Mughals and the local magnates. The cooperation of the gentry was essential to gain access to the agricultural surplus of the new regions. The Mughals simply superimposed a new bureaucratic structure on the existing pattern of zamindari rights. The Mughal polity was, therefore, not a monolithic structure, but was a hierarchical and differentiated power structure – a graded power structure with overlapping rights and obligations. Mughal state shared many attributes of sovereignty with these local magnates. These local magnates were the real lords of men and resources as well as the guardian of caste-order at the local level.

### 12.2.1 The Marathas

The Marathas were a new elite, representing the amalgamation of families from several castes such as •Kunbis, Lohar, Sutar, Bhandari, Thakur and even Dhangars (shepherds). They served the Bahmani Kingdom or those rebelling against it, with bands of followers. They secured landed rights (watans and inams) for their services. 'Watan' grants were hereditary tenure for service while 'inam' were hereditary grants for previous service or special merit. A new ethic of martial tradition and adoption of a superior life-style distinguished them from the ordinary cultivators. The other kind of rights to various shares of the produce of land came into existence through colonisation by the Marathas (at village level-hereditary patil rights and at pargana level-deshmukhi rights). These local elite families took about 15% of the total collection of land revenue as their share. The Brahmin elite families (Kulkarni and Deshpande) also had their share of rights for record keeping and keeping accounts at the village and Pargana level. Deshmukhs provided military service by raising troops in the countryside and maintained law and order. They enjoyed various customary, military, judicial and economic rights. The emergence of the Maratha power was, therefore, an endogenous rising of the powerful zamindars aspiring to sovereignty and favouring redistribution of the agrarian surplus that benefited the local landed gentry. The Maratha agrarian claims in the form of **chauth** and **sardeshmukhi** (25% and about 10-12.5% of assessed revenues respectively) were a sort of zamindari claim – a kind of protection-rent, imposed in the areas they colonised.

### 12.2.2 Bengal

In Bengal, though the Mughal armies had subdued twelve rebellious chiefs in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, only a relatively small portion of Bengal was assigned to mansabdars as jagirs (the proportion of jagirs in Bengal was 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the revenues compared to 4/5<sup>th</sup> of revenues assigned as jagirs for the rest to the empire).

Hereditary chiefs and zamindars who exercised their patrimonial type of authority, based on face-to-face, personal relations, collected the other 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the revenues. Murshid Kuli Khan who initiated the process of autonomy for Bengal suba curbed the power of Mughal mansabdars and strengthened the power of certain zamindars. He transferred their jagirs to Orissa and the Emperor himself stopped the transfer of imperial mansabdars to Bengal after 1712. Although Murshid Kuli Khan dealt severely with the zamindars who were defaulters in paying their dues, he encouraged and sanctioned appropriation of other lands by zamindars who promptly paid their dues by allowing them to absorb smaller zamindaris through conquest, purchase and transfer. The process was well marked in West Bengal. By the end of Murshid's reign 60% of the jama (assessed revenue) came from 15 big zamindaris. There were considerable judicial and administrative responsibilities associated with their revenue collecting rights. The large size of zamindaris (e.g. Rajshahi zamindari with an area of 13,000 sq. miles, and Burdwan zamindari employing 30,000 militiamen) required a hierarchy of officials reaching down to the level of the village. In many cases, portion of zamindaris were given to revenue contractors or **ijaradars** for a fixed sum. Murshid Kuli Khan's restructuring of zamindaris continued through the "Nawabi" period and well into the "Company" period. Support of these big zamindars was the mainstay of the Bengal polity. But unlike the Marathas in the Deccan, the Poligars in the South and Jats in the North, the zamindars of Bengal did not have any significant military capabilities despite the large "rental" income and patronage they enjoyed. They went on augmenting their authority and were not loyalists of the state. For example, none of them came to the defence of Siraj-ud-daula in 1757 against the British.

### 12.2.3 Awadh

In Awadh, there were several categories, viz., **jagirdars** and revenue farmers (Ijaradars) but **mansabdari** as a method of paying or providing salary (in the form of jagirs) in lieu of government and military service was curtailed. The Awadh Nawabs initially tried to pacify recalcitrant zamindars but a new local ruling elite soon emerged, whose primary function was not military service, but looking after the administration of revenue collection. Most of the lands in Awadh were farmed out to the new ruling elite for 1-3 years of collection rights. They were designated as Amils. Amils were salaried, revenue collecting administrators in the Mughal system but under the Awadh rulers, they would bid for **ijarah**, a lease or contract for paying a fixed amount to the treasury. Delhi sultans had used this method of revenue collection. It was abandoned by Sher Shah and Akbar but was revived during Jahangir's reign. It was widespread in 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century politics and was initially even used by the "Company's" administrators. These tended to become hereditary estates in the course of time.

### 12.2.4 Hyderabad and Mysore

In 18<sup>th</sup> century Hyderabad, the assignment of revenue grants tended to become hereditary. This created a more settled land holding class which negotiated its revenue and military commitments through agents settled in Hyderabad. In Mysore, Hyder Ali (1761-82) subjugated many refractory Poligars (warrior-aristocratic families). They were, however, not displaced. They were usually confirmed in their estates after they submitted and agreed to pay their dues regularly. He also used the method of assigning revenues to the highest bidders or new landed magnates who managed to acquire proprietary rights over large areas.



The above description demonstrates a two-way process of acquiring power by the local magnates: consolidating their strength in their localities and thus, getting recognised by the imperial power or the powers being conferred on them by the imperial rulers on the promise to pay a certain share of revenue.

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### 12.3 ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY POLITIES

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The establishment of the new regional polities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the emergence of entrepreneurs (both among Hindus and Muslims), especially the so called revenue farmers, often relations of the old nobility, sometimes local princes. Their relationship with the rulers was contractual and mercenary, as they were not bound by loyalty or military ethos. Merchants, drawn largely from the traditional Hindu commercial castes and Jains lent money to the rulers and the nobles. They were pivots of India's capital markets, transferring money from one part of the country to another with their (hundis) credit notes, thus encouraging commercialisation. However, the use of money was meant more to meet social obligations and responsibilities. Statuses and offices were leased and subleased more frequently in these new states. These merchants and bankers provided advances to the revenue farmers on the security of their holdings and formed a key political grouping in the state formation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### 1) Awadh

The post of **diwani** was effectively abolished in Awadh after mid 1720s. Atmaram, a Punjabi khatri merchant, managed revenues independently of the Mughal court. His sons and grandsons continued to manage Awadh's revenues as the **diwans** of subsequent Nawabs. The cash-nexus transformed the nature of military organisation also. The earlier patrimonial, personal and semi-informal grouping of Awadh's army gave way to mercenary troops. In Awadh, the Mughal system of **amani** collector, remitting entire revenue except salary and perquisites of office, was substituted by the widespread system of **ijaradari**, dominated by **mustajirs**, or **ijarah** holders. It meant that surplus wealth was not confined to the Nawab and his dependents. It was distributed through the local patronage networks and controlled largely by the **mustajirs** or revenue farmers.

#### 2) The Marathas

The Brahmin groups such as the Chitpavan, the Saraswat, and the Deshasth rose to prominence under the Bijapur administration. Their power increased in the Maratha administration especially after Bajirao became the **peshwa**. They played a crucial role in extending banking facilities to the Maratha State and advanced money against future revenue receipts. **Peshwas** were kinshipwise and matrimonially related to many such banking families. To stabilise district-level administration, the **peshwa** appointed **kamvishdars** to collect taxes, adjudicate disputes and develop agriculture. They made use of the records of revenue-settlement and collection at the village and **pargana** level. They remitted the **rasad** or the next year instalment of revenue ( $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  to  $1/2$  of the contract amount) for which money came from the Pune banking families. Later on this principal along with 1-2% monthly interest was to be recovered from the **Kamvishdar's** district. The **Kamvishdar's** pay was a fraction of the **rasad**. The transformation of the small guerrilla bands into a professional standing army of the Maratha state required more cash at the disposal of the treasury to feed and supply the

huge army. The development of revenue administration in close association with banking and credit supplied liquid assets to the state.

### 3) Bengal

The taxation system of the Nawabs of Bengal depended not only on the capacity of agriculture to produce surplus but also on a market for agriculture products, and flows of trade which enabled cash collected in the countryside to be taken to those areas where the state needed it. This was underpinned by the availability of credits at many levels. The Nagarseths provided the credit in the form of remittances and advances to the zamindars and Nawabs.

### 4) Mysore

There was large-scale intrusion of usury capital in the revenue-transactions of the Mysore rulers. Revenues were assigned to the highest bidders. **Amildars** remitted them through bills of exchange obtained from the **sahukars**, who thus acquired control over the revenues along with profits and interests for providing credit facilities. It was estimated that only 50% of the revenues reached Seringampatam. Apart from the profits of bankers about 10% of the total collection was appropriated by the local officials as collection costs or sibandhi.

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## 12.4 REGIONAL BASIS OF POWER THROUGH REBELLION AND AUTONOMY

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The configuration of socio-political forces that strived to attain sovereign status through insurrectionary or refractory means at the regional level was almost the same in all the regions. These were the revenue-farmers, merchants, scribal families and local landed gentry. In some regions such as Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad, the erstwhile provinces of the Mughals underwent a gradual metamorphosis and became autonomous kingdoms. Richard B. Barnett outlines the steps towards autonomy in these successor states. These steps were:

- The Subedar or Nazim as the chief military officer of the province acquired the ability to nominate or appoint outright his own diwans or revenue officials, thus accelerating the shift in power from the Imperial Centre to the regions of the empire,
- Appointment of their own successors by **Subedars**, in the initial phases, pending the emperor's confirmation,
- Diversion of revenues, formerly submitted to the central treasury, for use within region, thus confining remittances from the provinces more and more to ceremonial gifts and occasional contributions,
- Independent diplomatic and military activity by the **Subedars**,
- Regional ruling families establish their residence at the provincial capitals rather than at the Mughal Court,
- Minting of coins, at least the silver rupee of the empire, if not the less common and more ceremonial gold mohurs by the Regional rulers; and
- The ultimate symbolic declaration of independence – the delivery of **khutbah**, the Friday congregational invocation and sermon in the central mosque, in the name of the regional ruler.

The first five steps were taken by almost all the successor states of the Mughal Empire. However, these states did not resort to the last step as the long-lasting symbolic authority of the Imperial system survived even after its degeneration.

#### 12.4.1 Awadh

Saddat Khan Burhan-ul-mulk, who was appointed as Subedar of Awadh in 1722 initiated the process of gaining autonomy for Awadh. He appointed his son-in-law Safdarjung as the Deputy Subedar. He tried to subdue numerous refractory chiefs, rajas and zamindars of the Awadh region such as the **Shaikhzadas** of Lucknow, the Raja of Tiloi, the powerful zamindar-Bhagwant Singh Khichar of Ghazipur and Asothar and the Chandela Rajputs. He appointed a Punjabi Khatri merchant Atmaram as his Diwan. However, he continued to assist the Mughals against their enemies and played a key role in the rout of the army of Malhar Rao Holkar, the Maratha Sardar, in 1737. He came to the rescue of the Mughal Emperor with a contingent of 50,000 troopers during Nadir Shah's invasion and became a mediator between Nadir Shah and the Mughal emperor after the latter's capture by the Shah's forces. Around Rs. 2 crores were spent from Awadh's resources (treasury) on troops when Saddat Khan marched to face Nadir Shah's forces. Safdarjung paid another sum of Rs. 2 crores as **Peshkash** (tribute) to Nadir Shah to retain the Subedari of Awadh. This shows that regular remittances of revenues to the Imperial treasury must have stopped during Saddat Khan's rule. He did not build a capital but continued to stay in the temporary residence at his military encampment near Ayodhya. The effort to attain autonomy by Awadh received further impetus during Safdarjung's rule (1739-54). He helped Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, during the Maratha invasion. In 1743, he acquired the post of **Mir Atish** – Commander of artillery – as well as the Subedari of Kashmir from the Mughal Emperor. In 1748, he was given the Subedari of Ajmer, which he exchanged with the Subedari of Allahabad. He also acquired 33 **parganas** around Farrukabad from the Afghan chief Bangash Nawab. He only sent ceremonial gifts to the Emperor and used the entire revenue resources according to his own discretion. Later on Shujaud-daula (1754-75) sought confirmation of his **Subedari** from the Mughal Emperor Alamgir II but he himself confirmed and appointed officials to their posts. This was a marked departure from the normal Mughal administrative practice. He also conducted diplomatic alliances and relations without any reference to the Delhi court. However, now, a new force in the form of East India Company had started eroding the autonomous sovereign status of Awadh after the defeat of the combined armies, of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, Mir Qasim (Nawab of Bengal) and Shuja-ud-daula (Nawab of Awadh) at Buxor (1764), at the hands of the British. A settlement in 1768 limited Awadh's army to 35,000 with a maximum of 10,000 troops trained and disciplined like the British troops. This limited the operational sovereignty of Awadh in army matters.

#### 12.4.2 Bengal

Murshid Kuli Khan was the Diwan of Bengal from 1700 onwards. He was given the **Subedari** of Bengal in 1717 and the combined office of Nazim and Diwan during 1717-27. He continued to send an annual tribute of around Rs. 1 crore through bills of exchange drawn by the Jagat Seths (Marwari Bankers) from Bengal, on their house in Delhi. Murshid Kuli Khan also transferred many **jagirs** of the Mughal **mansabdars** in Bengal to Orissa. Alivardi Khan plotted a successful coup and became the Nawab of Bengal through force. He further

succeeded in acquiring an independent status for Bengal. During his reign, the resources of Bengal were no longer allocated in the form of Imperial **jagirs** and the flow of tribute to the Mughal treasury dwindled. Between 1743 and 1758, only Rs. 40-50 lakhs were remitted as tribute. Alivardi combined the post of **nazim** and **diwan** in his person and appointed his own deputies in Bihar and Orissa though he did get the ratification from the Emperor subsequently. He also established an independent standing army.

### 12.4.3 Hyderabad

The state of Hyderabad emerged as an autonomous region after 1724. Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Zah consolidated his hold over the Deccan and suppressed all opposition to his **Subedari** of the Deccan during 1720-22 (after the fall of the Sayyed brothers). He was the wazir of the Empire during 1722-24 but returned to the Deccan and started acting as an independent ruler. He waged wars, concluded treaties, conferred titles, gave **jagirs** and made appointments without reference to the emperor. For example, after his defeat at Palkhed (1728) by the Maratha Chief Bajirao, he concluded a treaty at Mungi-Shevgaon recognising Maratha rights in the Deccan without seeking any ratification from the Mughal Emperor. Subsequent Nizams obtained confirmation of their accession to the throne and acquired **Khila't** or the cloak of honour from Mughal emperors, maintained a nominal subordination to the empire, issued coins in the Emperor's name and refrained from using scarlet umbrella, the symbol of imperial authority. But, it is worth noting that Nizam-ul-mulk described his domain as **riyasat** and not a **Suba** of the Mughals.

### 12.4.4 The Maratha and Sikh Polities

The Maratha and Sikh polities emerged through the process of insurgency directed against the Mughal aristocracy. They reflected the local gentry's political ambitions which arose as a consequence of plebian uprising of cultivator castes against mughal "oppression". Many Maratha soldiers were employed by the Deccan states as '**bargirs**' or horsemen who did not furnish their own horses and weapons. The local rural elites (**patils/kulkarnis** at the village level) and (**deshmukhs/deshpandes** at the pargana level) made use of this martial tradition to further their political aspirations. **Deshmukhs** provided military service by raising troops in the countryside, assisted in repelling invaders, disarming rebels and joined the fighting forces in times of war. Shivaji made use of **light cavalry** backed by forts as places of refuge and rebelled against the Bijapur ruler and then against the Mughals. But he did not subvert significantly the power of rural elite families or **deshmukhs**. He attacked rival **deshmukhs** but integrated others in his revenue administration and governance. He merely wanted the recognition of his position as the **sardeshmukh** or the head of **deshmukhs** at that time.

Andere Wink stresses the role of **Fitna** in the Maratha state formation. **Fitna** was a political mechanism in which, the Maratha gentry and the Mughal nobility were following the same policy of 'Symbolic-dissent'. The process of conquest was not primarily a matter of military action but was achieved through fomenting sedition, dissension, and disorder by drawing off allegiance from among the enemy ranks. The use of military force was minimum. **Fitna implied taking advantage of the existing local political conflicts or factionalism by making conciliatory moves such as gift giving and grant of rights.** The Mughal nobility striving for an independent provincial power base and the

expanding Maratha state both competed to gain access to the loyalties of the powerful local landed magnates and derived political mileage out of local internecine rivalries. Wink, therefore, visualises the Maratha extension of power and sovereignty not as a 'rebellion' against the super-imposed Mughal authority, but as a consequence of Mughal expansion itself.

The Sikhs or Singhs in Punjab set aside the administrative framework of the Mughals by making use of ties of kinship and the motivating ideology of the Sikh religious faith and doctrine. Banda Bahadur's uprising (1709-1714) represented the increasing numerical strength of the Sikhs in the Punjab, their expanding material resources and social institutions, a community kitchen (*langar*), the establishment of shrines, tanks, *takhts* (thrones), and *sangat* (congregational worship). Though the uprising was crushed, it paved the way for the crystallisation of the Sikh identity. The Singh leaders utilised the concept of the Sikh identity in the formation of a number of principalities in the 1770s. They also evolved a new institutional framework that centred on the *rakhi*, the *misl*, the *dal-khalsa* and the *gurmata*. The Singh leaders undertook to provide protection or *rakhi* to cultivators against all outsiders including the Mughal officers, after levying only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the produce in return for that protection. They made use of kinship ties as the basis of small combinations or *misls* to pool resources for mutual offence and defence and for territorial acquisition. The combination of a large number of *misls* acting in concert under a chosen leader constituted the *Dal Khalsa*. Apart from this there were open meetings of the Singhs in which resolutions were passed indicating a consensus. These resolutions of the *guru* known as *gurmata* were the basis of cohesion.

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## 12.5 ADMINISTRATIVE SET-UP OF THE NEW STATES: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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The administrative machinery in the regional polities that arose on the decline of the Mughal state had a close resemblance to the latter in form and structure. However, there were also pronounced differences in some aspects of administration. Officials appointed by Shivaji such as the *pehwa*, the *mujumdar*, the *sarnaubat*, the *chitins*, and the *sar-lashkar* had existed in the earlier state structures of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar. There was also no innovation in the field of tax-collection. Shivaji relied on step-wise increasing settlement that ended in 'Malik Amber's settlement'. Muslim *qazis* were appointed on salary to adjudicate cases. Shivaji recruited Deshasth Brahmins for keeping accounts of his expanding personal estates and in the central bureaucracy – a practice borrowed from the Deccan Sultanates. The administration of taxation was markedly similar to that of the Mughals. Nomenclature for the taxes was the same as used by the Mughals. The taxes were assessed in the Mughal pattern and were even paid in the Mughal customary months. The rural police officer – *Fauzdar* and urban police officer – *Kotwal* resembled the Mughal terminology and functions. However, the Maratha polity had no Mughal type unified civilian-cum-military rank and pay structure. New performance-based Brahmin elites from the Chitpavan, the Saraswat and the Deshasth groups manned the central bureaucracy and the local administration. In this capacity, they were called *Kamvishdars* who enjoyed wide powers of tax-assessment and collection. They adjudicated disputes, provided elaborate information about local conditions and kept records. Later on, the British District Collector was modelled on this Maratha officer only. The Mughal system of administration, which was based on



the division of the revenue and the policing functions, was retained at the local level. At the village level, the Brahmin Kulkarni kept accounts and maintained records while the non-brahmin Patils enjoyed legal and policing powers. At the Pargana level, the Despande-Desmukh functionaries retained this dualism i.e. separation of revenue and policing functions. The Peshwas used a new innovative system of quota repartition of revenue by which revenue aggregates of villages or districts were split up into mals or fractions varying between 3 to 75% that were separately assigned or alienated to different persons.

Even in the Sikh Principalities, which emerged in 1760s and 1770s, the administrative framework of the Mughal Empire survived. **Diwans**, **thanadars** and **kardars** were appointed and were paid through the grant of **jagirs**. At the local level, **chaudhris**, **muqaddams**, **qanungos**, and **patwaris** continued to perform their usual functions in the revenue-administration. In the administration of justice also many of the older courts of **qazis** were retained, although more importance was attached to the **panchayats**. The 'Singhs' (chiefs) contributed the bulk of the ruling elite in these principalities denoting social mobility. But many non-Sikhs were also associated with the administration suggesting institutional continuity with the past. When these principalities were absorbed in the Sikh state of Ranjit Singh of the Sukarchakia misl in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, administrative framework did not change much. The **kardars**, assisted by local **chaudhris**, **muqaddams**, **qanungos**, and **patwaris**, continued to perform functions that resembled that of the Mughal amils.

The functional sovereignty of the new successor states of the Mughals incorporated local and regional elites such as the **mustajirs** or **Ijarah**-holders in the new decentralised administration. In Awadh, they continued to be called amils, but they were not salaried, revenue-collecting administrators they once were under the Mughals. In the Awadh polity, the numerical system of mansabdari was retained but now it no longer denoted income and military duty. The military organisation continued to be based on patrimonial, personal and semi-informal groupings. It was 'segmentary' in nature that is heterogeneous troops provided by various commanders, owed personal loyalty to their immediate masters. There was no unified command and the army consisted of disparate units of mercenaries under different military leaders. The Nawabs of Awadh also continued and further extended the policy of appointing Hindus in the military and administrative posts that was initiated under the Mughals.

The executive and revenue administration of Bengal also remained practically unchanged during the rule of the Nawabs. The enforcement of law and order and other executive functions continued to be discharged by **fauzdars** at the **sarkar** level and by the **shiqdars** at the **pargana** level. These officials were assisted by the **kotwals** and the **qazis** armed with magisterial powers. A hereditary class of **qanungos** continued to play the role of the record-keepers. However, there was almost collapse of the Mughal **fauzdari** administration in Central and Western Bengal where the powerful local landed gentry or zamindars acquired considerable judicial and administrative responsibilities combined with their revenue-collecting rights. Largely Hindu administrators known as **muttaseddis** (who were also deputed into districts to manage the Nawab's estates or **Khalsa** lands as **amils** or local **diwans**), worked in the central treasury. In other areas, large zamindars and ijarahdars, backed by the bankers' guarantees, became the main agency of revenue collection. Similarly, in Hyderabad Nizam-ul-mulk retained the Mughal form of administration down to the pargana level. This administrative framework was, however, modified by the later Nizams as they

introduced revenue farming under taluqdars to counter indigenous local Hindu zamindars more effectively. During the rule of the Nawab of Carnatic and under the rulers of Mysore, the Hindu warlords or **polygars** were invested with the titles which signified Mughal grandeur while Mughal **qazis**, **kotwals** and **muftis** and revenue agents or **amildars** were appointed on the Mughal pattern. These southern states also adopted certain administrative functionaries and titles from the local Hindu rulers. For example, they retained village **patels** as the executive heads of their respective villages and **shanbogs** as accountants and elements of traditional organisation of twelve **ayagars**, an **ayyam** meant income and hence, it signified twelve shares in the income of the village. It was also known as **barabaluti**, i.e., a system denoting livelihood shares of village incomes for performance of special services.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these polities felt threatened by the rising power of the British East India Company. In order to meet this threat time demanded that they introduced European type military organisation and command structure. Hence, the rulers of Awadh, Mysore, Hyderabad and Maratha sardar Mahadji Scindhia, although making use of the levies recruited by the local military elites, also tried to build a regular infantry armed with European muskets.

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## 12.6 LEGITIMISING AUTHORITY

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In Section 12.5 of this Unit, we have seen how the new states of 18<sup>th</sup> century emerged through insurgency or through usurpation of the power of the central authority, thus establishing independent sovereign states. Whatever the process of state formation, it was important to seek legitimacy and justification for their rule. Stewart Gordon lists three modes that were used by these rulers to establish their legitimacy and authority. These were:

- a) The ruler should be a proven protector of the people, capable of establishing a limited sort of public order and preventing external aggression.
- b) A ruler having a commanding personal presence owing to qualities such as courtly etiquettes, bravery, armed training, ability to settle factional disputes.
- c) The holder of a **sanad** from a strong power.

Beside these elements, other prominent legitimising forces were religious ideologies of the time, the incorporation of local powerful elites into the state-structure, use of syncretism in cultural practices, and the extension of agriculture and trade. Although both the Sikhs and Marathas represented traditions which opposed Mughal rule, the Sikhs drew their ideological authority from the Guru Granth Sahib and the Marathas, according to some scholars, developed a kind of “Hindu rule based on the protection of the Brahmin, holy cattle and holy shrines”. Yet we find that they portrayed themselves as agents of the Mughal emperor and except for Tipu Sultan, no ruler sought the title of emperor. When the Marathas under Baji Rao I sought recognition of their rights in Malwa, he was simply designated as the **Naib-Subedar** of Malwa in Muhammad Shah’s farman of 1741 with the obligation to make ceremonial gifts to the emperor and to preserve all rent-free tenures in Malwa that had been granted by the Mughal emperor. Although, Elphinstone, in his ‘History of India’ depicted the Marathas as a ‘nation’ and Shivaji’s activities as a ‘war of Independence’, a sentiment

which re-echoes in M.G. Ranade's '**The Rise of Maratha Power**' (1900), the Marathas, according to other scholars, had only asserted their zamindari right, e.g., **sardesmukhi** right, in the Deccan. Some scholars see the Bhakti cult that stressed love of God, rejection of caste-restrictions in rituals and pilgrimages as the ideological basis of Maratha polity. However, it actually posed a threat to the Brahmanical traditions and did not preach resistance to the Islamic rule. Maratha elite also patronised shrines like Pandarpur. Shivaji espoused tolerance and syncretism, made alliances with Muslim states of Golconda and Bijapur against Hindu rulers such as the nayaks of Carnatic. Shivaji sought to validate his authority by obtaining the sanction of the Brahmins and approval from the powerful deshmukhi families. But his coronation posed a problem because local Brahmins were not willing to crown him and accept him as a **kshatriya**. Finally, Gangabhat, a Maharashtrian Brahmin from Benaras made genealogies to trace his ancestry to the Rajputs and arranged the rituals.

Incorporation of the powerful local elites and moneyed interests without reference to race, religion or caste-origin was another pillar of strength for regional polities and their functional sovereignty despite their formal acceptance of the Mughal paramountcy. The Nawabs of Awadh gave Hindus prominent military and administrative posts. Among the powerful generals in Awadh's army were the **gossain** monks – the leaders of Naga **sanyasins** and the Shaivite warriors whose superb tactical mobility made them valuable to the Nawabs. Many of the powerful **ijarah**-holders or mustajirs in Awadh came from the powerful Punjabi **Khatri** families and local Hindu zamindars and merchants. Another unique feature of Awadh's army was the appointment of the eunuchs as army officers. The Nawabs of Bengal were shi'ite by faith and ruled over a largely Sunni Muslim community and although they formally tried to enforce the laws of the shariat, their state-sponsored **madradas** propagated Islamic learning and Persian was the official language of administration under them yet they accommodated their Hindu subjects in various ways. The majority of the administrators of the **Khalisa** lands and the central treasury known as **mutaseddis** were Hindus. The support of the powerful **mutaseddis**, zamindars and **Jagat Seths** who were Hindus was essential to the Bengal rulers.

Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan tried to control the local revenue officials. They tried to expand agriculture and punished the amildars in whose districts flight of peasants were reported. They also gave lease of 5-7 years to the ryots and tried to forbid the sale and mortgage of their lands. Marathas also adopted similar policies to win the confidence of the cultivators. Although, the Mysore rulers, Hyder Ali and his son Tipu are depicted sometimes as religious bigots, they did not persecute the Hindus for their beliefs. They adopted a tolerant attitude towards other religions. A Muslim sect of Mahdavis was expelled from Mysore for conspiring against Tipu Sultan in 1794. Tipu maintained close contact with the **pirzadas** and Muslim saints. The dargahs of the pirs were worshipped both by the Muslims and Hindus. Many Shaivite saints used to participate in Muharam in south India. Tipu took steps in 1780s that reinforced his legitimacy and further loosened the shadowy ties that bound him to the Mughal Emperor. Initially, Hyder Ali had obtained a **sanad** from the Nizam the representative of Mughal authority in the south but by 1770s he challenged the authority of the Nizam. He also started minting his own coins. The Mysore rulers kept some sort of pretence of subservience to the Wodeyar King initially. Their initial coins had images of Siva, Parvati, Vishnu, which were replaced by the royal motif of elephant in later coins. Later Tipu did away with the Hindu figures and named his gold and silver coins after the Caliph, saints and imams.

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## 12.7 SUMMARY

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In this Unit, you have read how in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a number of semi-independent, semi-sovereign states such as Awadh, Bengal, Maratha, Hyderabad and Mysore emerged on the debris of the Mughal Empire. The local landed gentry especially the **ijaradars** and the merchants were the main pillars on which the structure of the 18<sup>th</sup> century polities rested. These states were established by the process of rebellion against Mughal authority by the Mughal subedars or by new social groups aspiring for political power. The importance of credit, usury, banking and land revenue in the 18<sup>th</sup> century state formation has been highlighted.

The political history of the emergence of various regional states such as Awadh, Bengal, Hyderabad, Marathas and Mysore has been described. The elements of continuity and change in the administrative setup of the new and successor states have been analysed. Finally the ideological basis of the 18<sup>th</sup> century polities has been discussed.

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## 12.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Chitnis</b>	:	Secretary who dealt with diplomatic correspondence and wrote royal letters
<b>Dargah</b>	:	The place which houses the tomb of the Sufi saint
<b>Farman</b>	:	Royal decree
<b>Khatri</b>	:	A scribal Hindu caste category in North India
<b>Khutabah</b>	:	A sermon delivered before the Friday noon Congregational prayer in mosques throughout the Islamic world
<b>Mufti</b>	:	A Muslim theologian entitled to issue opinion on religious matters
<b>Muzumdar</b>	:	A general term for records keeper
<b>Peshwa</b>	:	Prime Minister, later head of Maratha polity
<b>Pir</b>	:	Muslim saint
<b>Sar Lashkar</b>	:	Commander of forces
<b>Sanad</b>	:	A contract specifying rights and obligations
<b>Sarnaubat</b>	:	A Persian term meaning the leader of a band
<b>Shaikhzadas</b>	:	Indian Muslims

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## 12.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the process which led to the emergence and consolidation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century polities.
- 2) How did these polities legitimise their authority?

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# UNIT 13 COLONIAL POWERS: PORTUGUESE, DUTCH AND FRENCH

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## Structure

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Arrival of the Portuguese
  - 13.2.1 The Portuguese Sea-Borne Empire (1500-1640)
  - 13.2.2 Instruments of the Portuguese Commercial "Empire"
  - 13.2.3 Evaluation of the Portuguese Commercial "Empire"
- 13.3 Phase of the Dutch Domination (1600-1680)
  - 13.3.1 Nature and Pattern of the Dutch Trade
  - 13.3.2 Administrative Functioning of the Dutch Factories
  - 13.3.3 Impact of the Dutch "Empire" on the Indian Society and State
- 13.4 The French in India
  - 13.4.1 Compagnie des Indes Oriental
  - 13.4.2 Transition from "Commercial Empire" to "Territorial Empire"
  - 13.4.3 The Role of the French Partis in the Indian States
- 13.5 Summary
- 13.6 Glossary
- 13.7 Exercises

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## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit on the colonial powers, you will be able to understand how the European traders (official as well as private) influenced the Indian states and society in different ways. Apart from this, you will also learn about the different methods of control exercised by the early commercial empires, their role in intra-Asian and Indo-European trade, their administrative functioning and finally their transition from maritime powers to territorial powers.

Disruptions in trade route and changing political scenario in the Middle East compelled the European traders to search for new trading routes to India. After many efforts the European traders first appeared on the Indian sea coast at the end of the fifteenth century. The coming of Vasco de Gama at Calicut in May, 1498 marked the beginning of a new era in Euro-Asian trade. Initially the Portuguese established their control over the mercantile activity between India and Europe since they had discovered the route to India via Cape of Good Hope. However, Portugal lacked a powerful merchant class and the Crown took the lead in providing finances and political support to the Portuguese overseas mercantile enterprises. By the end of sixteenth century, the Dutch and English corporate merchant companies entered the arena and started challenging the Portuguese monopoly (The English East India Company was formed in 1600 and the Dutch in 1602). The French East India Company (established in 1664) soon followed them. Although dominated by single large corporations of merchants in their home countries, the private traders also carried out some amount of Euro-Asian trade. These commercial empires were sustained by the naval supremacy of their nations and were based on attempts to monopolise trade. Their activities were confined to coastal port cities in India and did not impinge upon the sovereignty of the indigenous polities to any great extent. They utilised the existing network of indigenous system of procurement and trade. They generally exchanged Indian



goods for bullion. This turned the balance of foreign trade in India's favour and became an instrument of economic growth. This was a reason for the tolerant view of Indian rulers towards them. There were areas of conflict over the control of trade and markets but generally use of armed tactics was avoided. The French were the first to attempt some sort of territorial empire in India on a large scale. The British East India Company later imitated their methods followed by the Dutch. There also emerged conflicts amongst these European powers for securing trade monopolies and territorial control.

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## 13.2 ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

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The expedition of Vasco de Gama that reached Calicut in May, 1498 after rounding the Cape of Good Hope was inspired by many motives. The desire of the Portuguese monarch, D. Manuel (1495-1521) to open a direct sea-route to India was primarily commercial, though sometimes it was disguised under the garb of the Christian religious ideology which stressed the proselytising mission of Christianity. The basic aim of the Portuguese was to enrich themselves and their state by establishing their monopoly over the spice trade with Europe – a lucrative business of the times. They used military force to achieve this aim. Forts were established at Cochin and Cannanore. The first Portuguese Viceroy Francisco d'Almeida who arrived in 1505 AD, was however, not very successful in furthering the commercial and territorial designs of the Portuguese in India. It was Alfonso de Albuquerque who (1509-15) gave shape to the Portuguese geo-political designs. He quickly occupied several port cities in India and islands in the Indian Ocean. Goa was taken in 1510 followed by Malacca in 1511. In 1515, Hurmuz, at the mouth of Persian Gulf, was also acquired. The overall territorial control after these acquisitions was quite small, but they were of great strategic significance. The fort of Colombo was established in Sri Lanka in 1518. Goa became the capital of the Portuguese Commercial "empire" in India in 1530. Subsequently, more conquest followed in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese occupied Diu, Daman and Bassein to control the trade from Gujarat and also occupied the coast of Konkan and Malabar to control the trade from Malabar. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they had about fifty forts and a powerful naval fleet of 100 ships. In this process of commercial and territorial "empire" building, the local rulers sometimes assisted the Portuguese. For instance, the Raja of Cochin became a puppet of the Portuguese in order to increase his own power in relation to his nominal overlord, the Zamorin of Calicut. The commercial and the naval ships of the Portuguese, were also, throughout the century, partly manned by crews and soldiers recruited from among the local people.

### 13.2.1 The Portuguese Sea-Borne Empire (1500-1640)

The empire created by the attempts of the Portuguese described in the earlier Section was not a territorial regime. It was a maritime network within which territories, establishments, ships, persons and administrative arrangements in Asia and East Africa were placed subordinate to the Portuguese Crown. In Lisbon, **Casa da India**, a royal trading firm headed this Sea-Borne "empire". In addition to the Crown, groups of merchants, financiers and bankers of various countries of Europe were also associated with the Casa da India. They played an important role in the procurement and the transportation of the return cargo from Asia. In Asia, the enterprise was under the control of an administrative set-up known as **Estada da India** (state in India). It was headed by the Viceroy at Goa – the head

of the civil and the military government of the whole empire from East Africa to Moluccas and Macao – who was responsible to the Crown only. Informal councils that were called into session by the desire of the Viceroy to obtain advice only on specific, usually military matters assisted the Viceroy. Initially, there was no fixed membership or procedure for the conduct of the affairs. Gradually, these councils became institutionalised. Its members, apart from the Viceroy who acted as the president, included the Archbishop of Goa, the chief Inquisitor, some important **fidalgos** or noble residents of Goa, the captain of the city of Goa, the chief judge of the high court and the chief financial officer. There was also a municipal council, elected by the Portuguese and the Eurasian population for the governance of Goa. The subordinate forts and settlements replicated the structure of the administrative set-up established in Goa.

The chief purpose of the forts and their captains was to secure the commercial monopoly of the spice trade with Europe as well as a monopoly of the trade between the various specified ports within Asia in order to tax it and to control its direction in the Indian Ocean. The captains and the other Portuguese residents also engaged in private trade of their own. The Portuguese sea-borne empire sustained itself by controlling and taxing the sea trade of local merchants in India. In fact, the revenues from custom duties in the whole empire were about 60-65% of the total revenues in the sixteenth century. We may add to this other items of revenues derived from the control of sea-trade such as booty from captured Asian ships.

The main items sought by the Portuguese in Asia were spices, especially pepper. The Portuguese procured bulk of this commodity from the Malabar region and later from Kanara on the southwest coast of India. The trade in precious metals from Portugal to India, and spice trade in the reverse direction was a royal monopoly since 1506. Private trade in monopoly items was, however, allowed to naval officials and some specific individuals under royal license. The private traders indirectly participated in it by providing finance to the royal house. The state in India (Estado) procured pepper in India that was sold in Antwerp until the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century and in Lisbon thereafter through contract sales. After 1564, the Crown was unable to maintain its monopoly of pepper trade and shared it with private trading interests. In 1575, the royal monopoly of pepper trade was given to Augsburg merchant Konrad Rott and the Milanese merchant Rovalesca at a rate of 32 **cruzados** per quintal. Subsequently, the Crown made arrangement with other mercantile houses while retaining some share in this profitable trade. The contract system continued until 1598, when a substantial challenge from the British and Dutch in the sea borne spice trade made it uneconomical for the pepper contractors. Even the formation of the Portuguese India Company in 1628 was not a successful experiment and the company was dissolved in 1633.

The cargo sent from Portugal to Asia for the procurement of pepper and other goods included precious metals (west African gold and rials coined from American silver), non-precious metals such as copper, lead, tin, quicksilver and mercury and some amount of coral, alum, wines and olive oil. Copper, among non-precious metals constituted the most important item for quite some time in terms of value. The Portuguese also participated in the intra-Asian trade, probably larger in value and more profitable than the trade between Goa and Lisbon. Private individuals, however, mostly reaped the profits from this intra-Asian trade. A part of the Portuguese intra-Asian trade sustained the export of Moluccan spices to Lisbon which were obtained mainly by the export of the Indian textiles to Molucca. From the very beginning, it was a 'loose' monopoly of the Crown with crew members of

the royal ships allowed to participate in it. The selected state officials were also granted the rights to engage in this trade to some extent. In the case of shortage of resources, even private traders were allowed to participate in this intra-Asian trade. As the ship captains used royal ships for carrying goods for their own private trade, the Crown's participation was limited to providing freight service thus making it less profitable. The Portuguese state finances in 1540s and 1550s were in a bad shape and the Crown found it unprofitable to continue to participate in the intra-Asian trade. For the Crown it was difficult to sustain its monopoly as the royal house did not have the financial resources needed to protect it.

### 13.2.2 Instruments of the Portuguese Commercial "Empire"

You are aware that as soon as the Portuguese reached India, they had successfully tried to monopolise trade in spices. Throughout the sixteenth century, a series of orders and instructions from Lisbon and Goa made it clear that trade in spices was reserved for the Portuguese Crown and its agents. This monopoly right was strictly enforced and the naval supremacy of the Portuguese played a significant role in it. The regulation and control of all sea-borne traffic was essential to achieve this aim. The Crown organised expeditions to specified places within Asia on a monopolistic basis. Only designated ships could make a given voyage in a particular year. The cargo space on the royal ships was sold in the early sixteenth century to the private merchants on a high premium. The Crown found such commercial ventures costly after 1540s because the construction of ships became a costly affair. The Portuguese state started issuing licenses to private merchants and individuals to undertake such commercial ventures. These licenses were given out on several grounds such as a reward for military service; as dowries to daughters of prominent but impoverished *fidalgos*; as prerequisites of a particular post. But mostly, these licenses were given to the highest bidder and as such could be very profitable for the holder.

The Portuguese also tried to control and tax the trade carried on by the other traders on the Indian Ocean. The main instrument used was the **cartaz** or passport backed up by the **armadas**. The Portuguese justification for their attempt to control the sea trade in Asia was based on their claim to be the lords of the seas. All the ships trading within Asia were thus required to take a pass or **cartaz** issued by a competent Portuguese authority. The pass identified the captain of the ship, stated its size and what crew it carried. The quantity of arms and munitions allowed was strictly limited. The ship had to call at a Portuguese fort to pay custom duties before it proceeded to its destination. Any ship without a pass was confiscated and its crew was severely punished. The fee charged for issuing the **cartaz** was small but the Portuguese benefited in terms of custom duties.

Later in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese invented a new instrument of trade control, the **cafila**. This consisted of a convoy of small local merchant ships guarded by a Portuguese fleet. The basis of **cafila** principle was twofold: income for the Portuguese custom houses and protection for the native traders. Some **cafilas** also brought food for the Portuguese forts and ports.

### 13.2.3 Evaluation of the Portuguese Commercial "Empire"

The initial ill effect of Portuguese monopoly was felt on the trade through the Red Sea to the Mediterranean in the first half of the sixteenth century. This trade was revived in the second half of the sixteenth century when the Portuguese

control slackened. The Portuguese monopoly gave way to a more efficient monopoly of the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Moreover, to what extent the projected huge profit in the spice trade was true needs to be looked into. The state finances of Portugal deteriorated during the second half of sixteenth century. The maintenance of forts and fleets did cost vast sums of money. The sustenance of Asian trade monopoly was, thus, a costly affair. Secondly, the Portuguese state depended on the foreign merchant capital, foreign expertise and foreign markets. The Portuguese also found it difficult to impose complete monopoly due to the opposition of Asian traders and rulers. There were frequent 'leakages' in the system. The Gujarati merchants collected vast amount of pepper in 1540's and 1550's in the Bay of Bengal and traded it all over Asia. The Portuguese failed to take over Aden, which was acquired by a hostile Ottoman empire in 1538. This left open a vital gap in their monopolistic designs. The Portuguese also tolerated private trade of Asian merchants via the Persian Gulf because they relied on these merchants for the supply of horses; in fact, the control of horse trade in Gujarat was one of the basic concerns of the Portuguese.

In Kanara and Malabar also, which were regions of pepper production and procurement, the Portuguese failed to enforce effective monopoly. In Malabar, the Zamorins of Calicut opposed the Portuguese system because the Raja of Cochin on whom the Portuguese relied, was formerly subordinate to Calicut. Commercially, this resistance took the form of local merchants continuing to trade in pepper. Portugal's lack of control over the territories where pepper was grown made their task easy. Since the Portuguese, based in coastal areas, tried to pay low prices to the pepper growers, the 'illegal' local merchants easily found their cargo. They could send it to the Coromandel via land-route, free from the Portuguese interference or to Gujarat via sea, which was risky. Further, the private trade of Portuguese officials and traders also constituted a major source of 'leakage' in this monopoly trade.

The Portuguese also tried to monopolise horse trade by centralising the whole horse trade from Arabia and Persia via Goa. All ships coming from South Arabia or Hurmuz with horses could come only to Goa. The main chink in the system was the need to conciliate the local rulers for political reasons. The Portuguese could extract concessions from the local rulers if they allowed the supply of horses without obstacles to them or denied horses to their enemies. The Church in Portugal also disliked the idea of selling horses to the 'infidels'.

There were occasional conflicts between the Portuguese and the nobility in the service of the local rulers and merchants. In Gujarat as mercantile interests of the indigenous powerful groups clashed with the Portuguese, Malik Ayaz, a slave noble of Gujarat Sultan, resisted the incursion of the Portuguese in Diu in the early sixteenth century. But the sea-borne empire of the Portuguese did not pose a serious threat to the economic resources of the Indian rulers and empires. The ships of Indian merchants while paying custom dues at Goa also continued to pay custom duties at the ports under the control of the local rulers. The control of sea trade was not considered essential by indigenous regimes as they were preoccupied with control over land territories, which relied on revenues from peasants in a more substantial way. Hence, with local challenge missing, the Portuguese invented their notion of sovereignty over sea trade and waters and maintained it with their naval supremacy. The local merchants were also willing to pay a small sum for the Portuguese protection. At the same time they evaded their control whenever there was a possibility to do so.

The Sea-Borne "empire" of the Portuguese was huge in terms of the area they were trying to control. The financial and the human resources available for this vast undertaking were relatively small. The total number of Europeans and Eurasians available for a major expedition seldom reached 5,000 men. The total number of men capable of military service in the whole empire may have been about 10,000. Despite their naval supremacy, the Portuguese failed to impose adequate trade control measures due to such meagre manpower. They were, in reality, only levying a tribute on local merchants. The Portuguese did not change the existing pattern or attempt any radical changes in routes, goods or trading techniques. It was a sort of a re-distributive empire, where the Portuguese skimmed off a layer of profits derived from the maritime trading activities of others for themselves.

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### 13.3 PHASE OF THE DUTCH DOMINATION (1600-1680)

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The States-General, the national governing body of the Dutch republic, founded the **Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie**. The company was formed as a result of the merger of a few companies. Wealthy merchants from Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Zeeland thus augmented the capital resource base of the company. The Charter of States-General had given the company monopoly rights to trade in the east for 21 years. Armed with this, the Dutch East India Company established its first factory at the Coromandel Coast which was the principal supply point of textile to the south-east Asian markets including the Spice Islands of Moluccas, Banda and Celebes and to the European markets. The Company's trade on the Coromandel Coast registered a significant increase over the seventeenth century especially due to the increase in the demand for textile from the south-east Asian markets. By 1680, the Dutch and the English Companies accounted for practically the entire trade. The Dutch East India Company was dominant in this trade while the English East India Company started catching up by 1680 especially in the sphere of Euro-Asian trade. However, the Dutch maintained their overall supremacy in the intra-Asian trade particularly between the Coromandel Coast and the south-east Asian markets. While the Portuguese were confined basically to the south-west coast of India in the sixteenth century, the Dutch and also the English soon expanded their trading networks to include the Coromandel Coast, Bengal and Gujarat. These new colonial powers also remained predominantly confined to the coastal areas, but trading stations were also established in the interior areas such as Ahmedabad and Agra.

#### 13.3.1 Nature and Pattern of the Dutch Trade

While the Dutch ascendancy in the seventeenth century was based on their ability to compete in the market, they still made use of monopoly rights in paying the producers in the Spice Islands at low rates. They also made use of force and violence to obtain exclusive rights in particular products and markets to minimise competition from the indigenous merchants. The Dutch East India Company also utilised the pass system as evolved by the Portuguese, to keep the Asian competitors out of the trade in monopoly products. There was, however, a phenomenal growth in the volume and value of Euro-Asian trade during the seventeenth century. There was also diversification in the composition of this trade. India remained a prominent supplier to the Dutch due to its role in Dutch



company's intra-Asian trade. Textiles from Coromandel and Gujarat were exchanged for pepper and other spices in the Indonesian archipelago. The Company also exported raw silk and opium from Bengal. The composition of Euro-Indian trade also changed. The importance of pepper and spice declined as major import items from India to Europe. The share of textile and raw silk increased from 16% of the total imports into Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century to 55% of the total imports at the end of century. Apart from Coromandel; Bengal, which was also the producer of raw silk and textiles, also became the main centre of procurement for the Dutch.

Another salient feature of Dutch trade with India was the necessity for the Dutch to pay for Indian goods in precious metals. This was related to the inability of Europe to supply western products in Asia at prices that would generate demand for them. An important dimension of this 'bullion for goods' model of Euro-Asian trade was that for the Europeans, the profits from trade were almost entirely derived from the sale of Asian goods in Europe rather than from the sale of European goods in Asia. Apart from bullion or precious metals, the Dutch also exported to India woollen, silk and other textiles manufactured mainly at Leiden, and non-precious metals such as lead, iron and mercury besides wine and beer.

In 1663, the Raja of Cochin managed to expel the Portuguese out of his Kingdom with the help of the Dutch East India Company which obtained monopoly privileges similar to the Portuguese. Earlier the Dutch Company had forced the authorities in the Spice Islands of Indonesia to grant monopoly rights to the Company for procuring spices such as cloves, nutmeg and mace. Even in the Indian subcontinent, the Dutch Company and local ruling authorities found their relationship mutually beneficial. The indigenous authorities saw the Company's trade as a net addition to their income and economic resources. The immediate gain was of custom revenues, which for the Mughal treasury was next only to the land-revenue. Moreover, the Company brought 'bullion' or precious metals in order to procure goods from India. As the local domestic output of these metals was negligible, such inflow of precious metals was necessary for the Indian monetary system. Generally, the custom duties charged by the Mughal Imperial authorities and other regional powers were ordinarily the same as extracted from the Indian merchants. However, the Mughal administration exempted the Dutch and English Companies from the payment of the Indian transit (**rahdari**) duties, giving them a slight advantage over Indian merchants. The local and the provincial authorities continued to levy transit duties. In other words, the Dutch and English Companies operated in the Indian market like other groups of Indian merchants with no special privileges and no restrictions whatsoever on their activities.

### 13.3.2 Administrative Functioning of the Dutch Factories

The Dutch East India Company established its first factory at Petapuli on the North Coromandel Coast in 1606. Another factory was established in the same year at the port of Masulipatnam. In 1610, a factory at Pulicat was established which also became the headquarters of the Dutch directorate of the Coromandel. Fort Geldria was constructed at Pulicat in 1613. The overall control of the Coromandel factories was given to the governor. The head of Masulipatnam factory was to be the second-in-command and was designated president in 1621. In 1690, the seat of the Coromandel 'government' was shifted from Pulicat to Nagapatnam in the Southern Coromandel Coast. Only 441 persons manned

these commercial establishments of the Coromandel Coast in 1680 out of which 233 were Indians performing diverse jobs. Of the 208 European functionaries, only 128 were soldiers including a lieutenant, 5 sergeants and 7 corporals. Most of them were stationed at Fort Geldria. Rest of the civilian establishment looked after the trading operations of the Company and consisted of chief factors, factors, under-factors and clerical assistants. The walled factory compounds served both as living quarters and as a storehouse for valuable goods. This establishment was replicated in Gujarat, Malabar and Bengal. A significant feature of factories in Bengal and Gujarat was the absence of military personnel (as employees). The Dutch and the European officials in Bengal and Gujarat were, thus, mostly assigned commercial duties. Even the main job of the law enforcement officer (the fiscal) at Hoogli was to prevent illicit participation in private trade by the Company's factors. The Bengal factories were organised into an independent directorate free from the control of the Pulicat government in 1665.

The chief factory at Hoogli became the seat of the Dutch directorate of Bengal factories. The principal executive body at the chief factory was the council headed by the governor or director. The Hoogli council consisted of, besides the director, a senior factor in charge of the Company's accounts, the law enforcement officer, the factor in charge of the factory's stores and a few other factors. A council that was under the control of the chief factory also governed each subordinate factory. The office of the chief-administrator, who supervised the accounts of all factories on the Coromandel Coast before these were sent to Batavia, supervised the Coromandel factories. There was also the council of justice for the coast that had powers to judge and punish the Dutch employees of the factories on the coast.

The governor-general and his council at Batavia in Java with a large establishment regulated the entire commercial empire. It was an intermediate administrative body between the Board of Directors of the Company known as – the Heren XVII and the Company's interests in Asia. Initially, this intermediate administrative body was located at Bantam but was shifted to Batavia in 1619. This became the eastern headquarters of the Company and became the chief link between the chief factory and the Board of Directors. Even the cargo from all over Asia were collected at Batavia before being sent to Holland. The extensive participation of the Dutch Company in the intra-Asian trade, which distinguished it from the English and French Companies, was facilitated by the co-ordination from Batavia.

The Dutch East India Company, making use of its naval supremacy, took over the institutionalised means – the pass and the convoy system – evolved by the Portuguese to control the Indian trade. Indian vessels, which often relied on rope and tree nails to hold their planks in place, lacked the strength either to bear heavy artillery bombardment from within or lacked the ability to absorb the recoil of large artillery. Despite their superior naval force, the Dutch were not always able to enforce the pass system effectively. For instance, the Dutch Company tried to restrict direct access for the Indian vessels to the 'tin ports' north of Malacca after their conquest of Malacca in 1641 and the subsequent conclusion of a monopoly agreement with the main tin-producing region in the Malay Peninsula. But the Indian ships could easily evade the Dutch control as they had free access to the Bay of Bengal port of Aceh in northern Sumatra – a great entrepot of the region. Moreover, the Dutch company faced the consequences in the form of retaliation in Gujarat.

### 13.3.3 Impact of the Dutch “Empire” on the Indian Society and State

The rise of a number of port cities on both the east and west coast of India was the result of the commercial activities of the European trading companies. In the earlier period, ports were simply a link between overseas trading activities of the merchants and the inland hinterland. The ports became, under the administration of the European companies, autonomous loci of power. As they were functioning in an alien and potentially hostile environment, they were fortified immediately so that they could defend themselves. The Dutch port of Pulicat was protected with the guns at Fort Geldria. Although the Dutch did not attempt to create a territorial empire in India, they had already prepared the ground for the French and English companies by establishing a strong territorial base in Java and the Spice Islands.

The small European community in the port cities could not have had any significant impact on the structure of the state and society in India. The Companies made use of the existing network of production and procurement available in India to obtain exportable commodities, though in course of time, they introduced some modifications to solve some specific problems. The Europeans utilised the services of the **dalal** or broker; an Indian employee with an intimate knowledge of local markets, to deal with the Indian merchants. Though on some occasions conflicts arose between the Indian rulers and the Dutch, the latter were not in a position to make the former subservient. The Indian rulers found the Dutch company's trade beneficial. The gold and silver imported by the Companies into India led to a substantial increase in the supply of bullion. The increasing monetisation of the economy facilitated commutation of land revenue demand from kind into cash, which led to a further increase in the market exchanges and trade. It also helped in the rise of banking firms so crucial to the world of expanding commerce. It was in this context that the Dutch East India Company was allowed to operate a mint in Fort Geldria at Pulicat and later it obtained the privilege of minting pagodas at Nagapattinam in 1658.

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## 13.4 THE FRENCH IN INDIA

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The French established their first factory in India at Surat in 1668. Subsequently Francois Martin established Pondicherry in 1674, which emerged as the Headquarters of the French in India. Like other Europeans trading companies, the French added other important factories to the existing ones at Balasore, Masulipatnam, Chandernagore, Tellicherry and Calicut. More commercial centres were established in Bihar and Bengal in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In the next Sub-Sections, we will describe the French commercial and political intervention in detail.

### 13.4.1 Campaignie des Indes Orientales

The French company designated as **Campaignie des Indes Orientales** was started in 1664 with the state's financial support. J. B. Colbert, the mercantilist thinker of France was the inspiration behind the formation of the company. Its working capital was only one-half of the Dutch company in 1664. The initial capital of the company was 8 million livres in 1665, which rose to 12 million livres in 1670. The state finances and management proved to be a liability in its operations. Only 16% of stockholders were ship-owner merchants, 8% were

financiers, while the royal family and gentry owned the rest of stocks. The fortunes of the company were dependent upon the uncertainties of the European Wars. The company was operating only four ships a year in the Indian Ocean after 1675 and stopped paying dividends to its shareholders after 1680. It now delegated its commercial rights to Messieurs de saint Malo, a private entrepreneurial concern under whose management it started earning profits again. However, the French state took back its commercial rights in 1719, and a new company-Compagnie Perpetuelle des Orientales, with a capital resource of 300 million livres, functioned till 1769. The strength of its fleet increased from 10 to 75 ships. The new company also participated in intra-Asian trade, although the Euro-Asian trade still remained more important. The major items exported by the French from India were white cotton clothes, muslin, painted clothes, pepper, saltpetre, cowries and redwood. They imported into India alcohol, wines, coral, gold thread and iron products. The value of goods exported from India far exceeded the value of products imported into India with deficits sometimes reaching as high as 75% of the goods imported. Export of precious metals to India made up the deficits. The French Company, like its Dutch and English counterparts, utilised the services of the Indian merchants as agents. It also used the system of advances to procure goods from the Indian artisans. The French sometimes collected tribute from the Indian merchants in the name of taxes to tide over their financial crisis. The Indian merchants of Chetti, Mudaliar and Pillai castes provided both credit and commodities on credit to the French. These Indian merchants even mediated between the local rulers and the French in case of conflict.

### **13.4.2 Transition from “Commercial Empire” to “Territorial Empire”**

The initial acquisitions of the French were similar to the Portuguese and the Dutch. The French Company acquired Mahe on the Malabar Coast in 1721, followed by Yanam in 1731 and Karaikal in 1758. The head quarters of the French were in Pondichery where Fort Louis was established during 1700-1707. It had become a large port city with a population of 1,20,000 by 1741. All these efforts were part of the commercial networks required for the smooth functioning of the Company.

The French Governors Dumas and Joseph Francois Dupleix wanted to establish a territorial colony in India so that the revenues raised from such a territorial empire would replace the need to bring precious metals as a means of procuring exportable goods in India. However, the French shareholders of the Company were unwilling to pay the heavy costs for such colonisation ventures. Besides this, the East India Company's opposition to such an imperial design of the French was also a major hurdle in the realisation of Dupleix's dreams. However his commanders met with temporary success when La Bourdonnais took over Madras in 1746 and Gingee fell into Bussy's hands in 1750. The Marquis de Bussy, second-in-command under Dupleix, was more successful in establishing the French domination in the Deccan. The war of succession after the death of Nizam-ul-mulk provided him the opportunity to interfere in the Deccan politics. Nizam's grandson Muzaffar Jang was supported by the French against the claim of Nizam's second son, Nasir Jang who was recognised by the English. Muzaffer Jang emerged victorious in the battle of Amboor (1749) and appointed Dupleix as his deputy to all the lands to the South of river Krishna. He recognised the French Protégé, Chanda Sahib as the ruler of Arcot. The sarkar of Masulipatnam

was gifted to the French, and they were given access to all the revenues of the Carnatic. A permanent contingent of French troops was placed at the disposal of the new Nizam. The French were granted a few more Sarkars after Muzaffar Jang's death when Salabat Khan was raised to the throne. This brought almost the whole of Coromandel Coast under French domination. The French contingent was raised to 2,000. Bussy enjoyed enormous powers in the Nizam's court and administration. The French were on the verge of giving shape to the dream of a territorial empire. But Duplex was recalled in 1754 after his disastrous experiment in the Carnatic. Godeheu, his successor failed to defend French positions against the English. Although Comte de Lally, the commander of the French expeditionary force in India, temporarily captured Cuddalore in 1758, his tactlessness led to the occupation of Pondicherry and Chandernagore by the English. The French also suffered heavily in battles of Chandurti and Wandiwash. Thus, instead of being able to establish a territorial regime, the French power was vanquished after the conclusion of the Paris treaty (1763), which ended the seven-year war between Britain and France in Europe.

After the treaty of Paris (1763), the French surrendered the significant role they had played in the military and political affairs of India. However, the French had shown to the British the ways and means of establishing a territorial colonial empire. The French were the forerunners of colonisation in another sense. After acquiring Pondicherry from the king of Bijapur in 1672, they developed this port-city. The physical space of the settlement was divided on the basis of colour and race. The French quarters maintained their exclusivity behind high walls and secluded gardens, while incorporating some features of Indian building techniques. Later on, the British colonisers also developed their settlements on the basis of the separation of the communities and religion.

### 13.4.3 The Role of the French Partis in the Indian States

The French also made a significant contribution as the French partis in the service of the Indian rulers. The French were the forerunners in organising and commanding Indian armed contingents. Soldiers were poorly paid in France and the common citizens could not aspire for the rank of officers, as this was a prerogative of the nobility. The Indian rulers were willing to pay the French soldiers handsomely and there were ample opportunities to rise in rank and status if one had military competence. Hence, a large number of French mercenaries or professional soldiers served in the armies of Indian rulers. As early as 1764, Yusuf Khan rose against the British in Madurai and resisted two long sieges with the help of the French soldiers and officers. The French-trained Indian troops offered a number of advantages to the Indian rulers. They provided "hierarchies of command" to sustain control during the battle. The new organisation of the army needed routine drill so that deployed in mass-formation, and equipped with good muskets and supported by rapid-firing cannons, they could have lethal effect. This relegated cavalry to an auxiliary role and infantry emerged as the mainstay of warfare. But it became important to train them regularly in order to increase their efficiency and discipline. The Indian rulers used the service of the French to re-organise, re-equip and re-train their armies. The French also helped in matters of military engineering such as fortification and casting of guns. The fortification of Srirangpatnam, Palaghat, Udayagiri and Aligarh were some important examples of the French military constructions.

Michel Joachim Marie Raymond entered the services of the Nizam in 1786 after having distinguished himself in commanding the Mysore army. He organised



Corps Francois de Raymond whose number reached 11,000. He became Amin-Jinsi or the controller of ordinance and established a gun foundry for producing cannons. The Nizam gave him many titles besides a personal **jagir** of Rs.7 lakhs. Another notable French commander De Boigne who served under Mahadji Sindhia, organised battalions on the French model whose strength reached 50,000 men. He was given the title of the viceroy of Hindustan, a handsome salary and a *jagir* for the maintenance of his troops in the fertile Yamuna Doab. The composition of his famous Brigade resembled the later British Indian army with soldiers recruited from the Jats, the Sikhs, the Afghans and the Rajputs etc. Similarly Eustache de Lannoy rose from a humble position to become the commander of the 50,000 strong Travoncore army of the ruler Ram Verma. He was instrumental in the fortification of Udaiyagiri fort, construction of a gun-foundry and a gun-powder factory. Although, there was no separate unit commanded by the French officers in the Mysore military organisation, individual French commanders, soldiers and engineers played an important role in the Mysore army. Similarly, Allard and Ventura organised the **fauz-i-khas** of Ranjit Singh, which was an integrated all-arms formation consisting of two regiments of cavalry, four battalions of infantry and troops armed with 24 guns or artillery under the over-all French command. In fact, about one-third of Ranjit Singh's army was trained in European fashion and was based on the principle of promotion on merit. The fauz was thus an anomaly in a society where a person's status and rank depended on his/her birth. The French not only exercised financial and judicial authority within their **jagirs** in such Indian polities, they also enjoyed considerable clout and influence in them.

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### 13.5 SUMMARY

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In this Unit, you have learnt about the activities of early European trading companies. The European trading companies established their "commercial empires" through monopolising maritime trade. The relative superiority of the Europeans on sea was crucial in the establishment of such empires. The activities of these empires were mostly confined to the coastal areas of the Indian sub-continent and they utilised the existing networks of procurement, trade and finance. The balance of the Euro-Indian trade was favourable to India and India earned huge amounts of bullion through its export-surplus. In this way the foreign trade of European merchant corporate houses benefited the Indian economy. Although there were occasional conflicts between the European companies and the Indian rulers over control of trade, there was no large-scale use of force. The manpower available to the European companies was limited and they could not afford to challenge the indigenous rulers.

The French were the first to attempt establishment of a territorial regime on the strength of a new type of professional infantry trained and deployed for mass coordinated attacks. The French experiment failed but the English later successfully utilised the French model of empire building.

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### 13.6 GLOSSARY

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**Cartaz** : A type of pass issued by the Portuguese to the Asian traders.

- Cafila** : A small Convoy of trading ships guarded by a naval fleet.
- Fidalgo** : A person belonging to the feudal aristocracy in Portugal.
- Pagodas** : The gold coins of Indians rulers.
- Partis** : The French professional soldiers in the service of the Indian rulers.
- Redistributive empire** : An empire, which simply redistributes the surplus.

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### 13.7 EXERCISES

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- 1) Would you consider the French to be the forerunners of colonisation in India? Elucidate.
- 2) Discuss the chief characteristics of the Portuguese sea borne Empire.

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## UNIT 14 THE BRITISH COLONIAL STATE

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### Structure

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Nature of the Colonial State
- 14.3 The Political Economy of the Colonial State
- 14.4 Instruments of Control
  - 14.4.1 The Colonial Military Apparatus
  - 14.4.2 The Police Organisation
  - 14.4.3 The Judiciary and Law
  - 14.4.4 The Bureaucracy – The Steel Frame of the Raj
- 14.5 Sources of Legitimation
- 14.6 Summary
- 14.7 Glossary
- 14.8 Exercises

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### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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The political structure which evolved in India under the British during the initial phase of their rule was civil in nature due to the East India Company's stress on trade and commerce. However, war and conquest followed soon with the aim of establishing a territorial empire. The British introduced various Acts between 1773 and 1858 to establish parliamentary control over the government in India. After 1858 the administration of the East India Company was dissolved and the Crown was directly empowered to exercise control over the administration. The political authority of the colonial state relied upon many instruments for preserving and enforcing its power which was a pre-condition for the formulation of colonial policy. The frontiers and territorial boundaries had to be demarcated for security which was a prerequisite for the growth and development of colonial state and policy. Certain developments in Britain found expression in policy making in India.

The laissez faire ideology was responsible for the progressive rise of parliamentary control in government and centralisation which led to political integration in India. The philosophy of liberalism emanated from the doctrine of laissez faire. The influence of liberal ideas was reflected in the administrative and legislative endeavours of Governor General William Bentinck. The British policy at this stage was an attempt to devise a balance between the traditional Indian society and the British Capitalist system based on rule of law. In Britain the ideology of laissez faire gave impetus to industrial capitalism in economy and democracy in politics.

The new social and economic exigencies influenced the abolition of the company's trade in 1833 and the Indian market was opened to British industrial manufactures. Thus it became necessary to introduce reforms in administration and decree fresh laws in the changed scenario of the arrival of an increasing number of European settlers (immigrants) in India. The European settlers constituted a group which disapproved of the highly centralised executive administration. They wished to promote their interests through a separate

legislative authority which paved the way for the growth of representative government in India. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 tried to create a counterpoise between the representative government and the executive bureaucratic administration.

The new Indian middle class of English educated elites who were the support base of the government and the new landed aristocracy joined hands with the European business interests to curtail the power of the executive by pressing for representative legislative authority. Representative government meant an accountable political system controlled by the socially dominant which acted as a link between the bureaucracy and the masses. In the legislative councils the Zamindars, planters and lawyers pursued their own interests. This gave rise to agrarian distress. Therefore the executive government was forced to introduce agrarian reforms to protect the interests of the Raiyats.

As a consequence of British policy political associations were constituted (to give opinion on legislation) and the urban middle class elites pressed for the introduction of representative government through this platform. The Indian Councils Act of 1892 accepted the elective principle in practice but in the guise of recommendation. The legislative councils were a forum for getting information regarding the popular reaction to various legislations. The views of the Indian representatives which were aired in these councils were reported by the press and could be used to justify British policies.

The Morley-Minto Reforms (Indian Councils Act of 1909) accepted the criteria of representation on the basis of classes, races, communities and interests which was in accordance with India's pluralistic society but later separate electorates were used to create divisions between Hindus and Muslims. Minto had acknowledged the principle of a special separate electorate for Muslims in 1906. This was done to offset the influence of the middle class professionals in representative bodies. To ensure the implementation of the principle of election an electoral system had to be formulated. The growth and development of the legislative system led to the rise of an alternative system of governance carried out by the people of India themselves through their elected representatives.

Based on these introductory comments this Unit discusses the nature of colonial rule. Further, it goes on to explain the political economy of the state along with the various instruments of control adopted by the British. It also discuss the sources that were used by them to legitimise their authority.

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## **14.2 NATURE OF THE COLONIAL STATE**

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The Battle of Plassey (1757) marks a significant break in the modern Indian history. The East India Company, whose original purpose was commercial gain, transformed itself into a ruling territorial power by acquiring all the attributes of the state. It could wage war, make peace, raise taxes and administer justice in the conquered territories like any other sovereign power. As a private enterprise, it administered its territories for the profits of its shareholders, but the ultimate source of sovereignty lay with the British Parliament and Crown, the twin institutions that regulated its governance before taking over direct administration of the Indian Empire in 1858. After 1858, some modification was introduced in the institutions and administrative machinery founded by the Company Raj, but the basic fabric of the state and its purpose remained

unaltered. Some scholars argue that the early colonial state and its edifice was built on the foundations of the existing pre-colonial institutions and identities. They refuse to acknowledge any sharp break in the nature of polity after assumption of power by the British. But while acknowledging the forces of continuity, we must also understand that colonialism refashioned the existing indigenous political arrangements, social-structures and relations in a qualitative way. As the colonial state was the key actor in bringing about all these socio-economic changes, we now turn to the analysis of some important aspects of colonial state.

The colonial state was qualitatively different from the pre-colonial Indian states especially in the manner in which it marshalled military force and extracted resources from India. The colonial state in a subtle way combined the radical method of social transformation with the use of conciliatory means to appease various social groups. Being an alien force, the final sanction for the maintenance of colonial rule in India was necessarily physical force and repression. It was the conviction of the colonial rulers that in colonies and in their governance, a strong and decisive executive action to secure order was necessary. For instance, to crush the Kuka uprising (1872) in Punjab, many rebels were shot dead, blown from guns and hanged. We all know the notorious Amritsar massacre at Jalianwala Bagh. In other words, army was the instrument for maintaining the coercive apparatus of the colonial state. However, even the most autocratic regimes require some sort of legitimisation. The British used various means and ideological strategies to justify their rule in the eyes of the Indian people. The State, even though armed with an efficient bureaucracy and a huge amount of information about Indian society and people at its disposal, lacked the financial resources and sufficient military might to rule so vast and turbulent a land by force alone. The colonial state was a product of historical circumstances and was shaped by the British ideologies. The British ideologies projected the state established by the British in India as an engine of modernisation. They laid stress on the positive virtues of colonial rule such as establishment of rule of law, a modern education system and an impersonal 'rational' bureaucracy that improved and made more efficient the work of maintaining law and order. Despite its selective administrative intervention for initiating changes in the social sphere, the colonial state was to a large extent guided by the basic liberal principle: establishment of the principle of private proprietorship of land. But the principle of private proprietorship can be implemented only if contracts are guaranteed, and if law protects contracts and property rights. The liberal ideology of the colonial state emphasised that the state should enable markets to function freely and act as the guarantor and protector of market by introducing the necessary laws and legal institutions. The Romantic paternalist strand of colonial-ideology, however, feared that unregulated markets would disrupt indigenous institutions such as the village community and harm certain social groups in a manner that could jeopardize political stability (see Unit 23 for detailed discussion of colonial ideologies).

It is difficult to measure the degree of colonial state's reliance on the consent of the people and the ideological precepts for justifying its rule in India. The colonial state sought the consent of the Indian people in various ways and attempted to legitimise its rule. For example, it acquired to some extent the image of a public authority responsible for maintaining social-order and justice. But although, the rhetoric of the 'rule of law' and 'individual freedom' decorated its claims to legitimacy, in practice the colonial state maintained its



domination by the use and demonstration of force, which reflected the very nature of colonial state in India. At the same time it is also true that naked force was used only in case of crisis whereas the demonstrative aspect was always there. The British state upheld the theoretical principle of equality before law. This formal, legal equality of all citizens was absent in the pre-colonial administrative system of the Indian rulers. Peshwas, for instance upheld the principle of hierarchy and scale of worthiness according to caste and birth in deciding the exact nature of penalty to be imposed in case of crime. The British colonial state, in its enactment of the Indian penal code, standardised personal law separately for Hindus and Muslims. The colonial administrators prepared a Compendia of the customary laws for each region, but the underlying thrust of the colonial state was towards codification of law and uniformity in respect of the law. The upper caste customs were codified and applied to all the Hindus. The colonial state based itself on formal legal equality guaranteed by rules and procedures that were to be followed by the police and the courts. These imposed partial checks on the arbitrariness of the rulers despite the drawback that they reflected colonial needs and were not framed by a democratic procedure by the Indian people. The laws were often repressive, like, The Vernacular Press Act (1878) enacted to muzzle the critical Indian Press. It contained provisions for proceedings against 'seditious papers' with a minimum of legal fuss, a certainty of conviction and almost complete censorship. In the field of justice, the Ilbert Bill Controversy (1882-83) reflected the racial prejudices of European administrators in India. The Bill was based on the liberal principle of equality before law and sought to empower Indian Magistrates in the rural areas to try British subjects. The British opponents of the Bill argued that India's social and legal institutions were different from Europe, hence such a legal equality could not be granted. Similarly, representative self-government was denied to the Indian people on the pretext that Indian people were not competent and intellectually mature to establish representative and accountable government – a complete negation of traditional Indian local governance. The colonial state institutionalised the liberal ideology during 1860s and 1870s through the creation of municipalities and district boards with elected members. Seats in these local bodies, however, were precisely allotted to specified trading and religious communities. The basic purpose was to increase the government's revenue by raising local taxes and to integrate the powerful indigenous groups in governance. Although the alleged aim of these 'reforms' was to train the Indians in 'self-rule', they initiated the process of the establishment of communal electorates. Despite these drawbacks, the colonial state unconsciously did provide such knowledge that was utilised by the Indians in fighting for self-governance and independence.

The problem of seeking legitimacy was also related to the issue of accommodating alien concepts and doctrines within the traditional structure of Indian society. The colonial state's anxiety to legalise existing rights and privileges of the powerful and the dominant groups (Indian intermediaries, e.g., Taluqdars in Oudh) often subverted and undermined their own ideals as in the case of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. The practical need to accommodate powerful indigenous social groups often grew out of the colonial state's requirement to maintain political stability. The social policies of the colonial state had to be devised to appease the dominant and the powerful social groups. Hence, reinforcing caste system through the Census classification of social hierarchy and legitimising the authority of the Brahmins, etc. were some of the methods used in this regard.

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## 14.3 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE COLONIAL STATE

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The early colonial state's chief concern was to ensure the smooth appropriation and collection of land-revenue (the main source of its income). A variety of land- settlements were introduced in different parts of the country to achieve this aim. The Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis (1793) assigned the right to collect revenue, as an inheritable, transferable right of ownership of the estates, to the Zamindars of Bengal. The revenue demand was fixed in perpetuity. The Zamindars were expected to collect rent from the cultivators and remit a part of it as revenue to the Company's treasury. The revenue assessment was initially very high. Many Zamindars defaulted and sold their Zamindaris to other landlords and usurers. In the early nineteenth century, therefore, the colonial state empowered Zamindars with extra-economic coercive powers such as the right to imprison and evict peasants. In parts of Madras Presidency that were acquired from Mysore, agrarian magnates had already been squeezed dry by Tipu Sultan's policies. This facilitated a direct settlement between the colonial state and the cultivators. The Utilitarian ideology (as discussed in unit 23) also stressed the maximum appropriation of net produce from the peasants. In Madras and Bombay Presidencies, about two-thirds of the agricultural lands were under Ryotwari settlement. In the later settlements, the colonial state also retained the right to enhance revenues periodically, usually at a thirty years interval. The early Company rule was, in fact based on the direct plunder of the Indian revenues. These were 'invested' in the purchase of Indian manufactured goods, especially cotton textiles, which were further sold in the European markets. With the expansion of the territorial empire of the Company, the revenues also soared from about 3 million in 1765 to 22 million in 1818. The heavy- reliance of the colonial state on the doctrine of private property removed the customary safeguards that shielded the Indian peasants and the state laws greatly strengthened the new class of property owners.

India's textile manufactures lost their edge in the world- market due to the emergence of the industrial organisation and mechanised techniques of production in the English factories. The British industrialists of Lancashire and Manchester also demanded the abolition of the Company's monopoly over Indian trade. The Charter Act of 1813 ended the Company's monopoly of trade in India. China's tea and silk now substituted Indian textiles as the most profitable item of the Company's trade. The East India Company financed its China trade by forcing Indian cultivators to grow indigo and by establishing a state monopoly over opium cultivation in India. With the smuggling of huge amounts of Indian opium into China it was no more necessary for the Company to export bullion to finance their China trade.

Although India's markets were opened up for the British industrial goods from the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was only in the second half of the century that India was systematically transformed into a typical colonial economy exporting agriculture based primary products such as cotton, jute, tea, wheat and oilseeds. The colonial state unilaterally transferred resources from India to England to meet an array of Home Charges. India received no equivalent value of goods and services in return for a rising export surplus. Home Charges included the cost of the secretary of state's establishment in London, costs of war at home and abroad, purchase of military provisions, pensions for British military and civilian bureaucracy in India, etc. It also

included a guaranteed 4.5 to 5% annual interest to the British Railway Companies that helped in the construction of the Railways in India. The interest payments on public debt raised by the colonial state in London money markets was also a part of this visible resource transfer. The Home charges amounted to \$17-18 million at the turn of the century. In addition to this, the other means of 'drain' of Indian resources were private remittances by British officials, merchants and the 'invisible' charges for services accruing to British shipping, banking and insurance companies. The silver rupee of India was equal to 2 shillings in 1872 but depreciated against the pound sterling and was equal to 1 shilling and 2 pence in 1893. The depreciation in the value of Indian currency meant that there was increase in the real burden of India's payments to England. The British denied that there was any drain of resources from India and maintained that they received only a 'fair' return on the capital invested in India and payments for various services rendered to India's colonial subjects. However, the nationalist critique of Colonialism stressed that the wealth drained away from India represented a potential investible surplus, which would have contributed to economic development of India if it had remained within the country.

The transfer of resources from India took place through the council bills of the Secretary of State. British buyers of Indian goods paid pound sterling for council bills. These council bills were exchanged for rupees (obtained from the government of India's revenues) in the branches of the exchange banks in India by the British trading firms. The rupee currency was then used to finance the production and trade of export commodities. The rupee profits accruing, due to the exchange rate being favourable for the British, could subsequently be used to buy sterling bills at the local branches of the British-owned exchange banks. Pound sterling could be obtained against these bills in England, which could be again used to buy council bills. The cycle was repeated year after year.

The main aim of the colonial state was to facilitate the expansion of the markets in India for the manufactured products of the Metropolitan country. The low purchasing power of the agricultural population in India, as reflected in a very low per-capita income, hindered this expansion. Therefore, the emphasis shifted on the production of commercial crops, introduction of irrigation canal networks in certain areas and moderation of revenue demands. In such circumstances, the main channel of appropriating the agrarian surplus was credit mechanism. The traders and moneylenders advanced money to the peasants for the production of commercial crops that were to be exported by the export companies. Although, expanding commercialisation of Indian agriculture did create some brief periods of boom, one example was the cotton boom of early 1860s during the American Civil War, it also increased dependence of Indian peasants on usurers and resulted in a spate of devastating famines, especially in the 1890s.

The imperial interests mostly determined the financial and political needs of the colonial state. The Indian railways, often seen as the great modernising force of colonialism leading to social mobility and internal unification of markets, were constructed and designed to serve the economic and military interests of the British. They facilitated movement of the army, the dispersal of the British industrial goods, served as channels for extracting the agriculture based primary products and their transportation from the Indian **bazaars** to the ports. It was a profitable source of investment for the British capital while the risk was primarily the responsibility of the colonial state in the form of guaranteed interest payments, whether the railways made profits or not.

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## 14.4 INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL

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In this section, we will discuss the major instruments of control used by the colonial state. The colonial army and police were the means through which the political authority of the colonial state was exercised while the judiciary and the bureaucracy implemented laws framed by the colonial state policy makers. We have omitted the ideological and educational apparatus of the colonial state here as they have been discussed in other Units in greater detail.

### 14.4.1 The Colonial Military Apparatus

The colonial army was the mechanism used by the colonial state to maintain its paramountcy. Its emergence can be traced to the establishment of the Bengal army under the command of Calcutta Presidency. The increasing financial power of the East India Company derived from its monopoly over trade and supplemented by the **Diwani** or the power to collect taxes enabled it to directly recruit and pay the sepoy's instead of hiring soldiers through the indigenous chiefs. Europeans utilised the power of the infantry, organised on the basis of strict command and training pattern. The collective, coordinated musket fire wielded by these troops proved very effective. But creation of such an army required professionalisation i.e. the army had to be separated from the civil society for a long period so as to train and discipline the soldiers as professionals who could act in a cohesive, coordinated manner on the battlefield. Military parade and close-order drill and manoeuvres were not merely ceremonial performances, they were rather means to create professional soldiers. This professionalisation also required regular payments and a system of reward and security, such as promotion system, linked to the length of service and performance and a pension system for long-serving sepoys. The linguistic and caste-divisions of the Indian society were used by the British to create socially segregated inward looking groups thinking only in terms of their own regiment and divorced from the civil society. Sepoys were grouped into companies and battalions and were commanded at the lower unit level by Indian officers from the sepoy's own social-group.

The East India Company's army consisted of the Bengal army and the armies of Bombay and Madras Presidencies, each with a different type of internal organisation and level of professionalisation. The sepoys of the Bengal army generally hailed from the high-caste (Brahmin and Kshyatriya) Hindu families of Oudh and Bihar. They maintained the caste and village ties even in their 'military villages'. The ties with their original villages were however, slackened but not snapped. The Bombay and the Madras army recruits belonged to the Punjab, Oudh, and Rajputana and hailed from different castes. There was an influx of Maratha soldiers after the Anglo-Maratha war. These armies consisted of different ethnic groups and castes and were organised on professional basis, e.g., Mer Corps. They were further distanced from the civil society and made proud of their regiments. They generally helped the British during the 1857 revolt as loyal professional soldiers. The British armies also professionalized logistics by routine purchase and stockpiling of non-perishable goods so as to attain mobility without resource problems and without resorting to plunder. The colonial state, also took special care to deny the Indian rulers the access to resources to prevent them from organising similar professional armies. The annexation principle was applied in territories of the Princely States where succession lapsed. The system of subsidiary alliances with the Indian rulers was initiated with the aim of

liquidating the local military and even the quasi-military forces so as to achieve almost complete “de-militarization” of the Indian kingdoms.

The revolt of 1857 necessitated certain reforms in the organisation of colonial armed forces. The Royal Peel Commission (1859) spelt out the proportion which was to be maintained between the number of British and Indian soldiers in India. The ratio was fixed as 1 British: 2.5 Indian sepoys. The mobile artillery was completely controlled by the British and the Arms Acts were passed to deny the possession of weapons in the hands of ‘unlawful’ elements. The colonial state also evolved the ideology of martial-fitness of certain castes and races. The ideology of martial-race was an attempt by the colonial state to utilise ethnicity for promoting imperial interests. The territorial nomenclature of the armies was abandoned and now the Bengal army was re-organised by absorbing soldiers from the so called “martial race such as the Sikhs”, the Jats, the Muslims, the Punjabis, the Pathans and the Dogras. Nepali Gorkhas acquired such an importance in the British military organisation that they constituted 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the army in 1914. This powerful instrument of colonial power was commanded by the King’s commissioned officers from Sandhurst in the beginning and subsequently by the officers from the Military Academy in Dehradun to obey the **hukm-i-sahiban alishar** (the orders of the Great Sahibs).

The total strength of the Company’s standing army was 1,55,000 in 1805 and it was a unique feat in the history of the growth and development of the state institutions in India. Although the colonial state professed that the maintenance of public order was ordinarily the duty of police, troops were frequently summoned to deal with disturbances. This policing role of maintaining public order remained a major function of the colonial army even till 1947. Besides maintaining the ‘internal frontier’ of India, the colonial army safeguarded the global strategic interests of the empire. The colonial army was used in many places to protect imperial interest such as in Ceylon, Java, Red Sea, Egypt, China and Afghanistan. During the First World War, it played a crucial role in the defence of the Suez Canal and the sea-route through the Red Sea which was so important for Persian-Gulf supplies. In East Africa, Indian troops were used for the liquidation of the German colony of Tanganyika. And, a much larger role was played during the Second World War.

#### 14.4.2 The Police Organisation

The colonial state in its early phase used the indigenous institutions for controlling crimes. Warren Hastings, for example, retained the post of the **fauzdars** and utilised the policing functions of the Zamindars during the early phase of Company rule. Finding this arrangement inadequate, he also appointed Magistrates in the districts and each district was divided into smaller sub-units, each under the charge of a **darogah** who headed a group of 20-30 armed policemen and supervised the village watchmen who was in charge of 20-30 villages. The **darogahs** functioned under the over-all control of the Magistrates. Regulation XXII of 1793 abolished the policing right of Zamindars. In the system of administration, evolved by Cornwallis, District Collectors combined the duties of revenue-collection and the police duties as Magistrates. These functions were separated briefly at the recommendation of the Bird Committee (1808-12) when separate District Superintendents of Police were appointed. However, in 1844 the functions of the Collector, the Magistrate and the Police were again combined to tackle the problem of the increasing incidences of property crimes.



The Police organisation emerged as an autonomous organ of the colonial state in the North-West-Frontier Province in the 1840s as a quasi-military instrument for maintaining order and assisting a fragile political authority. Sir Charles Napier modelled 'his' Police in the Sind Province on the pattern of Irish Police Organisation (1836). Easy mobility, a clear and firm hierarchy, and direct and formal links with the army and a highly centralised command marked this Police organisation. In his scheme, the posts of lieutenant of Police and an adjutant in the district, both were to be manned by the British army officers. **Thanedars** or Commissioned officers of the mounted police were in charge of each division of a district. By 1859, there was a complete network of about 245 Thanas in Sind. This type of police organisation was later recommended by the Police Commission (1860) and enshrined in the Police Act of 1861. The Act was applied to various provinces except Bombay and Madras. However, separate Police Acts were framed for these two provinces. The Police organisation thus emerged as a distinct department of government, with some degree of military discipline. In some cases, the District Magistrates had initially resisted the move to divest them of policing powers.

The British officers dominated the superior posts in the police. In 1887, a system of competition for higher appointments was introduced but it was meant only for the British citizens. A few posts of Assistant Superintendent of Police were thrown open to the selected Inspectors. The Andrew Frazer Police Commission (1902-03) recommended that there should be an Imperial Service Branch in which recruitment was to be conducted in England and a Provincial Service Branch in which recruitment was done entirely in India. The issue of Indianisation of an alien bureaucracy came before the subsequent Police Commissions. Gokhale and Justice Abdur Rahim expressed their concern regarding the substitution of indigenous for alien police officers as members of the Police Commission (1912). In the twentieth century, the Indianisation did take place at a gradual pace. The proportion of the Indian police officers of Assistant Police Superintendent and above rank was about 10% in 1924 but it reached 30% by 1946.

Another important aspect of the Police organisation within the colonial state was its military character in its administrative and organisational form. Although the colonial state attributed the responsibility of the maintenance of public law and order to the police, however the army was frequently used to deal with 'disturbances'. Its military character influenced even its perception of dealing with crime and the problem of violation of social norms. These were seen primarily in terms of rebellion and disorder and as aspects of public safety and political stability rather than simply as matters related to lawlessness and security of property and persons. The lack of financial resources and political will forced the police to rely on selective control, i.e., identification of particular social groups as their targets. The police also remained poorly armed, inefficient, lacking in proper training and highly corrupt. Even Curzon found all these weaknesses and defects in the police organisation. In the 1920s, an armed contingent of the police was established to avoid over-deployment of the army but the colonial policy makers always mistrusted this agency of administration. There was the lurking fear of revolt, of taking sides or of their sympathising with the crowds. The police organisation of the colonial state was also inhibited by the power of the racial ideology and by the fact that it was aligned with the powerful dominant landed groups. So much so that in most parts of the countryside it was the **daroga** and the local landlord who mattered as government for the peasants and labourers or to say for every section of the rural society.

### 14.4.3 The Judiciary and Law

The colonial state inherited an autocratic judicial setup governed by ill-defined and outdated laws. In the indigenous judicial system criminals were punished according to their caste-status. After an initial recognition of the caste-hierarchy, the colonial state attempted to incorporate the element of formal equality in the legal system. However, the system of legal equality adopted by the colonial state was limited in scope and ambiguous in its nature. British rulers considered the principle of racial discrimination and privilege as the cornerstone of the colonial judicial system. The legal inequality inherent in the earlier system with regard to the various social groups was sought to be removed but the racial distinctions were preserved as a privilege for the British subjects. However, after 1836, the British subjects could be tried in the same courts as the Indians in the civil matters. The other special privileges granted to the British subjects were abolished in 1836, but an Indian judge could still not try them in the criminal cases.

The early Company courts followed the principle of justice by the executive head with the Governor-in-Council deciding the legal cases of the English subjects. Warren Hastings established two types of courts at the district-level diwani adalats (civil-court) and nizamat adalats (courts for criminal cases). The British Collector enjoyed both revenue and judicial powers in a district whose boundaries followed the pattern of pre-existing revenue units called the Sarkars. Pandits and Moulvis were associated with these courts to assist the European judges. The Governor-in-Council acted as the court of appeal in both criminal and civil cases.

In India, the British found that laws were generally based on traditions recorded in memory and customs embedded in a variety of usages. Hastings believed that the knowledge of Indian laws as embodied in the textual traditions of India was relevant for developing the judicial set-up. The traditional Indian legal interpreters, the Pandits and the Moulvis, were seen as the upholder, expositors and interpreters of the legal tradition and hence they were associated with the courts as experts in this area. The British, however, distrusted Indian subordinates due to their own racial ideology. They wanted to acquire a complete knowledge of the canons and the authoritative legal texts. They wanted to codify the Indian laws. This, however, could be done only with the help of Indian assistants, whose integrity the British doubted. The British scholars hoped that this would remove the dependence of the future British officials on Indians subordinates. N.B. Halhed's "**A Code of Gentoo Law**" (1776) and H.T. Colebrooke's "**The Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession**" (1798) were early attempts to codify the laws concerning property, inheritance, marriages, castes and succession, etc. The attempt to standardise and codify the laws remained the basic concern of the colonial rulers. The Utilitarian ideology emphasised this need to remove the vagueness and diversity in legal practices in order to dismantle the structure of 'despotic' rule in India. Macaulay was appointed as chairperson of the First Law Commission (1834) to achieve this objective. A series of enactments established the colonial "rule of law". The Indian Penal Code (1860) codified laws and sought to eliminate social inequality. The Codes of Criminal Procedures (1872) settled the quality and quantity of evidence required for proving or disproving facts related to offences. The Indian laws (indigenous), were seen as changeless and immutable. In the case of Hindu law, the upper caste customs were codified and applied to all castes in the name of legal equality, whereas, the English law system was based on the historical precedents and was responsive to historical change. Such an element of flexibility and the principle of

multiple interpretation was reintroduced in the procedure of the working of the High Courts in India subsequently. The High Courts established in 1861 at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and later at Lahore and Allahabad, with original and appellate jurisdiction, took cognition of the earlier judicial decisions. The colonial state could also conveniently use the principle of non-interference to justify the existing oppressive practices or it could seek the justification for continuation of customary practices, despite references to its repudiation in certain “ancient customs and traditions”. At the same time, the different social category and groups could also articulate their specific interests and pressurise the colonial state to modify the existing law or enact new laws to protect their legal rights. The examples of such legal enactment were tenancy acts and the land alienation acts.

After 1858, in many areas the judicial powers were also given to the big landlords, say like the Talukdars of Oudh, to further enhance the colonial control over the countryside.

#### **14.4.4 The Bureaucracy : The Steel Frame of the Raj**

Apart from the armed forces and police the colonial state also created a hitherto unknown centralised bureaucracy. The colonial bureaucracy maintained its racial exclusiveness, although Indians occupied the lower rungs of administration. The structure and logic of the bureaucracy guaranteed unquestionable dominance of the British. Cornwallis formed a code of rules to guide executive actions. The Company’s civil servants were paid in the form of commission on the total amount of revenue collections. The system of appointment was based on patronage and nomination by the Court of Directors. The College of Fort William (1800) at Calcutta was established to provide training to the Company’s civil servants but was soon abolished. Later on a college was established at Hertford in 1805 for the same purpose which was shifted to Haileybury in England in 1809. It provided training in Oriental languages, literature and history.

The charter Act of 1853 substituted the system of patronage by a competition through public examination. The Haileybury College for training civil servants was abolished in 1858 and recruits to the civil service were to be affiliated to the different universities and colleges. In 1892, the Covenanted Civil Service continued to be the higher administrative service in which recruitments were to be made in Britain while a lower executive service called the Provincial Civil Service was dominated by Oxford and Cambridge graduates, with an educational background of the so called ‘public schools’. However, there were a fair number of recruits from the Irish universities as well. The bureaucracy provided the ‘steel frame’ to support the Raj and the upper echelons of the Covenanted Civil Service were exclusively British in composition. The educated Indians demanded a simultaneous examination in India but despite its acceptance by the government in principle, the system of simultaneous examination in India was implemented only after World War I. Even then the selected Indian candidates were excluded from a particular category of posts especially in the judicial services. The Indian recruits also received lower pay and allowances. The Indian nationalist leaders resented this kind of racial discrimination and the Indianisation of the bureaucracy was one of their main demands. After the World War I, the pace of the Indianisation of the bureaucracy intensified. By the time of the Quit India movement, nearly half of the civil servants were Indians. Since higher education in the colonial system was confined to the upper castes and

middle classes of India, the process of Indianisation by itself did not make the bureaucracy truly Indian in character. The bureaucracy retained the power and privileges of the colonial era even after Independence.

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## 14.5 SOURCES OF LEGITIMATION

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During the initial years of Company rule, the social policies of the colonial state were guided by the principle of minimising the disruptive influence and retention of many of the indigenous institutions and ceremonial trappings of indigenous ideology. The puppet Mughal emperor was treated with reverence and respect. Even coins were struck bearing the Emperor's name. Persian was retained as the official language until 1835, which ensured a continued livelihood for the Hindu and Muslim service gentry. While certain modifications were introduced in the judicial institutions and procedures, the Mughal legal system was not completely dismantled. The qazis, muftis and pandits continued to be associated with the British judiciary till 1861. Even when intervention was made in the sphere of the indigenous customs as in the case of the abolition of Sati (1829), sanction for taking such a step was sought in the Indian scriptures. All these attempts were meant to establish a semblance of legitimacy by appropriating the cultural symbols and markers that were sources of authority in the indigenous culture.

After the "rebellion" of 1857, the colonial state transformed the princes into a reliable base of support for the empire. The preservation of the ceremonial aspects of indigenous sovereignty together with a measure of internal autonomy to the Indian princes was a major step of the colonial state to seek the sanction and legitimacy through persons of higher order invested with authority. Similarly landlords and taluqdars were nurtured as the potential allies of the colonial state. This attempt to seek Indian allies was further evident in the institutions such as the municipal and local boards of the 1880s. This was an attempt to distribute social patronage to various groups and raise indirect taxes through the consent of the Indian non-official members.

The colonial state used law as the most important source of constituting its legitimacy. The appropriation of revenue, forest and natural resources was not to be seen as arbitrary unjustified exaction but was represented as the legal right of the state. The colonial state also used law as an arbiter of social-relations between the different social groups. Laws relating to tenancy, land-alienation and payment of rent and interests became contentious issues due to the divergence of interests between various groups such as Zamindars and Raiyats. The instruments that were used by the colonial state to justify domination and exploitation were now used by certain social groups to articulate their specific interests after modifications in the structure of the administration.

The ideology of improvement- moral, intellectual and material was used to selectively introduce certain 'reforms' in the Indian society and this became a powerful vehicle of maneuvering in the social sphere by the colonial state to sustain its rule in India. While upholding the principle of hierarchy and caste distinction, in many instances, the colonial state also brought with it the ideological currents of science, reason and modernity. The promotion of western education through the medium of English (see unit 26 for details) by the colonial state and the creation of the Indian urban middle class stemmed from the motive of creating a support base for their rule. However, Indian intellectuals did not always support the reformist, progressive zeal of the colonial state. They

questioned the right of the colonial state to interfere with the Indian social customs as in the case of the Age of Consent Bill (1891), which raised the legal age of marriage for girls from ten to twelve. There was also violent protest against the intrusiveness of the colonial state seeking to impose western medical system during the plague epidemics of late 1890s. But this did not mean a complete rejection of the potential benefits of the colonial rule, western science, medicine or rationality. Even a reformist institution within Hinduism like the Arya Samaj working within the framework of the assertion of Aryan supremacy and Vedic infallibility, adopted colonial curriculum in its DAV schools.

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## 14.6 SUMMARY

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The purpose of this Unit was to make you understand the various facets of the British colonial power in India. After reading this Unit you should have understood the nature of the colonial state and its economic compulsions as well as the logic and organisation of the various instruments of control such as the army, the police, the bureaucracy etc. that safeguarded the imperial interests. Lastly, you would have also known something about the ideological categories that were used by the British to justify their rule in India

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## 14.7 GLOSSARY

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- Darogah** : A local police officer
- Drain** : Unilateral transfer of financial resources from a colony to the Imperial country
- Legitimacy** : A claim to justification or lawfulness
- Martial-race** : The ideology that linked military competence and fitness to a particular ethnic group or race.

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## 14.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the features of the colonial military apparatus as an instrument of imperial control.
- 2) Discuss the means adopted by the colonial state to legitimise its rule in India.



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# UNIT 15 PRINCELY STATES

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## Structure

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Genesis of the New Princely Order
- 15.3 Basic Features of Sovereignty in the Princely States
  - 15.3.1 Administrative Structure in the Princely States
  - 15.3.2 Princely Order as a Prop of Imperial Design
  - 15.3.3 Mechanism of Imperial Control
- 15.4 Similarities and Differences Among the Princely States
- 15.5 Bureaucratisation and the Process of Modernisation
- 15.6 Extinction of the Princely Order
- 15.7 Summary
- 15.8 Glossary
- 15.9 Exercises

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## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit, we will focus on the Princely order consisting of about 600 states that survived the imperial onslaught of annexation of the Empire. Since the number of Princely states was so large, it would be difficult to deal with individual states, hence, this Unit discusses only some basic features such as the evolution of princely order, the administrative structure of Princely state, common elements and differences among Princely states. It also specifically focuses on the Princely order as prop of imperial design and mechanisms that were used to establish imperial control over the Princes. The study of the impact of bureaucratisation and modernisation on the Princely states and finally the fall of the Princely order are the other themes dealt with in the Unit.

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## 15.2 GENESIS OF THE NEW PRINCELY ORDER

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The different patterns of the British conquest of India and the methods employed to create an empire resulted in the “grandiose and ramshackle” structure of the princely order. The princes ruled in about 2/5<sup>th</sup> of the Indian sub-continent having 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the population of the British Empire. Some of these states like Hyderabad, Mysore and Kashmir were equal in size to many European countries while there were also very small feudal estates. The common feature of all these states was that they recognised the paramountcy of the British Crown. They enjoyed only as much independence as was allowed to them by the British and the paramount power treated them as feudatory or subordinate states. If the sovereignty of the princes had any meaning, it was in relation to their own subjects. The British protected the Princes against any threat to their autocratic power, internal or external. Most of the Princely states were administered as absolute autocracies. It was under the umbrella of British protection that all these ‘absolute’ rulers walked with all their grandeur and dignity. The princes were, therefore, useful tools in the over-all imperial design. They were natural allies of the British rulers and were always willing to help their patrons in the times of crisis such as war and intense nationalist mobilisation. The British could always rely on these ‘bulwarks of reaction’. However, despite monarchial form of

government, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century imperial perception of tradition-bound, unchanging oriental despots disinterested in progress and change may not be entirely true, as the forces of modernisation and social-change were already underway in some of the more “progressive” states. The nationalist historiography also attributes the collapse of the Princely order to the monarchic, absolute form of government and anachronism of this type of rule in the post-colonial democratic set-up. Apart from the popular opposition to the princes due to the impact of radical nationalist modern politics, the fall of the Princely order was also precipitated by the British Crown’s abandonment of its former allies and the steps taken by the independent Indian Government.

Prior to 1760, the East India Company had signed treaties with local coastal powers for commercial purposes and suppression of piracy. As the Company was transformed from primarily a trading company into a territorial power after the battle of Plassey (1757), it began to conclude treaties of “Subsidiary-alliance” with militarily weaker rulers from the 1760s onwards. In the first “subsidiary-alliance” with the Nizam of Hyderabad (1760) the Company agreed to furnish its well-trained troops in exchange for an annual subsidy. Similar treaties were concluded with Oudh, Cooch Behar and Carnatic subsequently. There were a number of practical considerations for retaining of indigenous Princes:

- i) Firstly, the subsidiary-alliance became an important tool for the extension of British dominance during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British lacked the financial resources and manpower necessary to conquer and administer the entire subcontinent. The Empire-builders, therefore, sought to limit their direct rule to economically prosperous and politically strategic areas and establish control over the other regions indirectly through a system of alliances with indigenous rulers. Generally these states were surrounded by British-controlled territories, cut off from sea-routes and were geographically not in a position to challenge the British. Rather, they had to be dependent in many respects.
- ii) Secondly, other areas that were troublesome to conquer and located in inaccessible terrain such as desert tracts, hills of central India, the highlands of Orissa clogged by dense forests and remote recesses of Kathiawar with little arable lands or yielding little revenue were also brought under the terms of treaties.
- iii) Thirdly the treaties with the indigenous rulers also gave a stamp of legitimacy to the Paramount power. The British used a variety of means to acquire a veneer of legality and a moral basis for their rule. The desire for legitimacy was the prime reason which led the British to carefully develop symbols that emphasised the paramountcy of their position over the princes while allowing the latter to retain extravagant ceremonial trappings of authority such as the ancient darbar ceremonies and gun-salutes.
- iv) Finally, in return for a promise of military protection from internal and external dangers, the East India Company secured the loyalty of Princes and their subjects. The Company could also raise contingents of troops paid from the state revenues or the annual cash tribute payments. The “subsidiary alliances”, thus extended the British suzerainty, without incurring much expense.

The political map of India was largely settled after the third Anglo-Maratha conflict (1818-20). However, the British continued to use annexation as a

solution for “misrule” of the indigenous rulers. Dalhousie annexed Satara (1849), Jhansi (1853), Nagpur (1854) and Oudh (1856). At the same time, other alternatives to annexations were also attempted before 1857. Jhansi was brought under direct British rule in 1830s but restored to a new ruler in 1842. Dalhousie rejected the proposal to annex Travancore on the ground that the terms of the treaty with the state did not permit annexation. No state was annexed after the events of 1857, although the British bureaucrats administrated some states for long periods. For instance, Manipur was ruled by the British after the revolt of 1891 until 1907. The ambivalence of the British policy towards annexation rose from the fundamental contradiction between the imperial interest of a trading company to expand and rule without getting involved in military operations and incurring military cost and the zeal of the Utilitarian and Evangelicals for reform of Indian society and institutions. Many British administrators were disdainful for the princely order and regarded them as the cesspool of corruption and socio-economic stagnation and as a symbol of ‘oriental despotism’. However, the support of loyal princes during the revolt of 1857 (especially Patiala, Mysore and Hyderabad) to the British imperial cause strengthened their claims as military, administrative and political allies of the British rulers. In the British perception, they became the “natural leaders of the people” and were rewarded in the form of honour and territories in some cases. The British rulers solemnly confirmed the British guarantee for their perpetual existence. Queen Victoria proclaimed that “all Treaties and Engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable East India Company are by us accepted and will be scrupulously observed – we desire no extension of our present Territorial Possessions – we shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of native princes as our own.” Assurances were given to the Princes that their dynasties would not be allowed to lapse for want of natural heirs. Not a single dynasty lapsed after 1857 and none of the states was annexed. The heavy cost of suppression of 1857 ‘revolt’ led to a budgetary deficit of \$14 lacs in 1858-59 and this became the principal argument against further annexation. The borders of states remained frozen in the post-revolt period.

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### 15.3 BASIC FEATURES OF SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PRINCELY STATES

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The princely states were vast motley of states differing in size, composition and income. A popular perception created by imperial stereotypes depicts them as elephant-riding Rajas enjoying the company of dancing girls. We should analyse the basis of feudal order within the state as a major aspect of autocracy. Moreover, in the ethnographic accounts of W.W. Hunter, Henry Maine and Alfred Lyall; India was projected as a society which privileged the traditional, the rustic and the martial over the urban and modern. The East was seen as a repository of ancient traditions sanctified by time, colourful rites, majestic spectacle and archaic knowledge. In this scenario the princes were seen as representing a clan-based polity, having, for example, a direct link with the Hindu Kingdoms of the pre-Muslim period. In opposition to this stereotype, there was constant imperial surveillance, interference and pressures which sapped much of the energy of the old *darbari* system. The traditional role of social-protection attributed to the state apparatus soon gave way to princes who had only the hunting-range to patrol. The princely order played a useful role in the great game of the empire; the ceremonial trappings were only peripheral to

the actual functioning of sovereignty within these feudatory polities. Even this ceremonial aspect was an amalgam of the old traditions and new ones were borrowed from abroad such as gun-salutes, orders of knighthood, and coat of arms. The most important feature of the princely order was that it acted as prop of the imperial design.

### 15.3.1 Administrative Structure in the Princely States

Most of the Princely states were run as totalitarian autocracies with absolute powers concentrated in the hands of the rulers or their favourites appointed in the patrimonial administration. The burden of land-tax was generally heavier than in British India. The rulers generally enjoyed Supreme control over the state revenues for personal use, and this often led to ostentatious living. In some states, the Princes shared power with the jagirdars, who controlled vast areas of land and resources because they were relatives or supporters of the rulers or both. Although they enjoyed varying degrees of authority, these feudatory nobles usually collected and detained the land-revenues from their estates and also held limited police and magisterial powers within their estates. For example, in the Alwar state, about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the fertile lands were in the hands of the jagirdars who were close kinsmen of the Raja. The jagirs were concentrated in the southern tehsils of Alwar. The Raja and these feudatory chiefs reinforced each other's position. The jagirdars provided troops in times of need to the Raja. Raja Banni Singh (1815-57) appointed a class of administrators who were not jagirdars and recruited Muslim officials trained in the British methods of administration. This led to conflict between the jagirdars and these new administrative officials.

In Hyderabad's personalised autocracy, sarf khas was the Nizam's own estate, which accounted for ten per cent of the total area of the state. The income from this went directly to meet the royal expenses. Another 30% of the agricultural land was held by jagirdars of various categories. Oppressive practices like vethi or veth-begar and exorbitant taxes and illegal taxes were an integral part of this feudal set-up. Salarjung (1853-83) recruited men who were trained in the British pattern. These Anglo-Indian bureaucrats drawn from the diwani administration constituted an autonomous bureaucracy and came to be known as non-mulkis. There was a constant conflict between the non-mulkis and the jagirdars and the bureaucracy organised on the Mughal pattern over the control of the state administration. The mulkis as the latter came to be known, broadened as a group during 1911-48 by integrating men from the districts. The Princely state of Hyderabad was based on efficient handling of the basic governmental functions like the collection of taxes, the maintenance of law and order and the provision of limited public services like education, transport and communication. The feudal jagirdars and the landed magnates remained the main supporters and upholders of the authority of the Princes, although some 'enlightened' rulers and their ministers did try to introduce reform in the administration and system of taxation.

The coercive arm of the state was generally small but effective in maintaining law and order. For example, for 5,412 square miles of the Patiala State territory, armed police consisted of only about 1600 men trained by a British police officer, J.O. Warbustoon. Apart from this, a small army consisting of 1,204 infantry, 452 cavalry and 212 men in command of the artillery under Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala acted as personal bodyguards of the Prince and as the supplementary force for the preservation of law and order. They also played a key

role in ceremonial duties. The Princely states were generally run on laws that were a conglomeration of enactments based on the British Indian models and on the personal decrees of the Princes. Even the personal decrees of Princes could be arbitrarily withdrawn or modified at any time at the discretion of the ruler.

As there was no institutional check on the arbitrary powers enjoyed by the princes within their own domains, they could freely use whatever little force the British allowed them against their subjects. They could also utilise income from the revenues at their own personal discretion. Even when the “modernising” princes of Mysore, Baroda, Travancore and Cochin instituted legislative assemblies, they maintained large nominated majorities in them. As the Princes and their autocratic rule came under increasing attack during the 1930’s, these rulers turned more and more to religious revivalism and communal mobilisation in order to maintain a semblance of legitimacy and in order to strengthen their positions within their states. Many Princes gave monetary contributions to educational institutions run by their own communities such as the Hindu University at Banaras, the Deccan Educational Society, the Sikh Khalsa College at Amritsar and the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh. Support to these type of institutions meant, in the context of communal politics, support for a communal effort to obtain more leverage within the British administrative structure. Mysore, Cochin and Travancore supported the prominent Hindu institutions in order to maintain a prominent ritual position within their own states. Bhupinder Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala tried to project himself as the leading figure of the Sikh community and patronised the Sikh institutions and even the writing of Sikh history. The Nizam’s administration in Hyderabad tried to project itself as a Muslim state, and this process was accelerated after 1927 with the emergence of the Ittehad ul Muslimin, a communal organisation that tried to project Nizam as the “Royal Embodiment of Muslim Sovereignty in Deccan”. In Travancore, the Maharaja claimed to act as the earthly trustee of a Hindu deity and the state controlled hundreds of temples.

### 15.3.2 Princely Order as a Prop of Imperial Design

The princes were one of the useful props of the empire. We have seen how the resources of indigenous rulers were utilised to extend the suzerainty of the British through an “ingenious” subsidiary alliance system. Gradually, the sovereignty of the princes got eroded and slowly and steadily they became feudatory puppets of the Imperial power. Initially the British controlled the foreign affairs and the relations of these rulers with other military powers. Gradually, however, the British intervened in the administration and the economic life of the Princely states. The Princes were allowed to retain certain privileges and their ritual status. They were given protection from external and internal threats in lieu of military support and loyalty to the British Empire. Paramountcy was not defined in any treaty but the doctrine of paramountcy was used to legitimise whatever action the British deemed necessary or desirable to secure the objectives outlined in the treaties. As the clients of their imperial patrons, rulers of the states assisted the British whenever the empire was threatened. The rulers of Patiala, Mysore and Hyderabad rendered valuable help to the British in its military campaign to save and re-establish the empire on the sub-continent during and after the “revolt of 1857”. The Princes rendered similar military help to the British during the Boxer Uprising in China (1898-1900) and the two World Wars. Most of the Princes supported British war efforts during 1914-18 by providing troops, personal services and monetary contributions. The

Nizam of Hyderabad alone contributed Rs. 35 lacs. The Princes also permitted the British officers to recruit troops for the British Indian army from their states. Bhupinder Singh of Patiala was the most active Prince in the British recruitment drive. During World War II also, the princes expressed solidarity with the British and many of them were appointed to government agencies connected with wartime administration such as war advisory council, National Defence Council, Eastern Group supply council, the central Price Control Conference, etc. The Princes were extolled as “the natural leaders of the Indian people” and were often used as “a bulwark” against the modern nationalist political mobilisation.

### 15.3.3 Mechanism of Imperial Control

The essential elements of British Paramountcy were settled by 1840. The system of ‘residents’ at the princely courts, the regulation of the succession and control over the states’ foreign relations were some of the prominent features of this relationship. The British maintained relations with the princes through political officers who either resided in or visited the princely courts regularly. This was a reversal of the indigenous practice of a client keeping an agent in the court of the suzerain. The political officers were members of the Foreign Department of the Government of India or the Bombay Political Department. In 1914, it was separated into two separate sections-Foreign and Political, the latter being concerned with the relationship with the princes. The large strategically important states like Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda and Kashmir had residents stationed in their capital who were linked to the Viceroys through the provincial government. The smaller states of Rajputana and central India were under the over-all supervision of agents to the Viceroy, who maintained contact with each state through subordinate officers. The Political officers were the custodians of the imperial policy, recognised succession as valid, handled correspondence between the princes and the British authorities and kept an eye over the internal administration of the state.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was large-scale intrusion of British manufactures in the Indian markets that necessitated extension of Railway and other modern means of communication. But these required darbari sanction of the princes. There was also the need to regulate transit duties on goods passing through the states. During Mayo’s Viceroyalty new legal documents were signed which made the princes dependent on the ‘advice’ of the residents in matters of administration. Twelve ruling princes who defied British administration were removed from their thrones in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for ‘crimes’ against the Queen Empress. In a series of measures during 1878-86, sovereignty of feudatory princes was further curbed. For example, most of the states were compelled to relinquish control over Post and Telegraph networks. Similarly, the salt monopoly of the colonial state was extended to cover most of the states. The princes were prohibited to produce and export salt except for one or two cases for domestic consumption. They were also deprived of civil and criminal jurisdiction over the broad-gauge railways passing through their territory. By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British Indian currency became the legal tender throughout the sub-continent and all the rulers were compelled to sign away their right to mint silver or copper coins. The British imperial power also regulated import of weapons to be used by the police force of princely states and controlled the employment of Europeans in the services of the princes.

In order to increase the degree of Imperial control and surveillance, British officials actively favoured the replacement of traditional patrimonial



administration by the bureaucratic mode of administration in the states, a model of administration analogous to their own ruled territory of British India. Such administrative changes were generally achieved through the intervention of residents. Thus, the states were slowly drawn into the overarching imperial system of administration. The 'modernising' princes, knowingly or unknowingly, hastened this process of integration. There were also more direct methods of intervention in the affairs of the princely states. The Imperial Service Scheme (1885) stipulated raising of Imperial Service troops that were trained, equipped and partly commanded by the British and utilised only for the defence of the British Imperial interests, but they were paid by the state governments.

The British justified their intervention by removing doubts regarding the legality of imperial intercession. In 1870, Aitchinson, the foreign secretary, came up with the notion that the treaties needed to be re-read with an eye to the circumstances when they were drawn up initially and in the light of subsequent evolution of relationship between the princes and the Crown. T.H. Thorton developed a theory of 'usage' in 1877, which held that any "long-continued course of governmental practice" acquiesced in by the state could be construed as lawful, since quiescence implied consent. In 1890s C.L. Tupper, the chief-secretary in the government of Punjab and William Lee-Warner, the chief secretary of Bombay government contributed to the doctrine of *res judicata*, which, in its original common law setting, permitted the judges to be guided by decisions in the previous cases of a precisely similar nature, but which, in its Indian interpretation, was interpreted to mean that treaties should be read as a whole, and applied equally to all states.

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## 15.4 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PRINCELY STATES

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We have seen how the expanding British power consolidated and demarcated the fluid political and territorial boundaries of the Indian kingdoms and ordained that primogeniture was to be the guiding principle of succession within the princely (dynastic) families. The state boundaries were secured and demarcated through the treaties with the British. The British Empire forged about collaborative alliances with about 600 states in the sub-continent. There were great variations in the size and the territorial extent of these states. Hyderabad's territorial area consisted of 82,698 sq. miles. In terms of income and expenditure, it rivalled Belgium in 1947-48. The state of Jammu and Kashmir with 84,000 sq. miles of territory was bigger in size than France. Even Travancore, with a population of 5 million in 1921, had more people than Austria or Portugal. The smallest state of Banka Pahari in Bundelkhand had only 5 sq. miles territory. Apart from size, the other differences among the princely states were with regard to income, taxation and more significantly in terms of the pace of modernisation and industrialisation. Some states, like Gwalior, Cochin, Mysore and Baroda were commercially and industrially more advanced than the rest. The Rajputana states and some states of central India were extremely backward and female infanticide, beggar and agrestic serfdom was prevalent in many of them. Another major difference among the states was in terms of the treaties and the circumstances under which such treaties were signed. The Nizam of Hyderabad signed a treaty with the British in 1798 as an ally against Mysore. Maratha chiefs accepted treaties after being defeated by the Company's forces. The Cis-Sutlej princes including Patiala and many Rajput rulers had sought British protection

(through treaties) against covetous neighbours. The tiny states in Kathiawar, which were simply like estates of locally dominant landholders, simply accepted British suzerainty as *fait accompli*, without any formal treaty with the Company. There was therefore, no uniformity in the rights, the treaty obligations and the privileges granted to the different rulers. These were even reflected in the ceremonial aspects as the rulers were categorised according to the number of gun-salutes to which the rulers were entitled. Only five big states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior and Kashmir enjoyed 21 gun-salutes. The states also differed markedly in terms of linguistic, religious and ethnic composition of its population. The rulers of Hyderabad were Muslims while its population consisted of only 15% Muslims. The majority of its subjects were Hindus who spoke Telugu, Marathi and Kannada languages. The ruler of Jammu and Kashmir was a Dogra chief while the majority of his subjects were Muslims. In Travancore, there were 25% Christians and 45% "lower-caste" Hindus while the ruler was a high-caste. Ideology, race, religion and upbringing were the major factors which imparted a variegated character to this group. Therefore, while Mysore by 1920 had a legislative council, a representative assembly and a public service board that recruited people in the state services through competitive examinations; Nizams of Hyderabad were wedded to the traditional notions of benevolent autocracy.

Despite all this heterogeneity of character the princely states also shared the basic commonality in terms of affluence, autocratic powers and a lineage history which traced their ancestry to gods and mythical heroes. They were subservient to the British Empire and played a significant role as one of the main pillars of support in the scheme of the Imperial conquest. They derived their strength from their British patrons. They were rooted in the feudal milieu and sought substance from the landowners – a class that provided the chief indigenous support base for them. Despite some exceptions, they had a highly developed class-consciousness as the 'fraternity of the princes'. The British projected them as the 'natural leaders of the people' and used the alliance with the princes for legitimising their power. On the other hand, the princes generally kept themselves aloof from the nationalist politics and agitation in the twentieth century.

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## 15.5 BUREAUCRATISATION AND PROCESS OF MODERNISATION

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The princes and the British both indulged in rhetoric about the states as being the repositories of the "ancient culture, oriental traditions and ideals", yet, the forces of bureaucratisation and modernisation started penetrating into the body politic of the states. For administrative purposes the princes relied on their bureaucracy whose nature and quality influenced the states' administration. Despite a general picture of corrupt and rotten administration, some administrators associated with the princes earned a reputation of their own. K.M. Pannikar, who served Patiala and Bikaner, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, the **dewan** of Travancore and Sir Mirza Ismail, who served as the chief-minister of Mysore, Jaipur and Hyderabad successively, were some of the able administrators in the service of princely states. In the majority of the states, education developed slowly compared to the British-governed Empire. However, some princes in Mysore, Baroda and Travancore took the lead in this direction. Gaikwad of Baroda introduced free compulsory primary education in 1894. The British, however, generally discouraged the schemes of reforms of the "modernising" princes. They

disapproved of the agrarian and the legislative reforms of Raja Rama Varma of Cochin (1895-1914), who was forced to abdicate his throne. However, there was scope for 'selective' modernisation in certain administrative practices such as the efficient collection of land-revenue and development of infrastructure needed to integrate princely states into the increasing orbit of British-inspired market-forces. The British themselves implanted a bureaucracy of British Indian type during the period of minority of the Princes. Such attempts were made in Alwar, Mewar, Jaipur, Kolhapur and Baroda. Some rulers also found in this type of bureaucratic reform a means to counter balance and check the power of the disruptive nobility. Education became a means of unleashing modernising forces in the States as the states lagged behind the British-governed territories in the sphere of education. The new bureaucracies in the princely states initially comprised of educated men from British India as they had acquired the necessary administrative skills. Subsequently, when the locally dominant social groups adopted the new educational system they started competing with these outsiders. In some cases, an antagonism developed between the earlier appointed outside elements in the state bureaucracy and the newly emergent group who aspired for privileges and powers in the state's administrative set-up. The 'brahmin-non-brahmin' conflict in Kolhapur and 'mulki-non-mulki' conflict in Hyderabad were a reflection of this type of social-conflict which got extended into the political sphere.

As already noted earlier, the British had achieved a greater control over persons and territories in the states by 1900 through communication and transport networks, fiscal and economic policies and structural re-organisation of the administration. Some princes resented such British-initiated changes or 'modernisation' as a further diminution of their autonomy and prestige. However, a new breed of hybrid princes who were systematically indoctrinated by private tutors, public schools and princely colleges like Mayo college (Ajmer) and Raj Kumar college (Rajkot) accepted superficial westernisation along with the notions of dynastic legacy. On the other hand, the "corrupt and inefficient administration" in the princely states served as the justification for the presence of British as 'the guardians of the best interest of the Indians'. Some of the rulers instituted legislative assemblies and tried to upgrade their judicial system. Mysore had an annual representative assembly from 1881. Travancore ruler constituted an all-official legislative council from 1887 and a Mysore type assembly with large nominated majority from 1904. Baroda also had a representative assembly from 1907. These bodies, however, lacked a real popular representative character and accountability as the majority of the members of these bodies were trusted officials of the rulers. Others remained autocratic states.

The pace of economic modernisation also varied from state to state. Some of the states attracted capital for industrial growth. A number of factors facilitated capital investments in the states which were thereby categorised as advanced states. As the states did not levy any income or corporate taxes and had less stringent labour laws, this opportunity combined with handsome subsidies in certain key sectors attracted capital. In one year, 1943-44 alone, over Rs. 5 crore of new industrial capital flowed into the states. A part of new investment came into mining but factory production and infrastructure absorbed a greater portion. Mysore took the lead in the woollen-textile, the automobile and aircraft production in the 1940's. Baroda became a prominent centre of cotton-textile industry while Hyderabad attracted new investments in cement, chemical and fertiliser industries. The city of Gwalior developed as a major industrial centre

with many cotton-textile mills, oil-mills, a power station and an embryonic machine tool industry. The Gwalior state also invested its income in the stocks of Bombay cotton-mills and brick-kilns.

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## 15.6 EXTINCTION OF THE PRINCELY ORDER

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The intensification of the nationalist mobilisation brought a few princes into the political arena. They participated in the imperial conferences and the indigenous associations. Initially, the British used them for seeking legitimacy for their rule in India. The Indian leaders also turned to the princes for financial patronage. In 1921, the British promoted a deliberative assembly, the Chamber of the Princes. The Chamber had no real power and evoked limited participation of the Princes whose rivalries and concern for honour further reduced its potential effectiveness. The princes generally resisted the constitutional and political changes within their own states thereby alienating the nationalist leaders Tej Bahadur Sapru, the liberal Indian leader, called for the federation of British India and the princely states at the First Round Table Conference (1930). The idea did not materialise due to princely intransigence, British ambivalence and Congress opposition. While the princes wished to gain from the British some sort of constitutional guarantee for their future existence, the congress leadership gradually sided with the popular aspirations against these feudal vestiges. The Haripura Congress Session (1938) resolved to extend moral support to the popular movements against princes and allowed participation of congressmen in individual capacity in such agitations. It is doubtful whether the lack of political and social reforms affected their political viability and became the major cause for their inevitable demise. However, when the imperial patron unilaterally abrogated relationship with them, the only course available to the princes was their integration into the body politic of either India or Pakistan.

The British labour ministry in the post-war conditions was not favourable towards the perpetual existence of the princes as they denied their citizens democratic rights and institutions. It was reflected in the attitude of Attlee and Cripps. The radical congressmen considered them to be a major impediment in the way of rational economic planning and rapid industrialisation. The local opposition to autocratic rule in the form of Praja Mandals affiliated to the All-India State People Conference also got a boost when the prospects of transfer of power appeared as a distinct possibility. However the British did not act in haste. They had to extricate themselves from the legal and formal military obligations towards the princes which were specified in the treaties contracted with them. They also tried to secure for them a position commensurate with their 'historical status' in the post-colonial polity. The Cabinet mission tried to persuade the princes for accession. Finally, Lord Mountbatten prevailed over the princes to sign the instruments of accession in August 1947, leaving defence, foreign affairs and communications to the union. These were the areas over which the states had long ceased to exercise their jurisdiction and control.

The federal centre, however, occupied the political space left by the collapse of British paramountcy and intervened in their internal matters on a regular basis to engineer a great and relatively peaceful merger and democratisation process. For this purpose, the smaller states were amalgamated into larger administrative units or merged with the erstwhile provinces of the union. They were also completely subordinated to the federal centre by using democratisation as a

means. The centre sent regional commissioners to Rajkot and Sambalpur, asked Holkar to remove his Diwan, detained the Raja of Faridkot, took direct control over the administration of Kutch, Tripura and Manipur on grounds of security. He intervened in Neelgiri and Bharatpur on the pretext of impending break down of law and order machinery, enforced a blockade on the Nawab of Junagarh who fled to Pakistan and finally in September, 1948 and invaded the Nizam's territories in Hyderabad. In December 1947, some of the Eastern states and states of Chattisgarh were integrated into Orissa after adivasi revolts against the princes. Similarly, the states of Kathiawar were merged into a new state named Saurashtra. The states of the Deccan and Gujarat were merged into the province of Bombay. In March 1948, merger of the Punjab hill states as a centrally ruled unit resulted in the creation of Himachal Pradesh. In April 1948, a new state of Madhya Bharat was formed integrating Indore, Gwalior and the other Central Indian States. More important than such territorial integration was the initiation of democratic reforms and institution of popular accountable ministries in many of these states. The merger and democratisation of the Princely polities made them analogous with the rest of the country as regards to the manner of governance. In April 1948, new instruments of accession were signed with the princes ceding to the union the power to pass laws in respect of all matters falling within federal and concurrent legislative lists including in the Seventh Schedule of Govt. of accession that had empowered the centre only in respect of defence, foreign affairs and communication. Some of the princes were absorbed in the new polity as governors and deputy-governors (rajparamukhs and uprajparamukhs), however, they could not maintain their privileges and extraordinary status that they had enjoyed under the British patronage. In return for the surrender of their sovereignty, the rulers of the major states were also given privy purses amounting to Rs. 4.66 crores in 1949, free of all taxes that were later also guaranteed by the constitution. These concessions were abolished in 1969.

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## 15.7 SUMMARY

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In this Unit you have learnt how the political map of India was redrawn by the East India Company through the 'subsidiary alliance' system. However during the mutiny the states had proved loyal to the British and therefore steps were taken to ensure that the princely rule was safe in India. A grand historical alliance was forged between capitalist Britain and the feudal princely houses in India. This alliance offered many advantages to both the British Empire and the Indian princes. Based on the support of feudal landowners, the princely order enjoyed some degree of internal autonomy in dealing with their own subjects. However, the princes were subservient to the over-all Imperial system of British paramountcy. They acted as the allies of the British paramount power and accepted imperial control and surveillance. The expanding British control over the territories, communications and finance in India was also felt by the princely darbars. The resident system and the introduction of bureaucracy on the British-model were the basic tools of imperial control. However, the British intervention was not homogeneous and the British impact on these princely houses differed from one state to another. The rising tide of popular agitations and the withdrawal of the British paramountcy sealed the fate of the princely order and they were soon absorbed into the post-colonial polities of either India or Pakistan after 1947.

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## 15.8 GLOSSARY

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**Paramountcy** : Supremacy

**Patrimonial** : Something inherited from ancestors

**Mulki** : Bureaucracy organised on Mughal pattern

**Non-Mulki** : Anglo-Indian bureaucrats

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## 15.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Trace the genesis of the princely states.
- 2) What were the basic features of the administrative structures in the princely states?



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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, The Mughals and The British, 1720-1801*

C.A. Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India: Indian Society and The Making of the British Empire*, Vol. 11.1

Stewart Gordon, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Marathas 1600-1618*, Vol. 11.4

M.N. Pearson, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Portuguese in India*, Vol. 1

Om Prakash, *The New Cambridge History of India: European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*, Vol. 11.5

Sanjay Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India*

C.A. Bayly, *Information and Empire: Political Intelligence and Social Communication in North India, 1780-1880*

Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*

Michel H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System*

Robin Jefferey (ed.), *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States*

Y. Vaikuntham, *People's Movements in the Princely States*

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## UNIT 16 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS IN NORTH INDIA

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### Structure

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Administration in the Vedic Times
- 16.3 Administration during the Age of the Janapadas
- 16.4 Administration of the Mauryan Period
- 16.5 Administration of the Post-Mauryas
- 16.6 Administration from 300 to 600 A.D.
- 16.7 Administration in Post-600 A.D.
- 16.8 Summary
- 16.9 Exercises

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### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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The study of administration in early India has to be understood in terms of the nature of polity and politics. While it is true that early Indian states were mostly monarchical, early Indian polity was not static, but experienced many changes. There is indeed a rich historiography of early Indian polity and administration. The study of the administration in India in the past was initiated, like many other facets of Indian history, by western—more precisely, colonial historians. In this historiography India was perceived as a country steeped in religious and philosophical speculations and paid little attention to mundane matters, including power and statecraft. Later, the historians of the Utilitarian school derided early Indians as incapable of political activities and experiences. The polity that existed before the colonial times was characterised by the concepts of Oriental Despotism and the eternal village community. Both the concepts denied any possibilities of change in political and administrative system. A turning point was the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1905 by R. Shamasastri. The availability of the edited Sanskrit text and its English translation in the next ten years clearly demonstrated that early Indian thinkers considerably contributed to political ideas. This led to the publication of a plethora of studies on early Indian statecraft and administrative systems. Many of these studies were penned by nationalist historians who often argued that many of the modern political ideas were anticipated by ancient Indian thinkers. Thus the prevalence of republics, democratic polity, constitutional monarchy and even a welfare state was argued for in this kind of historiography. From the 1950s onwards Marxist historiography highlighted that early Indian polity and administration was neither static nor changeless, but had a dynamic character which were further interlinked with existing society, economy and culture. It was also pointed out that administrative systems in early India were not mere applications of the ideals laid down in the theoretical treatises like the *Arthashastra* and the *Dharmasastras*. In-depth studies of inscriptions and various types of literary sources suggest that administrative systems did not always conform to political precepts which are recommended by law-givers. The recent decades have paid particular attention to the formation of the state in early

India. The very search for a 'process' implies that the polity in early India underwent several phases or stages. The emergence of the state from the pre-state situation was not merely a political event, but was associated with major changes in society, economy and culture. The advent of a state is generally connected with the growing social complexities and a sharper social differentiation than one finds in a pre-state situation. In this unit you will be introduced to the continuity and changes in the administrative system in North India from the Vedic times to the post-600 A.D. period.

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## 16.2 ADMINISTRATION IN THE VEDIC TIMES

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The earliest traces of a complex administrative system in India may go back to the days of the mature Harappan civilisation (c. 2600-1750 BC). Though the nature of the Harappan state cannot be grasped at the present state of our knowledge (because the Harappan script is yet to be deciphered), there is little doubt that an impressive authority held its sway over the far-flung Harappan civilisation. But for this administrative authority it would have been impossible to maintain for several centuries the very high standard of civic life, urban layout, a standardised weights and measures system and some uniformity in its material culture.

The earliest literary creation of India, the *Rigveda* (c. 1500-1000 BC) offers only meagre information on political life. The term *Raja*, generally translated as king, is already encountered in the *Rigveda*. Recent studies of the *Rigveda* however do not accept that the *Rigvedic raja* was a full-fledged monarch. Typical features of a mature monarchy, like a well defined territory, a subject population, dynastic succession, a strong army and a resource base, are conspicuous by their absence in the *Rigveda*. The *Rigvedic raja* did not bear usual epithets of an ancient Indian king, such as *Narapati* (lord of men), *Bhupati* (lord of the soil), *Adhipati* (overlord), *Mahipati* (lord of the earth). He was known as *Gopati* (lord of cattle), *Vispati* (leader of the clan or tribe), etc. A perusal of the *Rigveda* shows that the *Rigvedic* society was not a fully sedentary one, but was a combination of pastoral and agricultural pursuits. The *Rigvedic raja* did not rule over a fixed territory but was the chief of a clan. Thus the most famous political personality of the *Rigveda*, Sudas, was a *Raja* of the Tritsu-Bharata clan but he was not known to have been a ruler over a definite territorial unit. The *Rigvedic raja* seems to have corresponded more to a chieftain of a clan than the head of a monarchical state. He was the leader of the clan regularly participating in wars which were called *Gavishti* (literally search for cattle). Thus the wars in the *Rigveda* were fought largely for cattle but not for territorial expansion, a feature typically associated with the monarchical state. Under such circumstances it is unlikely to find any reference in the *Rigveda* to the administration of a kingdom.

At this juncture one comes across in the later *Vedic* texts (c. 1000-500 BC), the earliest possible references to some assistants of the *Vedic* ruler. They are described in the later *Vedic* texts as the 'bejewelled ones' (*Ratnins*). Among them were the leader of the fighting force (*Senapati*), the collector of a share or one who apportioned the share (*Bhagadugha*), the keeper of the dice (*Akshavapa*) and such like. These definitely do not signify regular administrative offices, but speak of growing complexities in the Vedic polity that required the presence of a few functionaries serving the ruler. The later Vedic literature also refers to the earliest known collection of an impost, or a levy probably on agricultural produce (*Bali*). But this does not imply either a regular revenue demand or the prevalence of a revenue collection

machinery. The rate of the *Bali* was not a fixed one and therefore there is little possibility of the assessment of the leviable agrarian revenue. In view of the uncertainties of the collection of *Bali* it was perhaps not possible for the Vedic ruler to raise resources sufficient to maintain a regular army. In view of the possible absence of a regular army and also of a revenue system the Vedic polity was at best a proto-state, on the threshold of the complex state system. But a full-fledged territorial state polity had not probably emerged yet. Moreover, the Vedic literature highlights the importance of three popular assemblies, the *Vidatha*, the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of these three assemblies. However the *vidatha* seems to have been a more primitive assembly than the *sabha* and the *smiti* because it combined in it political and cultural functions and was also involved in the distribution of the available social wealth among the members of Rigvedic clans (*Jana, Gana, Vish*). The *Sabha* and the *Samiti* were attended by the members of the clan and by the Vedic Raja as well whose power seems to have been to some extent checked by these popular assemblies. Though the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* faded out in the subsequent periods with the emergence of monarchical polity, the possibilities of popular participation in polity continued in the non-monarchical organisations (*Ganasangha/ganarajya*) of the post Vedic period.

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### 16.3 ADMINISTRATION DURING THE AGE OF THE JANAPADAS

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The period from c. 600 BC to 325 BC marks the advent of territorial states (*Janapada/Mahajanapada*) in North India. Most of these *Mahajanapadas* were kingdoms (*Rajya*) and a few of them non-monarchical oligarchies or chiefdoms (*Ganasanghas/Ganarajya*). The polity in a monarchical set up undoubtedly revolves around the king who ascended the throne by virtue of being born in a particular ruling house (dynastic succession). The king rules over a subject population (*Praja*) over a specific territory (*Janapada*, literally meaning a territory where a people or *Jana* first set its feet or *Pada*). This is surely a much more complex and impersonal system than the chiefdom where the chief of the clan is often connected with other members of the clan by kinship ties. The political history of North India during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. demonstrates the presence of a few large monarchical powers which commanded formidable armies and subjugated their lesser contemporaries. One can, therefore, reasonably infer the presence of a regular army in the monarchical polity. It is also no accident that the ruler would be assisted by regular administrators in the management of the state. The Buddhist canonical literature informs us about two very efficient and high ranking functionaries of Magadha Mahajanapada, namely *Vassakara* and *Sunidha* who served under the powerful king Ajatasatru. That his father Bimbisara had already been served by many rural level administrators would be evident from the reference to *Gramanis* appointed by Bimbisara.

On the other hand the non-monarchical Sakya clan obviously had no single ruler but 7707 Rajas who were not kings but Kshatriya chiefs. Matters of administration and politics were openly discussed and debated in the *Ganarajya* of Vajji in the assembly hall (*Santhagara*). Pali canonical texts tell us about the seven stages of judicial administration in the same *Ganarajya*. The *Ganarajyas* also had a commander of the fighting force (*Senapati*). Whether the non-monarchical clan had the sufficient resources to maintain a large and strong army like the monarchies is difficult to ascertain.

The importance of administrators and state functionaries was for the first time clearly recognised by the *Arthashastra*, a celebrated ancient Indian treatise on statecraft. The *Arthashastra* laid down that the state was composed of seven elements (*Prakriti*). The most important element was of course the ruler (*Svami*) followed by second element, *Amatya*. All political theorists of ancient India uniformly recognised that only the ruler or the king was more important than the *Amatya* which stands for an administrator, an officer of the state. Kautilya explains the indispensability of the *Amatya* in this way: ‘Rulership is possible only with assistance; a single wheel cannot move a vehicle’. It clearly implies that though the king was certainly the head of the monarchical state he could not rule single-handed without the assistance of administrative officers or *Amatyas*. Most theoretical treatises would consider the three terms – *Amatya*, *Mantri* (minister) and *Sachiva* (secretary)— as interchangeable or synonymous terms. The *Arthashastra* presents a different opinion. According to it, an *Amatya* is to be appointed on the basis of the performance of a candidate in a test of deception (*upadha*). There are four such tests of deception relating to money, fear, lust and righteousness. A person for example will be placed in the department of Finance if he is not allured by the deception in money matters. Thus the appointment of *Amatya* to a particular administrative department is based on his performance in a given test. The *Arthashastra* further recommends that the person who passes all four tests of deception is obviously a more capable administrator and therefore he should be appointed as a minister (*Mantri*). Thus the *Arthashastra* clearly distinguished a minister from an ordinary administrator. In the *Arthashastra* we also find the first attempt at the gradation of the administrative offices on the basis of a differentiated salary structure. The highest officers of the realm are entitled to a salary of 48,000 panas while the lowest ranked officials were paid 720 panas per year. In another list of officials Kautilya mentions 18 highest administrators of the realm.

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## 16.4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE MAURYANS

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A much clear image of the administrative system in a large monarchical state emerges with the coming of the Maurya Empire (c. 325 to 187 BC). At the height of its power the Maurya empire embraced a vast territory from Afghanistan in the North West to Karnataka in the South and from Kathiawar in the West to Orissa (if not North Bengal also) in the East. It was indeed a nearly pan Indian empire with its capital at Pataliputra (Patna). The availability of diverse source materials has enabled historians to understand the Mauryan administration system. The Greek accounts of Megasthenes (and its summary and quotations by later Greek writers), Asoka’s edicts and the *Arthashastra* throw light on the Mauryan administration. The possibility of a central and provincial (and also locality level) administrative organisation is seen for the first time in the Maurya realm. The pivotal feature of the entire Maurya administration and specially central administration was the Maurya emperor himself. The central administrative machinery seems to have been operative in what were ‘metropolitan’ (Magadha) and ‘core areas’ (located in the Ganga Plains). In spite of their mastery over almost the entire sub-continent the Maurya rulers used the rather simple title *Raja* (literally translated as malka and basileos respectively in the Aramaic and Greek edicts of Asoka.) Megasthenese, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, impresses upon us the personal zeal of the emperor in administration and his very busy daily schedule. This has a close correspondence to Asoka’s personal efforts and striving (*Pakama/Prakrama*) to disburse matters of statecraft (*Athakamma*). Kautilya places before the ruler the lofty ideal of



ensuring happiness of his subjects (*Prajasukha*), and not pursuing his own. What is good for the subjects is, according to the *Arthashastra*, beneficial for the ruler. An even loftier ideal of paternalistic rulership was announced by Asoka who declared that all men were his children (*Sabe munise paja mama*). Asoka also considered that all his efforts were in a way a repayment of his debt to his subjects.

The Maurya ruler was indeed the head of all executive functions of the realm. All principle functionaries of the government were directly appointed by and responsible to the Maurya emperor. Most of the early Indian theoretical texts considered the king to be only an upholder of the established norms, customs and law (*Dharmaprayatana*), but not a source of law. The *Arthashastra* seems to have departed from this tradition as it recognised the royal proclamation (*Rajasasana*) to be an effective source of law. Significantly enough, Asoka's edicts as administrative promulgations form a close parallel to the *Rajasasana* of Kautilya.

Though the *Arthashastra* certainly recommended the appointment of full-fledged ministers, no edict of Asoka categorically mentioned any Maurya minister. Megasthenes informs us of the 'the counsellors and assessors' from among whom the highest officers of the realm were recruited. One may guess but cannot prove that the counsellors – different from assessors – could have been the Maurya ministers. In two edicts of Asoka are mentioned the *Parisa*. The term *Parisa* is often taken to mean *Mantriparisad* or a council of ministers. The *Arthashastra* differentiates a member of the *Mantriparisad* from a full-fledged *Mantri* since the former receives 12000 *Panas* as salary against the salary of 48000 for a *Mantrin*. In other words a member of the ministerial council was given a rank inferior to that of a full-fledged minister. Asoka instructs his messengers to inform him at any time in case there was a difference of opinion among the members of the *Parishad*. It is, therefore, reasonable to infer that the *Parishad* was a deliberative body, but in which the presence of Maurya emperor was not mandatory. It is unlikely that the *Parishad* had any executive authority. The *Arthashastra* recognised that the actual burden of the administration should be assigned to a large number of departmental heads (*Adayaksha*). However, the term *Adayaksha* never occurs in Asoka's edicts. The officers under Asoka are termed as *Pulisas/Purushas (Rajapurushas)*. They were of three different grades; high (*Ukaya*), middle (*Majhima*) and low (*Gevaya*). The highest ranked officers during Asoka's time were known as *Mahamatras*. They were of the following types:

- a) those in charge of frontier areas (*Amata-mahamatra*)
- b) those in charge of the pasture grounds (*Vachabhumika-mahamatra*)
- c) those in charge of women or the inner chamber of the Mauryan palace (*Itihaka-mahamatara*)
- d) those in charge of propagation of Ashoka's *Dhamma* or the Law of Piety (*Dhamma – mahamatra*)

One of the salient features of the Maurya central administration was the army. The Greek accounts narrate that the Maurya army consisted of six lakh soldiers. While this is definitely an exaggerated figure it nevertheless reflects the very large size of the Maurya army by which the Mauryas carved out a very extensive empire. What is evident from the Greek account is the presence of at least four units in the army: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephant forces. Megasthenese reports that the Mauryas maintained a navy by which he probably implied a flotilla of boats on the navigable rivers, but not a full-fledged navy in the modern sense of the term. According to



Megasthenese, administration of the Maurya army was entrusted to six boards each consisting of five members (therefore in all 30 members). No such boards appear in the *Arthashastra* which entrusts the management of infantry, cavalry, chariot and elephant forces to respective *Adhayakshas*. Closely connected to the military administration was an espionage system. The Mauryas were probably the first Indian power to have developed and implemented a regular secret service. Megasthenese spoke eloquently of the trustworthiness of these secret agents. The *Arthashastra* divides the secret agents (*Gudhapurusha*) into two broad categories; the roving (*Sanchara*) and the stationary (*Samstha*) spies who are sub-divided into nine types. The *Arthashastra* recommended the employment of the spies not only to gather secret information but also to eliminate a suspect element, if necessary, by force, fraud and other dubious methods.

It is not difficult to imagine that the maintenance of a large and diverse category of officers and also a sizeable army required the availability of enormous resources. The collection and mobilisation of resources could be ensured by an efficient revenue system. Kautilya recommends the collection of taxes by the *samaharta* (the Collector General of Taxes) from as many as seven heads of revenue:

- 1) fortified urban centres (*Durga*)
- 2) countryside (*Rashtra*)
- 3) mines (*Khani*)
- 4) irrigation projects (*Setu*)
- 5) forests (*Vana*)
- 6) pasture ground (*Vraja*)
- 7) trade routes (*Vanikpatha*)

Of these the most important was of course the taxes from agrarian sector. Megasthenese and other Greek writers corroborate that the peasants had to pay a share of the crops produce and also had to pay a rent. During Asoka's reign at least two agricultural taxes were collected; a *bhaga* or the share (possibly 1/6<sup>th</sup> or 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the produce) and *bali*. The significant point that emerges from a perusal of *Arthashastra* and the Greek accounts is that the Mauryan administration probably levied taxes on both the agrarian and the non-agrarian sectors of the economy. The possibility of extracting revenue from animal breeders, forest dwellers, artisans and merchants can not be ruled out. The *Arthashastra* in fact lays down elaborate steps to gather information on the income, expenditure incurred by a family and proposes to estimate the amount of revenue to be derived from each household in an administrative/fiscal area. The *Arthashastra* further advises the ruler to impose extremely harsh revenue measures (*Pranaya*) in case the ruler faces a calamity or emergency. Under such a situation the ruler is recommended to demand high rate of taxes from agriculturists, breeders, artisans, and merchants. If these harsh measures failed to replenish the treasury, the *Arthashastra* frankly advocates a number of dubious and fraudulent measures to fill up the royal treasury.

The Mauryas are to be credited for introducing a provincial system of administration for the first time in Indian history. Inscriptions of Asoka inform us about the existence of four provincial headquarters at Taxila, Ujjaini, Tosali, (near Bhubaneshwar) and Suvarangiri. There were at least four provincial headquarters in four cardinal directions; the administration of provinces was often entrusted to a prince of royal blood, labelled as *Kumara* and *Aryaputra*. Though both the terms denote royal princes

the *Aryaputra* probably is synonymous with the *Aryakumara* in Panini's grammar which explains the term as the heir designate (*Yuvaraja*). The *Aryaputra*, therefore, was possibly of higher rank than an ordinary *Kumara*. *Aryaputra* is mentioned only in the context of Suvarangiri, the headquarters in the Southern sector. The appointment of an *Aryaputra* at Suvarnagiri was possibly due to the recognition of the importance of the Deccan which was rich in mineral resources viz. mines of gold and diamond. The perspective of four provincial headquarters in four cardinal directions probably presents too neat an administrative arrangement. There was indeed another *Kumara* named Samba, probably in charge of Manemadesa (in the central part of MP) as will be evident from an Asokan edict from Panguradiya. The presence of the fifth *Kumara* could signify the existence of more than four provincial divisions. The Kathiawad peninsula was certainly one such provincial division where the governor under Chandragupta was Vaisya Pushyagupta. The same area was governed by Yavanaraja Tushaspha during the reign of Asoka. Tushaspha was possibly of Iranian extraction. Thus in Kathiawad the Mauryas appointed persons outside the royal family – in fact even someone of Iranian origin – as provincial governors. The *Kumaras* though apparently of equal rank did not possibly enjoy equal powers. Two edicts of Asoka from Orissa give instructions that the provincial governor at Taxila and Ujjaiyini could send their own official on tours of inspection (*Anusamyana*) after every five years. The same type of tours were to be sent out from Tosali after every three years not by the *Kumaras* there but by the emperor himself. It would be therefore logical to infer that the provincial governor at Taxila and Ujjaiyini enjoyed more power than their counterpart in ancient Kalinga.

Provinces in the Maurya empire appear to have been further divided into districts which are called *Ahara* and *Janapada* in the Asokan edicts. Megasthenes enlightens us about a class of officers called *Agronomoi* who were in charge of the countryside. They were entrusted with the measurement of land, supervision of irrigation and administration of justice at local level. The Buddhist texts were aware of a type of officers who held the rope for the measurement of land (*Rajjuggahaka-amachcha*). Their function as a settlement officer corresponds to one of the functions of the *Agronomoi*, i.e. the measurement of land. Asoka employed a large number of *Rajjukas* over a vast multitude of dwellers in the countryside. The term *Rajjuka* may have some correspondence to *Rajjuggahaka-amachcha*. Asoka further assigned to them the local level administration of justice. The emperor explicitly expressed his trust on the *Rajjukas*: they were compared with expert nurses, attending to new born babies. In short the *Rajjuka* of Asoka's inscriptions may logically be compared with *Agronomoi* of the Greek accounts and therefore appear to have been an important officer at the district level. Kautiliya prescribes a different scheme of rural level administrative tier. At the top of the tier was the unit called *Sthaniya* consisting of 800 villages. Then came *Dronamukha* of 400 villages; further below stood *Karvatika* of 200 villages and at the lowest level, the *Samgrahana* consisting of 10 villages. One is not sure if and whether this scheme of rural level administrative blocks in a descending order was ever applied in the Mauryan realm.

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## 16.5 ADMINISTRATION IN THE POST-MAURYAN PERIOD

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The collapse of the Maurya Empire in c. 187 BC was followed by the emergence of several states and political powers in the sub-continent. Put differently, there was no single paramount political power. In Northern and Western India a few political powers like the Greeks, the Sakas and the Kushanas established their control by

entering the sub-continent through the North Western Border land. A significant aspect of statecraft during this phase was the advent of the monarchical state in peninsular India for the first time. In Northern India, monarchy as a political institution continued uninterrupted, although not bereft of a few new features.

The growing power of the king himself is best illustrated by the use of several grandiose political epithets used by rulers. This was in sharp contrast to the rather simple title *Raja* used by the mighty Maurya emperor. Rulers of this period assumed high sounding titles like *Ekarat* (the sole ruler), *Rajadhiraja* (king of kings), *Sarvalogisvara* (lord of beings), *Mahisvara* (lord of the earth) etc.,. Bactrian Greek rulers for the first time introduced royal portraiture on their coins many of which were in circulation in North Western part of the sub-continent. The visual representation of the ruler on coins was intended to instil a sense of might and right of political authorities over their subjects. What is particularly noticeable is the performance of Vedic sacrifices (*Asvamedha*, *Vajapeya*, *Rajasuya*) by Pushyamitra Sunga and the Satavahana rulers of the Deccan. These Vedic sacrifices were performed to claim enhanced power and glory by a ruler. The distinction from the Maurya practice is once again obvious. As such sacrifices were conspicuous by their absence in the Maurya realm, by performing such Vedic sacrifices the ruler was considered to have been elevated to the position of the divinity and/or as equivalent to a God. The dignity claimed in this case is not based on the concept of divine position or descent of the ruler, but the elevation of the ruler to divine status by the virtue of his performance of sacred sacrifices on auspicious occasions. Some scholars would find in such claims by rulers the element of 'occasional divinity'.

A much stronger claim of the divinity of king is visible from the Kushana period onwards. The Kushana kings regularly used their dynastic epithet, son of God (*Devaputra*). This concept was possibly derived from the Chinese idea of considering the ruler as the son of heaven. An inscription introduces Kushana king Vasishka as a man-god (*Deva Manusha*). An almost parallel thought to this will be clearly evident from the dictum in the *Manusamhita* that even an infant king must not be disobeyed and disrespected, because he is truly a great divinity in human form. The Kushana coins regularly portray the Kushana emperor with a halo behind his head implying his supra-human and supra-mundane position. There were at least five dynastic sanctuaries (*Deva kula*) in the vast Kushana empire. In these *Devakulas* images of the deceased Kushana emperors and that of the reigning Kushana king as well were installed. The Kushana emperors visually projected themselves as venerable deities and established a cult of the emperor. This ideology of divine kingship and the deliberate creation of a political iconography contributed to elevation of the might and power of the Kushana emperor/empire to enormous height. Since the Kushana empire included in it a vast multitude of different ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups, the cult of the emperor made the Kushana king as a cementing factor amidst immense diversities. This in other words helped the Kushanas to integrate an expansive empire.

The *Manusamhita* and the *Santiparva* of the *Mahabharata* also strongly uphold the concept that the foremost duty of the ruler was to render protection to his subjects and to maintain the ideal social order based on the *Varnasramadharmas*. These two texts also recognised that the king was entitled to collect taxes because he provided protection. In this concept may be seen the elements of the contractual theory of kingship or at least the notion of an agreement between the ruler and the ruled to render their respective duties and obligations.

As dynastic succession became increasingly regular, it further contributed to the strength of monarchy. In the Kushana empire, however, can be seen the practice of conjoint rulership comprising the reigning Kushana emperor as the senior ruler and his future heir as the junior co-ruler (e.g. Kanishka and Vashishka, Vashishka and Huvishka, Huvishka and Kanishka II and Huvishka and Vasudeva I). Whether such a system of conjoint rule precluded a struggle for succession cannot be ascertained.

The practice of assigning the bulk of the burden of administration to high ranking functionaries, like the *Amatya*, became quite regular during the period under review. The majority of the theoretical treatises viewed the *Amatya*, the *Mantrin* and the *Sachiva* as interchangeable and synonymous terms, meaning officers of very high rank including the minister. In the Buddhist Jatakas one comes across ministerial families (*Amachchakula*). Does this mean that the *Amatyas* could have been appointed on a hereditary basis and/or from handful number of families of high pedigree? Both the *Manusamhita* and the *Mahabharata* do favour the appointment of ministers from the two upper *Varnas*. The Saka ruler Rudradaman I (A.D. 150) had two important functionaries under him: *Karmasachiva* and *Matisachiva*. While the former certainly denoted executive officer, the latter signified those who possessed intellect. The *matisachiva* being distinct from the *Karmasachiva*, appears to have offered counselling and therefore may be equated with the minister. Many *Amatayas* were also appointed in the core territory of the Satavahana realm in the *Western* and the *Central Deccan*.

The organisation of the army must have been brought under the supervision of the central administration. The four principle units of the army continued as before: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephant forces. The commander in chief was usually known as the *Senapati*, an epithet Pushyamitra Sunga continued to bear even after he had overthrown the Maurya empire and established the Sunga rule. In the Kushana realm the commander of the army was known as the *Dandanayaka* (danda=army, nayaka=leader/captain). This period also recognised the importance of secret agents for the efficient management of affairs of the state. Spies were compared with the eyes of the ruler. But the theoretical texts of this period do not present the image of a systematic espionage network recommended by Kautilya.

The collection of revenue must have been one of the major concerns of administration especially the central administration. Revenue terms like *Bhaga*, (share of the produce), *Shulka* (tolls and customs) continued from the preceding period. Rudradaman I is said to have collected taxes according to the just (*Yatha*) and prescribed manner without taking recourse to exploitative revenue policy. His treasury is said to have been over-flowing with resources collected in an appropriate manner. During this period one encounters for the first time the regular practice of imposing a cess on salt production (*Lonakhadakam*). This system very frequently occurs in the Satavahana realm. Pliny (death A.D. 79) informs us that the levy on salt manufacture in the region of Mount Oromenus (the Salt Range in Pakistan) far exceeded the taxes levied by the ruler even from a diamond mine. Though the law books emphasise on the collection of appropriate and just taxes, the *Mahabharata* allows significant departure from this norm. The king should increase the burden of taxation slowly and in stages, like the wagon driver gradually piles upon the merchandise on his beast of burden. No less interesting is another recommendation: the king should imperceptibly draw out more and more resources from its subjects like a leech which sucks blood from a person in sleep without waking him up. That the ruler could on certain occasions exact forced labour (*Vishti*) and emergency



taxes (*Pranaya*) is indicated by Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman, although the inscription actually eulogises the ruler for never having afflicted his subjects with these extortionate demands.

In Northern and Western India, the provincial administration was on several occasions entrusted to *Kshatrapas*. The origin of the system goes back to the days of the Achaeminid empire of Iran where Satraps were appointed to look after the provincial administration. Thus Sodasa, a prominent *Kshatrapa* governor was in charge of Mathura, Chastana and his grandson Rudradaman-I both were *Kshatrapas* in charge of Gujarat and Kathiawad and served their Kushana overlords till 150 A.D. When Rudradaman assumed full independence (as a *Mahakshatrapa*) he appointed a provincial governor of the rank of an *Amatya* for Kathiawara region. Kanishka I had two governors at Varanasi named Kharapallana and Banasphara. One was a *Kshatrapa* and the other belonged to the rank of a military commander (*Dandanayaka*). This probably indicates that high ranking military officers in the Kushana empire could also be appointed as civil administrators.

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## 16.6 ADMINISTRATION FROM 300 TO 600 A.D.

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The major parts of these three centuries were dominated by two important monarchical powers, the Guptas in North India and the Vakatakas in the Northern and the Central parts of the Deccan. There were several other monarchical powers of lesser prominence in different parts of India. The polity of this period was pre-dominantly monarchical. The last remains of non-monarchical *Ganarajyas* can be seen in the 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Lichhvis definitely existed as a *Ganarajya* in the region of modern Vaishali; but it subsequently became a part of the Gupta realm and gradually was brought under a monarchical system. Among the powers that paid tribute to Samudragupta and obeyed his order were a few non-monarchical groups in Central India, Malwa and Rajasthan. Since the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. these non-monarchical groups are no longer visible in our sources. They eventually were incorporated in the Gupta empire and came under the fold of monarchical system.

North India was very much under the dominance of the Gupta rulers from c. 320 to about 500 A.D. The central administration definitely revolved around the king. The exalted position of the Gupta emperor is clearly betrayed by the use of grand titles like *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara* and *Paramabhataraka*. The Vakataka King in contrast to the Gupta king used a much simpler title, *Maharaja*. The portrait of the Gupta emperor on coins as slaying a lion or a tiger projected the image of a valorous and heroic ruler. There is a distinct tendency in the Gupta empire to stress the divinity of kings. Samudragupta was equated with Indra, Varuna, Yama and Kuvera. He was also eulogised as a deity residing in the earth and as an incomprehensible being (*achintyapurusha*). The Gupta rulers themselves being devout Vaishnavas often showed preference for the depiction of the boar (*Varaha*), the incarnation of Vishnu. As Vishnu in his boar incarnation rescued the earth, the Gupta ruler was visually projected as protector of his realm.

It is difficult to find any concrete information whether ministers (*Mantrin*) were appointed either in the Gupta or the Vakataka domains. Virasena Saba held the position of a *Sachiva* under Chandragupta II. As the term *Sachiva* was synonymous with *Mantri*, he could have served the Gupta emperor as a minister. Inscriptions of the Guptas and the Vakataka rulers clearly indicate a major proliferation of

administrative posts. There were palace guards (*Pratihara*) who were headed by the *Maha-pratihara*. The officer named *Vinayasura* announced and escorted visitors to the ruler when the royal court was in session.

The prominent officer in the military department was *Dandanayaka* whom we have already mentioned before. In the Vakataka inscriptions one comes across a more or less similar position of the *Senapati*. A significant feature of military administration of this period was the tendency to introduce different grades in official hierarchy. The Vakataka inscription enumerates in an ascending order, the following positions *Dandanayaka*, *Mahadandanayaka*, *Sarva-dandanayaka* and *Maha-sarvadandanayaka*. Similarly, the *Maha-senapati* was placed above the *Senapati*. A general officer in the infantry, and cavalry units was known as *Bhatasvapati* and the officer looking after a unit of elephant forces was given the epithet of *Katuka*. A completely new administrative position appears from this period onwards. He is the *Sandhivigrahika*, the functionary in charge of peace (*Sandhi*) and war (*Vigraha*). It appears that he was assigned to what may be called the Department of External Affairs. Above the *Sandhivigrahika* there was, as expected, a very senior officer, the *Maha-sandhivigrahika*. Maintenance of law and order seems to have been assigned to the officer called *Danda-pasadhikarna* which denoted the chief of the police force (Basadh seals). Regular and irregular police forces were given the epithets of *Chata* and *Bhata*. Close to the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. an administrative position was introduced in Western India to apprehend thieves (*Chauroddharanika*).

A remarkable feature of the administrative system of this period was the appointment of high ranking officers on a hereditary basis. Harishena, the composer of the Allahabad *Prasasti* was a *Maha-dandanayaka*, his father too had functioned in the same capacity. Virasena too was appointed to the post of *Sachiva* on hereditary consideration. While Chandragupta II had Sikharasvami as a *Kumaramatyaya*, his son Prithvishena served the next Gupta emperor Kumargupta I in the same position. No less significant is the practice to appoint the same person in different departments. Thus Harishena held the position of the officer in charge of war and peace, a senior military commander and possibly the officer in charge of the royal kitchen. Information regarding revenue collection and revenue administration is largely gleaned from contemporary inscriptions which offer an image of the increasing number of revenue terms. This may imply that the rulers extracted revenues from more sources than ever before. In addition to the traditional revenue terms like Share (*Bhaga*), enjoyment (*Bhoga*), tax in general (*Kara*), tolls and customs (*Sulka*), many new revenue terms begin to appear in copper plate charters. Thus *Udranga* probably denoted a fixed tax on permanent tenants. Most of the taxes were possibly paid in kind and a similar portion could have been realised in cash (*Hiranya*). A copper plate of 592 A.D. from Kathiawad demonstrates that a cess was levied on the following professions: braziers, cloth makers, armour makers, dyers, weavers and shoe makers. The image of the increasing burden of taxes therefore can hardly be denied. If these belong to the category of customary taxes, the Vakataka records refer to diverse types of irregular and non-customary dues levied on bulls and cows, flowers, grass, hides and charcoal and taxes on fermenting of liquors and salt digging. The Vakataka inscriptions leave little room for doubt about the exaction of various types of forced labour (*Sarva vishti*). This was indeed an extra-economic form of coercion and was possibly exacted from blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers and potters and other similar professional groups. The period under review is marked by a high demand for various types of taxes though the Chinese Pilgrim



Fa-Hsien (travelled in India 399 A.D. to 415 A.D.) spoke of very light burden of taxes. Fa-Hsien, obviously, did not provide an accurate picture in this regard.

The extensive Gupta and Vakataka kingdoms were divided into provinces which were designated either as *Bhukti* or *Desa*. The provincial governor was directly appointed by the Gupta emperor at whose feet the governor is said to have meditated. The expression implies his declared allegiance to the central authority. The provincial governor in charge of a bhukti was generally given the designation, *Uparika*. But from c. 475 A.D. onwards they came to be known as *Uparika Maharaja*, the suffix Maharaja certainly underlines the growing importance of the provincial governor during a phase when the Gupta central authority was waning.

Below the province stood the district known as *Vishaya* and *Ahara*. The district comprised of villages (*grama*) which were the lowest units of administration. However, there were several more tiers of administration between the district and village. These were variously known as the *Vithi*, the *Mandala*, the *Patta*, the *Pathaka* and the *Petha*. The officer in charge of the district was the *Vishayapati* who had his office at the district headquarters (*Vishayadhistanadhikarana*). The district office also maintained records of local land revenue and land transactions. The record keeper was known as the *Pustapala* while the *Kayastha* functioned as the official scribe. The most remarkable feature of the Gupta district and locality level administration was the incorporation of a few non-governmental persons in the local administration. They were the chief merchant of the city, the leader of the caravan traders, chief of the artisans, representatives of the well to do peasants and such like. None of them were salaried officials of the state but the Gupta administrative system accommodated their active presence in local administration. This was a new experiment in local administration never known to have been attempted before in Indian history.

Several scholars have put forth the opinion that the Gupta administrative system was more decentralised than the Mauryan administrative system. The decentralised nature of administration allowed for the active presence of non-governmental personages in local administration. This has been indicated as a marker of the gradual decay of the political control of the central authority. But the interpretation has been contested by others who have pointed out that the Gupta administration ably integrated the local elements in the district level administration. This is seen as further strengthening the fabric of the Gupta empire and helping it last for nearly two centuries and a half.

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## 16.7 ADMINISTRATION IN POST 600 A.D.

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A brief overview of the administrative system of the post-Gupta days may be presented here. The period, also called the early medieval phase in Indian history, was marked by the presence of many political powers. There was no single political master over the whole of North India. While this phase witnessed endemic clashes among many powers, these political powers were mostly local or regional powers. There is little trace of non-monarchical elements in the polity. The spread and proliferation of monarchical system has been explained by different scholars who have significantly contributed to the debate on the nature of the early medieval state. The multiplicity of powers is explained by many Marxist historians as an outcome of the disintegration of a centralised state system which gave way to a decentralised and fragmented polity. The parcellisation of the sovereignty of the apex political authority resulted in the emergence of many political pockets which came to be

controlled by local and regional rulers who rose to prominence at the cost of a central and /or an apex political authority. The polity is often characterised as 'feudal', as opposed to the centralised system. This explanation has been strongly contested by many other scholars. Their principal point of explanation is that the proliferation of the powers suggests the unprecedented growth of monarchical polity which actually penetrated into areas that did not experience a territorial state polity before. There was no break down or crisis in administrative or political organisation.

Perhaps the most striking feature in the political organisation of this period was the emergence of the *Samantas*. The term *Samanta* in the *Arthashastra* stood for a neighbouring king, but its connotation changed significantly in the third century A.D. The term began to denote a subordinate ruler or a vassal who served a suzerain. The *Samanta* had already appeared in some inscriptions of the Gupta period. The *Samanta* became a familiar and powerful element in the post-Gupta polity and figured regularly in both textual and epigraphic sources. The relationship between the *Samanta* and his overlord (*Sarvabhauma* or a ruler over many lands, *Sarvabhumi*) is an important facet of the post-Gupta polity. The *Samanta* system is also considered as the hallmark of the feudal polity in the Marxist historiography of early medieval India. It has been suggested that the period from c. 600 to 1200 A.D. experienced a major slump in commerce and circulation of coins. This seems to have created severe problems in ensuring the payment of salary in cash to the officers who therefore had to be paid in terms of land grants in lieu of cash. This kind of service grant gradually made the officer a master of the area granted to him. The service grant not only transferred revenue to the recipient but also transferred many administrative prerogatives to him. This is seen as a process of weakening of the central authority and the consequent rise of the *Samanta*. Literary texts often refer to vassals under the term *Rauta* (*Rajaputra*) and also speak of several ranks among the *Samantas*. The *Samantas* of a higher rank were known as *Mahasamanta* or *Mahasamantadhipatis*, distinct from minor *Samantas* (*Laghusamantas*). The sharp hierarchy in the rank of the *Samanta* is a significant feature of the system. The *Samantas* could have rendered valuable military assistance to the overlords during wars which were incessantly fought during this period. The *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin portrays how the Pala ruler of Bengal had to plead the circle of his *Samantas* (*Samantachakra*) to provide help in his bid to recover the lost area of Varendri (north Bengal). The *Samantas* in this case had to be won over by lavish gift of land and other wealth. The account has been interpreted as a marker of the growing importance of the *Samanta* feudatories at the expense of the central authority.

In Kashmir, as Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* bears it out, the ruler was reduced to a puppet as a result of the growing power of the vassals. The vassals in Kashmir were variously known as *Damara*, *Ekanga* and *Tantrin* who became the actual masters of the land. Kalhana lamented that because of the multiplicity of rulers (*Bhurirajake*) the entire administration (*Samastavyavahara*) actually succumbed to anarchy (*Arajaka*).

A large number of royal functionaries regularly appear in copper plate charters. Many of the positions continued from the Gupta period. The importance of the *Sandhivigrahika* seems to have increased during the early medieval times when warlike activities among formidable regional powers were virtually ceaseless. The tendency to appoint ministers on a hereditary basis or from a particular family became a well established practice during this period. Several generations of *Brahmana* ministers served the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar and had their

importance recorded in Sanskrit *Prasastis*. The enormous increase in the issuance of landgrants seems to have brought two officers to greater prominence than the previous times. They were the messenger (*Duta*) and the scribe (*Kayastha/Karana*). The messenger often carried the royal order of granting landed property from the political centre to the actual area of property transfer. Princes of royal blood are known to have served in the capacity of a messenger. The *Kayastha* as the scribe was accorded considerable importance in an age when numerous landgrant charters were issued. As a literate person the *Kayastha* had access to official records, especially land revenue records. In course of time the *Kayastha* was often placed in the land revenue department. The rapacious nature of the *Kayastha* in the revenue department was not unknown. Kalhana viewed the *Kayastha* as dangerous as a snake.

Landgrants of this period are replete with revenue terms as these inscriptions often recorded remissions of revenue. Apart from the well established taxes like share (*Bhaga*), enjoyment (*Bhoga*), tax in general (*Kara*), tax in cash (*Hiranya*), tolls and customs (*Sulka*) and ferry dues (*Tara*), many new and non-customary levies were imposed. This definitely caused immense hardship to the common folk. In the landgrant the usual synonym for tax is 'affliction' (*Pida*). That involuntary labour was exacted by rulers will clearly be evident from the widespread practice of the imposition of forced labour (*Vishti*). Besides the regular taxes, all possible local resources were also levied, e.g. mango and mahua (*Amramadhuka*), jackfruit (*Panasa*), salt (*Lavana*), betel and coconut (*Guvaka-narikela*), fish and tortoise (*Matsya-kacchhapa*)

The earlier practice of dividing the realm into provincial units (*Bhukti, Desa*, etc.) continued in North India. The locality level administrative units were districts (*Vishaya*), circles (*Mandala*) and *Vithi*. The possibilities of participation of non-governmental personages in local administration—in vogue during the Gupta period—became remote during this period. On some occasions, however, the town councils in *Western* India and the Gang-Yamuna doab area appeared to have accommodated locally important people. These were often called *Panchakulas*, literally a committee of five members.

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## 16.8 SUMMARY

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This Unit discusses the administrative and institutional system in North India, during the 'early historical' and 'early medieval period'. The political formation of the Vedic period is generally regarded as a pre-state or proto-state polity. With the emergence of the janapadas the monarchical and oligarchical pattern came into existence. The establishment of Mauryan empire heralded the era of large monarchical states with elaborate administrative machinery. In the post Mauryan period especially during the Kushana period the notion of divine kingship became prevalent. In the period between 300-600 A.D. the Guptas and the Vakatakas dominated the political scene. Their administrative system is categorised as decentralised by many scholars. The polity of this period was predominantly monarchical. The *Samanta* system is regarded as the hallmark of Post 600 A.D. political formation.

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## 16.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the salient features of administrative system under the Mauryas.
- 2) Give an account of the administrative system in the post Gupta period.

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## UNIT 17 LAW AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS

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### Structure

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Sources of Law
- 17.3 Classification of Law
- 17.4 Administration of Justice
- 17.5 Summary
- 17.6 Exercises

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### 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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The earliest concept of law which is found in the *Rig veda* is represented by the word *rta*. This word denotes the supreme transcendental law or the cosmic order which rules the universe and to which even the Gods owe allegiance. Subsequently the concept of *Dharma* took the place of *rta*. Though ‘*Dharma*’ is generally used in the Smriti literature to denote law, it cannot be dissociated from considerations of ethics and morality. According to Kane, the word ‘*Dharma*’ passing through several transitions of meanings, came to denote the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of one of the castes and as a person in a particular stage of life. In the *vedic* literature *Dharma* is identified with law and custom. In the *Mahabharata*, *Dharma* denotes a number of duties like the *Rajadharmā* (duties of the ruler), the *Prajadharmā* (duties of the subjects) and the *Mitradharmā* (duties of the friend). Upholding the supremacy of *Dharma* depended on *vyavahara*, which is known in English as ‘law’ and *vyavahara* has been defined by several commentators as based on evidence leading to removal of various doubts which includes formal law, legal procedure and administration of justice. Thus in the context of ancient India *Dharma* was an expression of socio-ethico-religious ideas and was not merely identified with religion. In this Unit you will be introduced to the sources of law in Ancient India, different categories of law and how justice was administered in that period.

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### 17.2 SOURCES OF LAW

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As regards the sources of law, we have to fall back upon Manu. Manu defined *Dharma* as: ‘The whole Veda is the source of *Dharma*, next the traditions (smriti) and the tradition and practice of those that know it (the Veda), and the customs of holy men and finally self satisfaction.’(II.6). Medhatithi and Yajnavalkya agree with Manu and thus we have three recognized sources of *Dharma*, namely, *srauta* (derived from the *srutis*, that is *Veda*), *smarta* (derived from the *smritis* that is *Dharmasastra*) and *sadachara* (the usages of virtuous men who know the *Vedas*). Kautilya, however, lays down that ‘*Dharma* (sacred law), *Vyavahara* (contract), *Charitra* (custom) and *Rajasasana* (royal decree) are the four legs of law, the later one superseding the earlier one ( *dharmas-cha vyavaharas-cha charitram rajasasanam vivadarthas-chatuspadah paschimah purva-badhakah*). Thus the king becomes the highest authority for promulgating law. The four sources of law as given by Narada (I.10) is almost a repetition of Kautilya. Brihaspati’s explanatory statements clarify the statement of Kautilya and Narada. According to him (I.19-21, IX.2-7), when a decision is based on the admission on oath by the defendant

it is said to be *Dharma*. When a decision is based only on sastra or evidence or arguments it is said to be a *vyavahara*. When a decision is based on inference or usages or customs of corporations it is said to be *charitra*. When a king decides a disputed case in a manner which is neither opposed to sastra nor is against the opinion of the sabhyas, it is called *rajajna* and this order overrides local customs etc. It is to be noted that *vyavahara* which included documentary evidence, cannot be called a source of law. As for transactions, like sale or mortgage, the deeds had to be drawn in conformity either with sastra rules or local customs or both. Normally three sources of law were accepted: *srauta*, *smarta* and *sadachara*.

The subject matters of litigation could be many and varied. Manu gives us a list of eighteen titles of the law (*vyavahara pada*) which are also more or less agreed by Yajnavalkya, Narada and Brihaspati. These are :

- 1) Non-payment of debt
- 2) Deposit and pledge
- 3) Sale without ownership
- 4) Concerns among partners
- 5) Resumption of gifts
- 6) Non-payment of wages
- 7) Non-performance of agreements
- 8) Rescission of sale and purchase
- 9) Disputes between the owner (of cattle) and his servants
- 10) Disputes regarding boundaries
- 11) Assault
- 12) Defamation
- 13) Theft
- 14) Robbery and violence
- 15) Adultery
- 16) Duties of man and wife
- 17) Partition (of inheritance) and
- 18) Gambling and betting.

That this list of eighteen topics is not exhaustive is made clear by both Medhatithi and Kulluka. The reason behind this is that with the passage of time society had become much more complex and naturally there was increase in the causes of litigation. Similarly in the *Dharmasutras*, which have discussed a few topics of law like murder, adultery, theft, defamation and inheritance, we do not get the other titles of law as in Manu as the society was much more simpler in the days of the *Dharmasutras*. But even then slow development of civil and criminal law is clearly perceptible in the *Dharmasutras*. Gautama says, 'Cultivators, traders, herdsmen, money-lenders and artisans have authority to lay down rules for their respective classes. Having learnt the state of affairs from those who in each class have authority to speak, the king shall give the legal decision.' Thus emerging important social groups like traders, money lenders and artisans were given due recognition.



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### 17.3 CLASSIFICATION OF LAW

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The first clear recognition of the division between civil and criminal law was made by Brihaspati. The fourteen titles of law, according to him, comprise money lending, deposits, invalid gifts, concerns of partnership, non-payment of wages, non-performance of service, disputes about land, sale without ownership, rescission of sale and purchase, breach of contract, relations between husband and wife, theft and inheritance as well as gambling. These fall within the purview of civil law. On the other hand, the four titles of law comprising the two kinds of insult (*parushya*), violence (*sahasa*) and criminal connection with another's wife spring out of injury to others were within the domain of criminal law.

To begin with civil law, we find that Manu deals with it in an elaborate manner. A few of them may be cited. The monthly interest on debt is allowed at the rate of 2,3,4 or 5 per cent according to the order of the castes. Inheritance was a very important matter and minute rules are prescribed to meet various contingencies. Property was divided only after the death of the father and the eldest brother got as his share, either the whole property or a larger share than the other brothers. Maiden sisters also got a share, which was normally one-fourth of the brother's. As regards ownership of a property Manu opines that the enjoyment of property for more than 10 years gives a prescriptive right to it. Yajnavalkya observes that title is superior to possession in all cases except where possession has descended from a line of ancestors. According to him while possession without title creates no claim except in cases of long continuity, title without possession has no force. As regards partition of property he says that partition may take place either during the life time of the father or else after his death. In general if the father divides his property, the best share goes to the eldest son or else equal share to all the sons. But if the partition takes place after the death of the father, then it is divided equally among all the sons, both the assets and the liabilities. The mother also gets an equal share as the sons and the daughter one fourth of the son's share. Yajnavalkya, thus gives the widow the full right to succeed. But the picture is different in *Narada smriti*. He does not give the right of succession to the widow. She is granted only the right of maintenance till her death. The term '*stridhana*' is used in the *Smritis* not in the etymological sense of all property possessed by a woman, but in the technical sense of 'certain kinds of property given to a woman on certain occasions or at different stages of life.' The different classes of *stridhana* are what was given to a woman before the nuptial fire (*adhyagni*), what was given at the time of the bridal procession (*adhyavahanika*), what was given to a woman through affection (*pritudatta*) and what was received from the brother, the mother or the father. To this Katyayana adds other kinds of *stridhana* such as the bridal price (*shulka*), what was obtained by a woman after marriage from the family of her husband or of her parents (*anvadhya*) and what was obtained by a married woman in her husband's house or by a maiden in the house of her father (*saudayika*). As a result "all property (whether movable or immovable) obtained by a woman, either as a maiden or at marriage or after marriage from her parents or the family of relatives of the parents or from the husband and his family (except immovable property given by the husband) is included within the scope of *stridhana*". Again according to Narada, if the father divides the property, he distributes the property equally or unequally after keeping two shares for himself. In case of division after his death, the sons get equal share after paying the debt. In case of laws of debt, narada refers to four kinds of interest: periodical (*kalika*), stipulated (*karita*), corporal (*kayika*) and compound (*chakravridhi*). The last three are condemned by Manu but interestingly they are approved by *Gautama Dharmasutra* (XII.34-35). While dealing with the



recovery of debts, Brihaspati mentions that creditor shall lend money after securing a pledge (*adhi*) of adequate value or a deposit (*bandha*), or a trustworthy security, or a bond written by the debtor himself or else attested by witnesses. Moreover he adds two more kinds of interest namely *shikha vridhhi* (hair interest) and *bhoghalabha* (interest by enjoyment). Hair interest is so called because it grows constantly like hair and does not cease till the cutting of the head, while the latter is based upon the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field.

Criminal law reflected caste privileges and disabilities. Punishment depended on the caste of the criminal and so for identical offences, punishments varied. As a general rule Brahmanas were to be exempted from capital punishment. The worst punishment for a Brahmana was banishment but even then he was allowed to take with him all his property. Manu's law on defamation clearly underlines the role of caste. For defaming a Brahmana, a Kshatriya was to be fined a hundred panas, a Vaishya from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, while a Sudra was to suffer corporal punishment. On the other hand, a Brahmana should be fined fifty, twenty five and twelve panas for defaming a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Sudra respectively. There was a uniform penalty of twelve panas for a Brahmana for defaming a fellow Brahmana. Similar distinctions are also made by Manu in the case of assaults. Manu says, 'With whatever limb a man of a lower caste injures a man of three higher castes, even that limb shall be cut off.' For adultery various penalties were imposed according to the caste of the accused and the circumstances under which the crime was committed. The penalties included fine, forfeiture of property, imprisonment and even death (except for a Brahmana). Yajnavalkya more or less follows Manu's dictum on criminal law. But his views on offences dealt through public justice are quite strong. According to him, a person not giving evidence is liable to pay the entire debt together with an additional one tenth, while he who knows the facts of the case but refuses to give evidence is liable to the same punishment as a false witness. Narada is much more systematic regarding various crimes and their punishments. Treating theft as a separate offence from *sahasa* (violence) Narada divides it into three grades according to the value of the property stolen. The punishment for theft varies from fine to corporal punishment, mutilation and death, according to the amount or value of the object stolen. Theft was regarded as a sin and a thief confessing his guilt is freed from sin. Brihaspati too echoes the sentiment of Narada or goes a step further when he says that punishment for theft or violence is proportioned to the gravity of the offence without reference to the caste of the offender.

In the matter of fixing penalties, there is no doubt that the king enjoyed a great latitude in criminal matters. While imposing a penalty, Manu and Yajnavalkya recommends that the king should take into consideration the motive, the period and location of the offence, also the capacity of the culprit to endure the penalty, in particular his age and gender. Thus the sentence is determined by the circumstances of each case. It is extremely variable and depends largely upon the will of the king who must remain master of his own justice.

Chronological Table of the Texts (according to History of *Dharmasastra*)

*Dharmasutras* : 600 B.C.—300 B.C.

*Manusmriti* : 200 B.C. —200 A.D.

*Yajnavalkya smriti* : 100 A.D.—300A.D.

*Narada smriti* : 100 A.D.—400 A.D.

*Brihaspati smriti* : 300A.D.—500 A.D.

*Katyayana smriti* ; 400 A.D.—600 A.D.

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## 17.4 ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

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Administration of justice was an essential part of the protection to which people are entitled from the government. Manu(VIII.1-2) and Yajnavalkya(II.1) felt that though the king should normally preside over the law courts, he should not dispense justice alone. So a king should be assisted by learned Brahmanas and experienced counsellors. In the opinion of Manu, if the king is absent in the court, he should appoint a learned Brahmana to perform his duties and three sabhyas should be associated with this Brahmana. This provision is also found in Yajnavalkya and Narada, though they do not set any limit to the number of sabhyas. Giving justice is equivalent, say Manu (VIII.306) and Yajnavalkya (I.359), to performing a sacrifice capable of procuring the highest spiritual benefits. Brihaspati repeats this formula on several occasions and does not hesitate to identify a law case (*vyavahara*) as a sacrificial act (*yajna*). Just as if he were performing a sacrifice, the king ought, then, scrupulously to observe the rules laid down by the text. He is bound by the terms of the sastras like a sacrificer by the ritual manual. However the king must always seek out the truth and make sure that he does not come to a hasty judgment. Moreover no legal rule may be applied until he has obtained complete familiarity with the matter. According to Brihaspati, 'A judgment should not be passed in reliance upon the text of the sastras alone, for a trial of a case without taking account of the circumstances of a case leads to a loss of Dharma.'

Brihaspati (I.57-58) maintains that courts of justice were of four kinds : a) *pratishthita*, established in a fixed place such as a town, b) *apratishthita*, not established in a fixed place but moving from place to place, c) *mudrita*, the court of a judge who is authorised to use the royal seal, and d) *sasita or sasrita*, the court in which the king himself presides. The king is indeed the supreme judge in his realm and is held responsible as a matter of duty to protect his subjects and to warrant that their disputes shall be settled justly. It is reasonable that he should be guided and counselled by smriti writers. Besides these courts there were other tribunals recognised as integral parts of the judicial system. Yajnavalkya (II.30), Brihaspati (I.92,94) and Narada (I.7) declare that law suits may be decided by *kula*, *sreni*, *gana / puga*, the royal judges, and the king in order of precedence. The jurisdiction of these courts is illustrated by the rules that *kulas* (families), *srenis* (associations of merchants and craftsmen), *ganas* (group of artisans dependent on mutual help) / *pugas* (association of persons belonging to different castes and following different occupations but living in the same place) and so forth, which are duly authorised by the king, shall decide all cases other than those relating to *sahasa*. The Mitakshara states that from the *kula's* decision one could appeal to a *sreni* and from the latter's decision to a *puga*. From the *puga's* decision appeal lay with the king, and here Vijnanesvara, the author of Mitakshara quotes Narada as his authority.

In the opinion of Yajnavalkya (II.8) and Brihaspati (I.17), there are four stages or feet of a law suit, namely, the plaint (*bhasa-pada*), the reply (*uttara pada*), the evidence or proof (*kriya-pada*) and the decision (*nirnaya pada*). Kautilya prescribes fines and even corporal punishment for corrupt judges. Yajnavalkya, Narada and Katyayana prescribe heavy penalties for sabhyas (associate judges) who were corrupt.

Elaborate judicial procedures are given by the *Smriti* writers. According to the general smriti rule, he who first approaches the court with his plaint is the plaintiff. A plaint may be amended at any time before the answer of the defendant has been

filed. Narada gives the plaintiff the right of keeping the defendant under legal restraint of four kinds which includes such processes as arrest before judgment or temporary injunction till the arrival of the king's summons so that the defendant cannot abscond. Following the claim of the plaintiff, the defendant has to put in his answer. According to Narada, the answer may be of four kinds, namely, denial, confession, a special plea and a plea of previous judgment. The defendant was expected to file his reply on the same day, but under certain circumstances a short period was allowed for the defendant to file his reply. After the statements of the plaintiff and the defendant had been recorded, the evidence had to be placed before the court. Proofs were of two kinds, namely, human and divine. The former consisted of witnesses and documents, the latter being ordeals. All the smritis lay down that ordeals were to be resorted to only when none of the human means were available or possible. Brihaspati gives elaborate rules of procedure regarding evidence in these words, 'A witness prevails over inference, a writing (document) prevails over witnesses, undisturbed possession for three generations prevails over both.'

Finally the parties were asked to leave the court to enable the sabhyas to deliberate after considering the evidence. The victorious party received a document of victory called the *jayapatra*, while the defeated party was to be punished by the king according to the sastra. Some of the *jayapatra*'s bore the king's seal and others, the seal of the chief judge. The Mitakshara holds the *jayapatra* to be a judgement giving a summary of the plaint, the reply, the evidence and the decision. When the plaintiff was defeated, the document was called a *hinapatra*.

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## 17.5 SUMMARY

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Thus what appears is that social order was in constant need of being regulated through a body of rules which were called *Dharma*. Custom played a very important role in making law progressive, thereby changing it from time to time to bridge the difference between the letter of the law and the requirements of changing social needs. In case of a conflict between the practice and the precept, the practice would prevail. The rules of *Dharma* were recommendatory and not mandatory in character.

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## 17.6 EXERCISES

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- 1) Write a brief note on the sources of law and different categories of law.
- 2) Analyse the judicial system prevailing in Ancient India.

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## SUGGESTED READINGS

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Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*

Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom : From the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century*

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Colas*

\_\_\_\_\_, *Studies in Chola History and Administration*

T. V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*

C. Minakshi, *Administrative and Social Life Under the Pallavas*

R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*

Romila Thapar, *The Mauryas Revisited*

\_\_\_\_\_, *Early India From the Origins to A.D. 1300*

S. K. Maity, *Imperial Guptas and Their times*

A. S. Altekar, *The Rashtrakutas and Their Times*

\_\_\_\_\_, *The State and Government in Ancient India*

H. S. Maine, *Ancient Law*

K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*

S. Supakar, *Law of Procedure and Justice in Ancient India*

Ramakrishna Mission (Institute of Culture) Golpark, Kolkata, *The Cultural Heritage of India Vol. II*

G. Yazdani, *Early History of the Deccan*

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# UNIT 18 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES IN PENINSULAR INDIA

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## Structure

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 The Sangam Polity
- 15.3 The Pallavas
- 15.4 The Pandyas
- 15.5 The Cholas
- 15.6 Administrative System in the Deccan
- 15.7 Summary
- 15.8 Exercises

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## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

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The task of the reconstruction of the history of Peninsular India was initiated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by western scholars especially Colonel Mackenzie who prepared a compendium of manuscripts which included works on tradition. The epigraphists like G. Buhler, Robert Sewell, F. Keilhorn, Jas Burgess studied the copper and stone inscriptions found in South India. The discovery of the Sangam literature and other ancient Tamil literary texts further contributed to the knowledge of South Indian history. The *Bhakti* literature has also been analysed by historians to understand the dynamics of South Indian history. M. Jovean Dubrueil, S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, R. Gopalan published several works on South Indian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's works provided a definite historical methodology for the treatment of South Indian history. His approach which was based on the glorification of the past and the centralised state model was adopted by many other historians such as C. Minakshi, T. V. Mahalingam etc. The first attempt to demolish this conventional approach was made by Burton Stein in his work *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India* who put forward the segmentary state model (model of decentralised polity characterised by ritual-sovereignty). His view has been challenged by historians like N. Karashima, D. N. Jha, etc. who subscribe to the feudal model. The theoretical debate enables us to analyse the nature of political formation in Peninsular India.

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## 15.2 THE SANGAM POLITY

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The Sangam polity was one of the earliest political formations of peninsular India. The Sangam literature (Tamil literature comprising of anthologies dated to early centuries of Christian era) together with the testimony of archaeology, numismatics and the Graeco-Roman travellers' accounts help us in reconstructing the history of this period. The literature of the Sangam age describes micro peasant communities forming settlements in the geographical area comprising of the plains (especially Kaveri valley). It appears that the tribal subsistence economy which was characterised by hunting and pastoralism was on the verge of getting metamorphosed. The clans led by chiefs (heroes) were engaged in warfare for acquiring cattle. These incursions resulted in the accumulation of wealth in the form of war booty. The wealth was

brought before the gathering of the community from where it was redistributed (*undattu*) a process in which the warrior chief played a pivotal role. Through this process the 'chief' acquired a central place in the society. The bards who composed poems eulogising the chiefs played an important role in legitimising the chief's position in society and polity. The bardic poetry is an important constituent of the Sangam literature. Vedic sacrifices were also a means for providing legitimacy to the chief as the political leader. They are also mentioned in the Sangam literature.

Three important chiefdoms developed in the ecological zone referred to as the marutam in the Sangam poems. This area comprised of the fertile river valleys on the plains. The peasant groups which settled here brought about the transition from hunting and pastoralism to agriculture based economy. The emergence of trading activities inter-regional and long distance led to the establishment of urban centres in the interior as well as the coastal areas. The chiefdoms of this period were able to exercise control over the surplus derived from the trading and agricultural activities in the region. This resource mobilisation through trade and agriculture helped the Muventar (the three crowned kings) viz. the Cheras of Vanji, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Cholas of Uraiyur in consolidating their power. Their seats of power were located in the trade centres.

An important source for studying the polity of Sangam period is *Kural* (a post-sangam work) by Tiruvalluvar. Tiruvalluvar refers to the *Nadu* (rastra) as the foundation of the polity. He points out that the king's treasury should be stocked through various sources of income viz. land revenue, transit duties, custom and also through annexation. *Ahanamuru* (anthology, part of Sangam literature) refers to the treasury of the Cholas. The *Silappadikaram* (Tamil epic) and *Manimekalai* (Tamil classic) refer to *Aimperungulu* and *Enperayam* which have been interpreted as royal associates. The *Kural* refers to *Avai* which probably indicates the king's *Sabha*. In other works *Manram* (hall) is also mentioned. Evidence is available regarding judicial system in Uraiyur. *Sabha* and *Manram* were the assemblies which performed judicial and other miscellaneous functions. The units of measurement of land were *ma* and *veli*. The importance of peasants and traders is reflected in the sources such as *Kural* and *Pattinappalai* (gives an account of the Chola capital). The latter refers to customs officials which bears testimony to the thriving foreign trade. The mention of prisons indicates that the legal system was well established and punishment was given to those who deviated from the lawful path. The heads of the army were bestowed with the title of *Enadi* (commander) by the chief. The *Vellalar* (agriculturists) were categorised into those who themselves cultivated the land and those who employed others to cultivate the land. The latter also occupied official positions (civil and military) and were endowed with the titles *Vel* and *Arasu* under the Cholas and *Kavidi* under the Pandyas.

The Sangam period was followed by rule of the Kalabharas which is referred to as a 'dark period' till the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. when the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai rose to power. However, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Chalukyas were replaced by the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed.

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### 15.3 THE PALLAVAS

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The Pallavas emerged powerful in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The agricultural tracts in the river valleys of Pennar and Palar were the focal points which sustained the Pallava authority. In this process of agrarian expansion the category of intermediaries who



were not peasants acquired superior rights over land as the representatives of the king. The epigraphical evidence (copper plate grants and stone inscriptions) provides information regarding the establishment of *Brahmadeyans* in settled and unsettled regions. This was made possible by the subjugation of the cultivators of the settled areas or by creating new peasant settlements. Brahmans played an important role in the expansion and consolidation of the Pallava rule. Thus the agrarian system was predominantly *Brahmadeya*-temple centric and proved advantageous to the Brahmans and royal power. The Brahmans were able to secure important positions in the administrative system and the close cooperation between the kings and the Brahmans determined the nature of the state. The kings sought legitimacy from the Brahmans (since they were the guardians and interpreters of moral and religious system) and in return endowed them with official positions and land grants. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar considers the Pallavas as the feudatories of the Satavahanas in south eastern India who established their rule after the decline of the Satavahana power. The inscriptions of the Pallava period can be grouped into three categories: Prakrit copper plate (3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Sanskrit copper plates (4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and stone and copper plate inscriptions (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards).

### Pallava Kingship

There are several mythical traditions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. The *Prasastis* of the Pallavas are similar to the *Itihas-Purana* traditions of North India. They comprise of genealogies and try to correlate the mythical traditions regarding their pedigree to the historical facts of the ruling family. The Pallavas claim to be *Chandravamsis* as is evident from a literary work titled *Nandikkalambagam* (Tamil work). The Sanskrit copper plates refer to them as belonging to the *Bharadavaja gotra*. The Pallavas ascribe to themselves *Brahmakshatra* status. This was a means to legitimise their power by tracing their lineage to Brahmans who possessed the attributes of kshatriyas. They also trace their connection to the Naga chief. The Pallava *Prasastis* (copper plate inscriptions) throw light on the dynastic traditions which eulogise the Pallavas as the custodians of *varnashramadharma*, who conducted sacrifices etc. Genealogies mentioned in copper plate grants describe the accomplishments of the king, depict him as a hero of victories attained in wars against adversaries and portray him of pure descent.

The Pallava kings made use of *danda* (force) for maintaining social order and in return exacted *raksabhoga*. The Pallava kings reigned supreme over the earth as mentioned in the records and they adopted several high sounding titles viz. *Dharmamaharajadhiraja*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Dharmamaharaja* and *Maharaja*. We come to know about these from the evidence of Sanskrit, Prakrit and other charters. The Hirahadagalli plates inform us that the Pallava king Sivaskandavarman is referred to as '*Agnisttomavajapeyasvamedhayaji*' (one who conducted the *Agnistoma*, *Vajapeya* and *Asvamedha* sacrifices). The coronation ceremony was marked by *Abhisekanama* i.e. the bestowment of a new name to the king. The *Birudas* (eulogistic titles) were adopted by the Pallava kings and these were engraved on the cave temples. The various *Birudas* adopted by kings were *Chitrakarappuli* (Tiger among artists) and *Vichitrachitta* by Mahendravarman I, *Mahamalla* (great wrestler) and *Kaviprabodha* (reviver of poetry) by Narasimhavarman I, *Tribhuvana Dipa*, *Abhayankara* and *Jnanasagara* by Rajasimha. The intellectual attainments of Pallava kings are attested by the information contained in the inscription on temples and copper plates. Mahendravarman I wrote Sanskrit plays, was a musician and also had interest in painting. Though the Pallava kings were patrons of Saiva sect of Hinduism but they were generally liberal towards other religions and sects.

Practice of election of the kings was also prevalent under the Pallavas. The Pallava kings were bestowed with characteristics of divinity. The Pallava king Paramesvaravarman is compared to Siva and Narasimha is considered Vishnu in human form.

The Pallava kings are known to have conducted the ceremonies called *Hiranyagarbha*, *Tulabhara* and *Gosahasra*. These were performed to legitimise their political power. These have been termed as *mahadanas* in the *Dharmasastric* and *Puranic* traditions. The Queen of Pallava king Nripatungavarman (670-710) had conducted the *hiranyagarbha* and *tulabhara* mahadanas. *Tulabhara* ritual was marked by the bestowment of gold equivalent to the weight of the grantor. *Gosahasra* gift giving (*dana*) meant endowment of a thousand cows. *Hiranyagarbha* was the most important of these customs. The other two ceremonies were performed prior to *hiranyagarbha* (golden womb). This ritual was a means used by the ruler to ascribe *kshatriya* position to himself. The ceremony involved conducting sacraments laid down for the twice born castes.

During the coronation ceremony Nandivarman was provided the royal umbrella (*chatri*) (*karivai*), the *Samudraghosa* and *Katumukhavaditra* (flag which had the *khata* (Siva's weapon) as the insignia) and *vsabhalanche* (bull-seal). These collectively comprised of the royal insignia. The consecration was held in the presence of *mantri mandala*, *mahasamantas*, *ganattar* and *ghatakaiyar*. The king was bestowed with new titles and the power to promulgate royal orders. Royal orders were originally written on palm leaves. The inscriptional evidence of Kailasnatha temple (at Kanchi) refers to Pallava king Rajasimha as *Sri Vrsabha darpah* (he who boasts of bull). The bull was also embossed on the clay seals.

### Ministers, Officials and Service Groups

There is evidence regarding *Amatyas* in the Hirahadagalli plates as well as in the literary work titled *Periyapuranam*. The testimony of the Hirahadagalli plates tells us that the *Amatyas* were the officials who were notified of the *Brahmadeya* grant which was bestowed by the Pallava king. The *Vaikunthperumal* temple (at Kanchi) inscription refers to *Matras*, *Ghatikaiyar* and *Mulaprakrti*. The *Matras* are regarded as ministers. The Kasakkudi plates of Nandivarman refer to the prime minister as *Brahmasriraja*. The attributes of the prime minister are narrated in the following passage "Brahmasriraja who was a friend of the world, who was filled with all virtues as the ocean with a heap of gems, who was famous, modest, handsome and long lived; whose speech was never rough, who was distinguished among men, who just like Brhaspati, the chief minister of the Lord of Heavens, was the chief Minister of the Pallava king Nandivaraman, the lord of the earth and the delighter of the people's eyes and hearts; who was refined by nature and through education, who was foremost among the learned firm and brave, who possessed the full and unshakable splendour of the Brahman and *kshatriya* castes, and a loyalty to the glorious Nandipotaraja lasting as long as the moon and the stars endure, who was the mainstay of his family, who was the eldest son, who in his disposition was like Siva incarnate, who excelled in all virtues and who was the eldest priest." (C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*). The ministers of the Pallavas possessed several titles such as *Brahmasriraj*, *Brahmayuvaraja* *Uttamasila*, and were even compared to Brihaspati. They were probably assigned revenues as remuneration for their services. The duty of *Ajnaptis* (those who implemented the king's directives regarding the grants) was performed by them. The inscriptional evidence reveals that they carried out the task of administration and acted as advisors and loyal supporters to the king.

The wide range of administrative functions attributed to the ministers were: commander in chief of the army, *Purohit* etc. Sometimes the *Purohit* performed several functions such as priest, duties of chief minister and *Yuvaraj*. The ministers and feudatories played an important role in the coronation and election process. Hirahadagalli plates refer to *Rahasyadhikrta* who has been interpreted as private secretary of the king. This Brahman officer performed the role of *likhita* (writing a record on copper plates) and was remunerated through assignment of revenues of villages. *Vayilkelpar* were officers who implemented the royal orders and also carried out survey of lands. The Tandantottam grant refers to *Kosa-adhyaksa* who was also the *Ajnapti*. The Ulatur stone inscription mentions *Manikkappandaram-kappan* (an official who was custodian of treasury) and *Kodukkappillai* (was the official who performed the task of custodian of gifts). *Mattavilasa Prahasana* (written by Mahendravarman the Pallava ruler) tells us that the court of justice at Kanchi was called *Adhikarana*. Probably there existed lower courts also. The Kasakudi plates refer to *Adhikaranadandan* and *Karandandan* (fines) which were to be paid by those who had committed the offence. These fines were levied by the officers at the directive of the court and were given as *parihara* (privilege) to those grantees on whose lands they were imposed on the offenders. The Pallava records mention *Dharmasana* (a judicial organisation) which dealt with cases concerning village assemblies.

The Sanskrit and Prakrit records of the Pallavas mention the plough and *nivartana* or *pattika* (units in which land was measured). Land grants were made to the Brahmans (*Brahmadeya*) to the Hindu temples (*Devadana*) and to votaries of other beliefs (*Palliccandan*). It seems that under the Pallavas land was measured and various categories of land rights prevailed which can be gleaned from the records of the period. The kings made tax free endowments upon the Brahmans and temples. The royal directive regarding land grants (tax-free) was to be implemented by the village or district headman or the assembly of *nattar* (spokesmen of nadu). The Kasakudi plates mention *Nilakkalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayilkelpar*. These officers were probably associated with the work of measurement and survey (assessment) of land. It seems that there existed a department for looking after administration of land. The Pallava rulers utilised the services of goldsmiths and *kasthahari* (carpenter) for inscribing the contents on the copper plates. The *Prasastis* of the Pallava copper plates were written by several poets patronised by the Pallava rulers viz. Paramesvara Kavi (of Medhavikula) who composed the *Prasastis* of Udayendiran plates of Nandivarman II, Paramesvara (Uttarakarnika) who composed the *Prasastis* of Tandantottam plates of Nandivarman II, etc. The Kuram grant of Paramesavaravarman I mentions *Uttarakarnika-Mahasendatta* as the *Ajnapti*. It has been suggested that the term *Karnika* probably indicated an official category. It appears that the official category *Karanam* (village accountant) was derived from *Karnika*.

### Army Organisation

The army organisation of the Pallavas in theory comprised of four parts: *Ratha*, *Gaja*, *Juraka*, *Patati* (chariots, elephants, horses, foot soldiers). It seems that the Pallava rulers made use of elephants extensively as is evident from the sculptures and the expertise of the Pallava rulers in knowledge regarding elephants. Rajasimha is called *Varanabhagadatta* which shows that his knowledge regarding elephants was equivalent to the expert Bhagadatta. War chariots are mentioned in the Tamil work *Nandikkalambagam* but, their use was restricted. The Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarman narrate the conflict between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas

and describe the army and the weaponry. The sculptures on cave temples and Vaikunthaperumal temple give us information about the weapons used by the soldiers. Hirahadagalli copper plates refer to *senapatis* or generals. *Periyapuranan* (Tamil work of 12th century A.D.) refers to the occupation of the Chalukya capital Vatapi by Narasimhavarman I. The *Mahavamsa* as well as the Kasakudi plates mention the incursions of the Pallavas into Sri Lanka in the 7th century A.D. The Tamil devotional hymns (*Periyatirumoli* by Alvar saint) mention several conflicts between the Pallavas and the Pandyas. *Nandikkalambagan* gives information regarding the wars won by the Pallavas. It is therefore clear that the Pallavas did possess a strong force to counter their rivals.

### Provincial and Local Administration

The provincial government was headed by the Yuvamaharaja. The district officers were known as: *Desatikas*, *Bhojakas*, *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas*, *Sumikas*, *Sancharantas*, *Ayuktakas* and *Adhyaksas*. In the northern area of the Pallava territory a number of officers were responsible for administration. This is evident from the Prakrit and Sanskrit land charters which record land grants in the presence of various officers viz. *Raj Kumaras*, *Senapati* (commander), *Rastrika* (governor), *Madabikas* (custom officials), *Desadhikritas* (officers responsible for the administration of the district), *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas* (supervised the horses, cows and cattle), *Arakhadikata* (guards), *Gumikas* (captains), *Tutikas*, *Nayikas* (commander), *Sancharantakas* (responsible for espionage) and *Badamanusa* (army officers). Dr. S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar points out that "while undoubtedly local administration is seen at its best under Chola rule we seem to find it in as fully developed a condition almost, under these later Pallavas." The inscriptional evidence of the Pallavas regarding local assemblies such as village *Sabhas* is dated to around 8th century A.D. onwards. The administrative system at the lowest level comprised of villages. The *Sabha* was the village assembly. The *Nadu* was larger than a village and the assembly of the *Nadu* was known as *Nattar*, *Urar* and *Alvar*. The unit bigger than *Nadu* was *Kottam*. There are several epigraphical records of the Pallavas viz. the copper plate charters of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (731-96 A.D.) which mention the *Konolai* (royal order) issued to the *Nattar*. The charters generally relate to endowments of land to Brahmans. These charters also help us in gaining insight into the administrative measures of the state i.e. land grants issued by the king in the name of the *Nattar*. The function of the *Nattar* was to prepare an *Araiolai* (document) giving information regarding the measure (veils) of land given to the grantee. Thus we get information regarding land endowments made by the kings. In the Pallava records, we find mention of the *Urar* i.e. the assembly of the *Ur* (village people) which functioned without adhering rigidly to rules.

The representatives of the *Sabha* were called *Perumakkal* (great men). The epigraphical evidence of the Pallava period relates to *Sabhas* of Uttaramerur, Perungulin Kuran, Perumbuliyur etc. The *Sabha* carried out various tasks at the village level such as looking after irrigation facilities such as tanks, monitoring temple grants and providing justice. These administrative functions were delegated to committees called *Variyams*. The inscriptions of the Pallava period viz. at Ukkal, Uttaramerur, Adambakkam etc. are testimony to the existence of *Variyams* and *Ganas* who performed various administrative tasks. It appears that the gifts bestowed upon Gods were placed in the control of the *Sabha* and the committee carried out the implementation of the terms of the grant.

The evidence of the following inscriptions gives us some idea of the working of the *Gana* and the *Sabha*. "An inscription dated in the 37th year of Nandivarman II

records an agreement made by the *Gana* of Payinur (Chingleput taluk) to remove the silt from the village tank annually and 6400 *kadi* of paddy was received by them from Nagan a merchant residing at Mamallapura. Settanandi, presumably a member of the *Gana* signed the document.” (C. Minakshi, Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas). “Dated in the 25th year of Nripatungavarman the *Sabha* Avaninarayana Caturvedimangalam undertook an agreement to supply one *ulakku* of oil every day to a matha to the Sattaperumakkal, presumably members of the governing body of the matha” (C. Minakshi, Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas). The term *Gana* in the inscription indicates members of *alunganattar* or committee which performed certain administrative tasks. There is mention of *Ganapperumakkal* of Sailesvara temple in a stone inscription dated to the 16th year of Pallava ruler Nripatungavarman. It seems that the *Ganapperumakkal* was responsible for supervising the cultivation of lands, temples, levying and remittance of taxes and were also custodians of offerings and gifts (*dana*). The term *Amrtaganattar* is mentioned in the stone inscription of Aparajitavarman in Tiruvorriyur. The stone inscription of Aparajita (dated to 4th and 7th year) also refers to *Amrtagana* which acted as the custodian of the gold which was bestowed upon the temple through the *Sabha*. The inference that can be drawn from the above examples is that the committees were placed under the *Sabha* which was the supreme body of the village. Land was the primary resource and its produce was taxed. Puravupon of the Pallava records was tax realised in cash and was imposed on cultivable lands.

### Land System: Grants, Land Categories and Rights

There are epigraphical records (Pallava charters) of the endowments of lands made to Brahmans and temples by the king which were tax-free together with certain other perquisites. The early Pallava land grants were bestowed by the king or queen directly. In the case of later Pallava grants the *Vijnapti* acted as an intermediary in the transaction. He sought the royal approval in the case of land grants. Kasakudi, Tandantottam, Pattattalmangalam charters of Pallava king Nandivarman Pallavamalla contain mention of *Vijnaptis*. The land grants to Brahmans and temples did not entitle the grantee the right to sale. *Svadattam* and *Paradattam* terms are found in the land grants, which indicate bestowment made by self and others respectively. In case of *Paradatti* the *Vijnapti* or requester and *Ajnapti* (executing officer) are involved. It seems that the initial land grants of the Pallavas are the Mayidavolu and Hirehadagalli plates (prakrit) (3rd to 4th century A.D.) bestowed upon Brahmans. The land grants of the later (in Sanskrit) period were also issued to Brahmans. All these grants were made in the Andhra region. From the period of Simhavarman the charters were in Tamil and Sanskrit and refer to grants to Brahmans. However there is reference to a grant which was made to a Jain teacher.

By the 7th century and 8th century A.D. Brahmans were being granted land to settle in various areas and large and numerous *Brahmadeya* settlements emerged. The land bestowed upon Brahmans and temples by individuals was purchased by them after payment in gold to the village assembly. However the donees did not have the right to dispose off the lands through sale. There are instances of purchase of land by individuals from the *Sabha* to bestow and gift it to temple by offering gold to the *Sabha* to ensure it was made tax-free. Land grants to Jain temples were called *Palliccandam*. Land grants were also made for maintaining village tanks (*Eripatti* or *Erichcheruvu*). The committee of village *Sabha* namely *Erivariyaperumakkal* (comprising of greatman of tank committee) supervised these lands (endowed by individuals or village) meant for tank maintenance. Village *Sabha* had the authority

to bring uncultivated land under cultivation from its funds (tank maintenance etc.) and also to acquire the lands of those who were defaulters in payment of taxes.

The various land categories and rights were: *Payalnilam* lands: Agricultural produce was divided equally amongst landholders and tenant cultivators.

*Payaleruvaram* : share of agricultural produce which went to the tenant cultivators

*Adai* : king's portion of the produce

*Adainilam* : lands from which king's share of produce is obtained

*Karainilam* : lands reallocated amongst tenant cultivators at intervals

From an inscription we come to know that tank-duty (*erikkadi*) was imposed on villages in the form of 1 *kadi* of paddy on a patti of cultivated land (*vilainilam*). The kasakudi plates refer to land grants (*paradatti*) executed by *Nilaiikalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayilkelpar* (officials). The grantees of land were called *Bhojakas* (Hirahadagalli plates), *Vidyabhoga* (Bahur plates) and *Arcanabhogas* of temple lands (as mentioned in the inscriptions related to temple lands).

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## 15.4 THE PANDYAS

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The Pandyas rose to power in the valleys of River Vagai and Tambraparni. The expansion and growth of agrarian economy due to development of irrigation works provided the resources for sustenance of the state system. Brahman settlements were an important feature of this period and the role of Brahmans in legitimising state power is evident from the epigraphical records.

### Nature of Kingship

Pandyas ascribe *Chandravamsa* origin to themselves. The Dalavaypuram plates of Parantaka Viranarayana describe the Pandyas as having their genesis from the Lotus in Vishnu's navel and from Brahma, Atri and the Moon. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya suggest that the Pandya ruler who laid the foundation of Pandya rule originated from the moon. The Pandya *Prasastis* (on copper plates) connect them with the Mahabharata, with the establishment of Tamil Sangam and depict them as co-occupants of Indra's throne. Thus the Pandyas tried to justify their position as rulers by tracing their lineage to local and Sankritic traditions. The copper plate records of the Pandyas contain inscriptions in Tamil and Sanskrit. Genealogy is found in both Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions. However, the Tamil inscriptions of the Pandyas contain comprehensive genealogies which suggest that the Pandyas had local moorings. These Tamil inscriptions draw upon the Sanskrit counterparts in relation to concept and pattern. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya point out that the grantee wrote a *prasasti* eulogizing the grantor. The Pandya *Prasastis* describe the king as the husband of the earth and prosperity. Arikesari Maravarman (670-710) (one who defeated enemy kings and Rajasimha (740-765) had conducted the hiranyagarbha and tulabhara ceremonies. The Pandya kings were regarded as possessing divine characteristics. The Velvikudi plates refer to Jatilavarman as the son of Siva. They also mention Manavarman and the dilemma whether he was a human, a demon, Siva, the Supreme Being (Para-Purusa-Visnu) or Indra.



## Various Aspects of Administration

The records of the Pandyas do not refer to a council of ministers or a court but they refer to *mantrins* and *uttaramantrins*. The Sivakasi plates mention the Uttaramantrin as those who performed the task of *Sandhivigraha*. The *Uttaramantrin* is referred to as *Tamilpperaraiyan* in Tamil who was in charge of *Mandira-olai-nayagam* office which verified the written order regarding the grant. The *Tennavan apattudavigal* according to Mahalingam and Sastri were the king's barons who had great authority in the kingdom and are regarded by M.G.S. Narayanan as the companions of honour or the king's bodyguards. In an inscription *Samantan Ganapti* is referred to as *Mahasamanta* of the king. The reference to Ranakirti as *Ulvittusevaka* in an inscription has been interpreted as companion of honour.

During the period of Jatila Parantaka there is mention of *Uttaramantrins* and *Mahasamantas*. *Matangajadhyaksha* or the officer who supervised the elephants was an important officer of the army organisation. Tirumalai Virar and Parartaka Virar, mentioned in the inscription of the 42nd year of Maranjayan, were probably associated with military organisation. It seems that there was no clear cut division between civil and military functions. The army comprised of soldiers who served under a commander but sometimes the king himself provided the leadership to the contingents of soldiers. The Kalugumalai record refers to an *Enadi* (army commander) who established a memorial for the soldiers in his service who were killed in action. King Maranjayan erected commemorative stone for soldiers in his service who were killed during battle. Historians regard these soldiers as the king's 'companions of honour'.

The royal grants (inscriptional evidence) are mentioned in the copper plates which also contain *Prasastis*. In these inscriptions there is evidence of local administrative divisions; *Nadu*, *Kurram* and *Rastra* (mentioned in the Sinnamanur grant). The basic constituent of local administration was the *gramam*. Their names have the suffix *Mangalam*, *Kudi*, *Ur* or *Vayal*. *Nadu* was the larger unit of local administration. The land grants bestowed by the kings are regarded as *Danam* which were of religious nature. Madras Museum grant and the Sinnamanur grant indicate the area bestowed as land grant. The information regarding endowment was inscribed on the copper plates in written form and the royal directive (*anatti*) was prepared by the scribe (*Perum banaikkarans*). Land grants were given to temples and Brahmans (*Brahmadeyas*). The grants bestowed comprised of various rights such as *Karanmai* (cultivation) and *Miyatci* (administrative rights). The Pulan-Kurichi inscription (5th century A.D.) refers to creation of *Brahmadeya*. This is one of the earliest record of *Brahmadeya*. The endowments meant the surrender of rights by the grantor i.e. *Sarvapariharamaka*. Temples were also endowed with gold *kasus* by the kings for conducting prayers and other services in the temple. These were entrusted to the assembly (committee of assembly or *variyam*) but interest had to be paid on this amount at a fixed rate. Sometimes grants of gold bestowed upon temples were placed in the custody of *Nagarattar* (corporation of merchants). Inscriptions give us information about village assemblies especially the way they functioned by delegating work to the committees. Membership in these assemblies was based on property and learning criteria as is clear from the inscription from *Uttiramallur* (Chingleput) of early 10th century A.D. These assemblies were not elected bodies. It is not clear how the *Variyams* (executive bodies) of assembly were constituted. The administrative personnel of the Pandyas as the evidence from the records reveals comprised of: *evi mudal* (keeper of original orders), *vaykktetri*, *pamarappottakam* (keeper of royal register) and *adhikari*. *Puravu vari Kanattar* was probably the land revenue department.

The stone and copper plate records were probably not original evidence (since the original inscriptions were inscribed on palm leaves). Land grant records are related to the tax-free grants of land made by the king to the Brahmans and the temples. A procedure was followed in making land grants. The king verbally gave approval. This was obtained by a high official. Then the directive of the king was executed regarding the listing of the grants in the revenue records. The oral approval was termed as *Kelvi* or *Tirumugam*. *Olai* was an executive order to the officials regarding implementation of the king's order. The *Ulvai* was the title-deed which was approved by the revenue officers (*Variyilar* or *Varikkuruseyvar*). It appears that records regarding sanction of land grants and other orders were kept in the capital and the officers in the localities were directed to implement the king's orders.

The cultivated lands were subjected to taxation. Some of the taxes on the basis of the evidence of inscriptions were: *Kadamai* (on temples lands), *Antarayan*, *Viniyogam* (land tax), *Ponvari*, *Accu-vari*, *Kariyavaracci*, etc. It appears that these were mostly exacted in kind though some might have been cash payments. Taxes were also imposed on loom (of *Kaikkolar* and *Saliyar*) and shopkeepers. The testimony of the inscriptions also indicates that at times villagers had to suffer due to harassment by the officials or the incursions of the petty chiefs. There are also indications that due to high taxation sometimes the peasants fled the villages.

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## 15.5 THE CHOLAS

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The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9th Century A.D. when Vijayalaya seized Tanjavur from a feudatory chief of the Pallavas called Muttarayas. Henceforth the Cholas were able to establish control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandya power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of *Nadu* was regrouped into *Valanadu* and was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties, which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

### Chola Kingship

The Cholas traced their origin to the *Suryavamsa*. Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the *prasastis* containing the genealogies (Tiruvallangudi Copper plates, the larger Leiden Plates and the Anbil Plates, KanyaKumari inscription of Vira Rajendra) and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimisation of the rule of the Cholas. The *prasastis* of the Cholas were based on the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. The dominance of the Sanskrit and the Brahmanical traditions is well attested. The Cholas also ascribe to the legacy of the Sangam period. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimise his position as king. The period from the eighth year of Rajaraja and onwards is marked by absence of genealogical record in the Tamil *Meykkirttis*. These compositions narrate the military exploits of the kings and are inscribed on stone and address the Tamil landed magnates. The Cholas ascribe Kshatriya origin to themselves as is attested by the title Kshatriyasikhamani of the king Rajaraja. The Varman suffix (Sanskritic)

added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming kshatriya status e.g. Adityavarman (871-906) and Parantaka Varman (707-755). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g.: Prakesarivarman and Rajakesarivarman and Arumolivarman (Tamil name with a Sanskrit suffix). The charters of the Cholas consist of the *prasastis* and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. *Hiranyagarbha* and *Tilabhara* ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim *Kshatriya* position. A grant of Vira Chola points out that the king was advised by a Brahman moral preacher (dharmopadesta) that bestowment of land to Brahmans would lead his forefathers to heaven. However actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the Brahmans and also to seek legitimacy from them in political sphere. We have proper records of land grants but the grants of gold, cattle etc. were merely stated in *prasastis*. Through the land grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose. Rajaraja is regarded as *Ulakalanda Perumel* (the great one who measured the earth like *Trivikrama*) and as Siva who established control over the land of Bhargava Rama.

### Local Administration

#### Ur and Nadu

The Chola copper plate evidence refers to the following while executing the land grant:

- 1) *Nattar*
- 2) *Brahmadeyakkilavar*
- 3) a) *Devadana*  
b) *Palliccanda*  
c) *Kanimurruttu*  
d) *Vettapperu-Urkalilar*
- 4) *Nagarattar*

*Nattar* were the representatives of *Nadu* (locality). The *Brahmadeyakkilavar* were the Brahman donees of *Brahmadeya* (lands given to Brahmans). *Nagarattar* comprised of the trading community and belonged to the nagaram or settlement of group of traders. *Devadana*, *Palliccanda*, *Kavimurruttu* and *Vettaperu* have been identified as tax free villages. Y. Subbrayalu has pointed out that *nattar* were analogous to the *Vellanvagai Urar* (peasant village) since a number of *Ur* constituted a *Nadu*. Subbrayalu considers the village or *Ur* as a small component (fractional) of the *Nadu*. As a constituent of administrative structure, the *Nadu* was important but it incorporated and represented the *Ur* (vellanvagai villages). Thus in the territorial sphere *Nadu* comprised of *Vellanvagai* villages. *Nattar* were the important members (land holders) of the *Nadu* (locality). There are very few inscriptions related to the vellanvagai villages. It seems that the *Ur* being the common populace represented the section which was not literate. However the inscriptional evidence related to *Ur* which is found in the temples is attributed to literate groups.

N. Karashima has analysed the two Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I and Gangaikkondacolapuram inscription of Vivarajendra. According to him the *vellanvagai* villages comprised of agricultural lands, lands used by pastoralists,

irrigation devices, funeral place, dwelling place, etc. The dwelling area comprised of: 1) habitation sites of landholders/cultivators (*ur-nattam/ur-irukkai*), 2) of the artisans (*kammanacceri*), 3) agricultural labour (*paraicceri*). Karashima is of the opinion that in the *Vellanvagai* villages differentiation is not noticed. Subbrayalu however refutes this argument and suggests the existence of a hierarchical structure in these villages comprising of cultivators (*kaniyudaiyar*), tenant cultivators (*ulukudi*), artisans and the agricultural labourers. The cultivators were generally referred to as *vellals*. The functions of the *Ur* included: supervision of village lands viz. activities related to sale, purchase and gift. An important prerequisite for becoming a member of the *Ur* was to be a holder of land. From the inscriptional evidence, we come to know that the members of the *Ur* also possessed the titles like *Udaiyan*, *Kilan* (*kilavan*), *Velan*, *Peraraiyan*. All these titles point to landholding. Thus the epigraphical testimony enables us to infer that *Ur* was the group/assembly of non-brahman land holders of a village.

N. Karashima has argued that the land was held in common in the *Ur* villages. Karashima in some other instances refers to sale of land by members of *Ur* as individuals. Subbrayalu also refers, to the tendency towards 'individual holdings' in this period. *Nadus* were named after a village, which formed a part of a *Nadu*. Inscriptional evidence indicates that in several *Nadus* the main village was *Brahmadeya* (land given to Brahmins). However, several *nadus* did not have *Brahmadeya*. Subbrayalu refers to increase in *Nadus* from the 9th century A.D. Initially *Nadus* emerged in fertile areas, which had more villages and later spread to periphery (less fertile areas) where the number of villages was comparatively less. Nilakanta. Sastri points out that the *Nadu* comprised of many villages which were the smallest component of administration. Mahalingam suggests that *Nadu* was an administrative unit and it was sub-divided into villages. There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding whether *Nadu* comprised of only *Vellanvagai* or also consisted of *Brahmadeya*, *Devadana* etc. Y. Subbrayalu points out that *Nadu* and *Ur* represented a locality comprising of *Vellanvagai* villages and its representatives participated in the assembly of *Nadu*. It is difficult to delineate the exact area over which the *Nadus* were spread. *Nadus* differed in size and they did not have any natural divisions (eg. rivers). Therefore they could not possibly have been artificially created units or divisions. Sometimes *Nadus* covered the area beyond a river. In conventional historiography *Nattar* was regarded as a territorial assembly of a territorial unit *Nadu* which comprised of eminent members of every village. Other assemblies such as of *Brahmedeya*, *Pallicandam* were also considered subordinate to *Nadu* in the administrative machinery. Recently historians have argued that *Nadu* was not an administrative unit created by the Chola state but it was a natural collection of peasant settlements which was incorporated into the state system of the Cholas as a legacy from the previous period. This is proved by the fact that these *Nadus* were not of same size and were nucleated. The *Valanadus* which came into existence in the period of Rajaraja I were artificially created as administrative divisions. *Nadus* initially emerged in fertile areas and later spread to comparatively less fertile zones. This is how the agrarian economy expanded. *Nadus* located in the fertile tracts were more populated than those in other areas.

There are several inscriptions which give us information about *Nadus*. *Kiranur* inscription of 1310 refers to the 'urom of villages Nanjil, Peruncevur, Viraikkudi..... as qualified for the *Nadu* or Vada-chiruvayil-nadu.' (K. Veluthat, p. 184). It is clear from the evidence of the records that the *Nattar* were the *Vellals* and the functions of *Nattar* (*Nadu*) were performed by the *Vellala* who held the title of *Velan*. The main occupation of *Nattar* was agriculture since *Nadu* was a collection of agricultural

settlements. The copper plates which basically deal with land grants address the *Nattar* and the execution of the grant made by the king was entrusted to them (deciding the limits of the lands granted by the establishment of superior rights of new grantees etc.) *Nattar* was subservient to the will of the ruler. *Nattar* also supervised irrigation works. They bestowed land on temples. They also served as stockists of donation made to temples. They also supervised the grants made by individuals and exempted the lands donated thus from tax and in return took a certain sum of money as a deposit. *Nadu* also bestowed land on temples which was tax-free (*nattiraiyili*). The tax payments exempted on lands donated to the temple were now the responsibility of *Nadu* towards the state. *Nadu* seems to have levied a cess for meeting these expenses. These levies or imposts were: *Nadatci*; *Nattu-viniyogan*, or *Nattu-vyavasthai*. The temple lands were sold and leased out, a process in which the *nattar* played an important role. *Nadu* seems to have been engaged in tax collection and assessment. Sometimes the *Nattar* performed the revenue collection task on behalf of the state and sometimes king's personnel (*komarravar*) were responsible for this work. *Mudaligal* and *Dandanayakam* were functionaries deputed in *nadu* and as royal officials they were entrusted with administrative responsibility. Thus the land holders in a locality were absorbed into the state system by the Cholas. These constituted the local landed magnates and worked on behalf of the king who exercised authority over them.

*Nadu* was the smallest unit for revenue administration. *Nattup-puravu*, *Nattu-vari* (land revenue) and *Nattukkanakku* all refer to revenue of *Nadu*. *Nattuk-kanakku* were the personnel responsible for revenue administration of *Nadu*. The collection and fixation of the revenue of a village was carried out within the context of *Nadu* where the village was located. When *Ur* exempted taxes this got reflected in *Nadu* accounts.

The king's decision to transfer the funds of temple for a specific purpose in the temple was reflected in the *Variyilarkanakku* (revenue register of royal authority) and the *Nattuk-kanakku* (revenue register of *nadu*). This testifies to the relevance of *Nadu* as an important part of administrative system of the Cholas inspite of its locally independent character. *Nadu-vagai-ceyvar*, *Nadu-kurk-ceyvar* and *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* and *Nadu-kankatci* were the personnel who represented royal power in *Nadu*. *Nadu Kuru* is mentioned in an inscription of *Kulottunga I* (AD 1116) who managed the functioning of new *Devadana*. These personnel were given the role of maintaining the accounts of temples in localities. *Nadu vagai* is mentioned as participating in the assembly of *Brahmadeya* (sabha). In an inscription *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* is placed below *Senapati*. These posts of *Nadu* officers were transferable. Some officers were entrusted with the administrative responsibility in more than one *Nadu*. Thus they worked as part of royal administrative machinery.

### **Brahmadeya and Nagaram**

*Brahmadeyas* constituted the category of Brahmans who were landholders in the agricultural tracts and who had been endowed with land (tax free) and had organised themselves into a distinct group. *Nagaram* comprised of traders who carried out trading and exchange activities in the pockets which had developed into commercial centres on account of the spurt in craft production and other activities carried out by artisans.

When the Cholas emerged as an important ruling power in the middle of 9th century A.D. in Thanjavur there already existed many *Brahmadeyas* which were densely

populated and rich tracts in the Kaveri region. The Karantai plates of Rajendra I refer to 1080 Brahmans who inhabited Tribhuvanamahadevi Caturvedimangalam. The assembly of these Brahmans which inhabited agricultural tracts was called *Sabha* or *Mahasabha*. Most of the *Brahmadeyas* or Brahman settlements were centred round the temple. Through the temple and the ideological focus based on the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, *Bhakti* and *varnashramadharma* the differentiated society and monarchical polity were legitimised. Therefore the kings endowed lands to Brahmans and created *Brahmadeyas* as a means to legitimize their power.

The inscriptions inform us that many of the *Brahmadeyas* in the Chola period were *Taniyur* (separate village) in a *Nadu*. They had a separate administrative system (revenue and justice). Many of the agricultural villages were clubbed together with a *Taniyur*. Sometimes a *Taniyur* was placed subordinate to a temple. Here the *Mulparusai* was the body which looked after the work of administration.

The inscriptions give the important prerequisites like age, landholding, knowledge, good behaviour for membership to an executive committee of *Sabha*. The Karantai plates (1080 Brahmans) refer to *Brahmadeyas* but do not inform us how the *Sabha* and other committees were formed. They were not established by royal authority. Their origin may be attributed to *Dharmasastric* norms. The *Sabha* and its committees supervised the temple lands, cattle and other resources. They assigned lands to tenants and levied rent. They kept a record of revenue collected and expenses incurred. They supervised the temple functionaries from priest to cleaner and organised the daily services of temples. *Sabha* acted as a group and the decisions taken were for the benefit of the organisation and not individuals.

The *Brahmadeya* settlements where the temple played a pivotal role lost importance in the later phase of the Chola period. After mid 11th century A.D. we find fewer *Brahmadeya* tracts and more temples were constructed and the older ones were improved upon. Sometimes the *Mahasabha* unable to pay the amount taken from a temple due to shortage of funds was forced to fall back upon its income from the neighbouring village.

*Nagaram* settlement was a tract where traders and others (including artisans) lived. "An inscription of 1036 A.D. from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-brahman inhabitants of superior status (*kudigal*) and those of inferior status (*kil kalanai*). *Kudigal* included two merchant groups *Sankarappadiyar* (lower group) and *Vyaparin* (higher group) plus three other groups – *Vellals* (cultivators), *Saliyar* (cloth merchants) and *Pattinavar* (fishermen). The subordinate workmen (*kil kalanai*) were *Taccar* (carpenters), *Kollar* (blacksmiths), *Tattar* (goldsmiths) and *Kolliyar* (weavers)" (B. Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*).

*Nagarattar* was the representative body of traders. *Nagaram* settlement was a separate area. Committee of *Nagarattar* was referred to as *Nagaravariyam*. *Nagaram* also held land in common called *Nagarakkani*. This they acquired through purchase but they also leased out land and performed the task of levying taxes and rendering services to the local groups. They maintained their records regarding income and expenditure. They also paid royal levies in the form of gold and paddy. They also allocated taxes to the local temples viz. *Kadamai* (tax on land), *Nagaraviniyogam* (a tax for sustenance of *Nagaram*) etc. In some cases *Nagaram* were independent of *Nadu* (*taniyur*).



## King, Officials and Chiefs

A number of officers were responsible for administration in the Chola kingdom although there is no clear evidence of a council of minister but *Uddan-kottam* seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. According to conventional historiography *Perundan* and *Sirutaram* were higher and lower category officials respectively. *Senapati*s (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as *Sirudanattup Perundaram*. *Nyayattar* (judges) were of both category. Recently historians have pointed out that these divisions are not conclusively borne out by evidence. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders (*udaiyan, kilan*) of lands. They could further sub-assign land or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a *Nadu*. A *Valanadu* comprised of a few *Nadus*. *Taniyur* was a separate village or settlement site. Above *Valanadu* there was *Mandalam* which was equivalent to a province. *Karumigal* and *Panimakkal* meant officers and servants. *Anbil* plates refer to a *Brahman Manya Saciva*. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally (*triuvaykkelvi*) especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter (*sri-mukham*) issued by *Anatti* (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were apprised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called *Nattukkon, Nadukilavan, Urudaiyan*.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of land grants were many and some are also referred to as *Uttaramantri*. *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalam* was the department of land revenue. *Varipottagam* was the record of land rights and *Vari-pottagak-kanakku* was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights and land revenue department were *Varipottagam* and *Variyiledu*. *Kankanis* or supervisors were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called *Variyilidu*. *Mugavetti* (wrote royal letters) and *Pattolai* were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of *Nadu* (of the status of *adhikari*) were *Nadu kuru* (revenue assessment and settlement officer), *Nadu vagai* (revenue official). *Mandira olai* was the officer who wrote the *Tirumugam* (letter containing the royal order). The term *Naduvirukkai* was used for *Vijnapti* (*vaykkelvi*) or petitioner and *Anatti* (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders (*triuvaykkelvi*) regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The *Olai nayagam* were the officers who verified the letter written by *Mandira-olai*. The oral order of the king was put to writing (*eluttu*) and compared (*oppu*) and then entered (*pugunda*). *Vidaiyil adigari* got the order listed in the record. The document was called *Tittu* and the charity deed (*aravolai*).

Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of *Nyayattar*. The central court of justice was the *Dharmasana* which conducted its affairs through *Dharmasana bhattas* (Brahmans proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

*Adhikaris* were the king's officers. They possessed the titles *Udaiyan*, *Kilan/Kilavan*, *Velan*, *Muvendavelan*, *Brahma*, *Pallavaraiyan*, *Vilupparaiyan* and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes more than one nomenclature was adopted. At times the name of the Chola ruler or his epithet was used as a prefix by the *Adhikaris*. *Naduvirukkai* were mostly Brahman (held titles like *Bhatta*, *Barhmadhirajan*) officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the *adhikaris*.

Personnel in charge of temples were *Srikaryam* but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of *Adhikaris* holding the *Srikaryam* office. Generally they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were *Kilan/Kilavan*, *Velan*, *Muvendavelan*, *Brahma*, *Bhatta*, *Kon*, *Pallavaraiyan*, *Vilupparaiyan*, *Nadu* title, *King's title*. *Senapati* was in charge of military affairs. They bear the king's title/name, and other titles such as *Udaiyan*, *Brahma*, *Araiyan*, *Kilans*. The office of *Dandanayakam* was probably akin to the *Senapati* (military office). The title mentioned for this office is *Pallavaaraiyans*. The titles held by *Senapaties* were: *udaiyan*, *brahma*, *araiyan* etc. The office of *Tiru-mandria olai nayakam* was an important office associated with preparation of land grant documents. The titles of these officers were *Muvendavelan*, *Brahma* etc.

Officers deputed at *Nadu* who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were *Nadu Vagai* who were revenue assessment officers. *Kottam-vagai* were deputed in *Tondaimandalam* area and performed the same function as *Nadu vagai*. *Nadukankaninayakam* had control over more than one *Nadu* and had a higher position than *Nadu vagai*. The titles which occur with the office of *Nadu vagai* were: *Araiyan* and *Udaiyan*. *Muvendavelan* was borne by *Nadu kuru* (officer of *nadu*) who was an officer of the rank of *Adhikari*.

Rajaraja I (1001 A.D.) adopted an elaborate land revenue fixation and assessment mechanism and thus *Valanadus* were created and this practice was also adopted by other rulers. The land revenue department was called *Puravuvuri tinaikkalam*. This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel: *Puravu vari*, *Vari pottagan*, *Mugavetti*, *Vari pottaga*, *Kanakku*, *Variyil idu* and *Pattolai* etc. In the time of Rajendra II the administrative personnel had more elaborate designations: *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalanakkar*, etc. The period of Kulottunga I witnesses few officers: *Puravu-vari-Srikanana*, *Nayagam* and *Mugavetti*. Later the term *Variyilar* refers to personnel of revenue department as a general terminology. These officers had the epithet: *Udaiyan*, *Muvendavelan*, etc.

The titles held by the king's personnel such as *Udaiyan*, *Kilan* and *Kilavan* refer to possession. Other titles were *Velan* and *Muvendavelan*. The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land holders or associated with land. The title *Muvendavelan* was bestowed by the Chola King and K. Veluthat points out "... the strong association of those who bore this high title with offices of some importance is .... borne in mind, demonstrating that the major *Vellal* landed magnates were enlisted in the service of the king by which process they became an integral part of the state system." It appears that the title used by chiefs and their families viz. *Araiyan* was used by other eminent people as well. In the period of Rajaraja I the chiefly rule suffered a setback but the number of *Araiyan* title holders was on the rise. This title was more prestigious than *Muvendavelan*. It is conjectured that the chiefs were

subdued to the position of landed magnates or cultivators from the period of Rajaraja and his successors although they still held the title.

The cattle herders (*manradi*) supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of *Cetti*, *Mayilatti* and *Palan*. They even occupied the important offices like *Senapati* and accountant. *Peruntaccan* and *Perunkollan* were titles used by artisan category but at the most their important positions were confined to royal palace and the temple connected with it.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like: *Purohita* (*dharmopadesta*), *Rajagurus*, *Tirumandira olai*, *Adhikari*, *Vayilketpar* (officer who noted the king's directives) etc. M.G.S Narayanan points out that *Udan kuttam* was like king's companion of honour. They might have had a head because we have mention of *Adhikari* of *Udankuttam*. There are references to the court in literature (*Periyapuranam* etc.). The king's court comprised of: Brahman advisors, Priests, *Rajaguru*, *Adhikaris*, *Tirumandira olai nayagams*, *Vayilketpar*, head of the king's bodyguards and *Samantas* (feudatory chiefs). The various levies of this period were: *Antarayam*, *Eccoru*, *Kadamai* (produce-rent), *Kudimai*, *Muttaiy-al*, *Vetti* (labour-rent) and *Tattar-pattan* (cash payment). Most of the imposts were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The Cholas undertook military expedition to Sri Lanka (during the time of Rajaraja I) and Sri Vijaya (during the time of Rajendra I). This shows the military strength of the Chola state. It seems that the cavalymen (*kudiraicevagar*), *Anaiyatkal* (those who fought on elephant), *Archers* (*villigal*, *anukkar*) were name of the categories constituting the military force. *Valangai* (right hand) *Velaikkarar* were the soldiers recruited from among the peasants. Soldiers were also recruited from the artisans group (*idangai* – left hand). These were basically mercenary soldiers. Chola *Meykkirttis* refer to Kantalur *Salai* which has been interpreted as an educational institution in the Chera kingdom which imparted military education and training to the Brahmans which as mentioned in *Meykkirttis* was the place where Chera fleet was destroyed by the Chola king. This proves that Chola military prowess was insurmountable.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. In the Pandya kingdom the only category of chiefs was *Ays*. In the Sangam literature there is reference to many chiefs viz. *Ays*, *Vels*, *Muvas*, *Kodumbalur* and *Adigamans*. The records of the Pallavas refer to chiefs such as *Gangas* and *Adigamans*. The various other chiefs who accepted the suzerainty of Pallavas were *Banas*, *Vettuva-adiaraiyan*, *Muttaraiyar* etc. The chiefs of the Chola period were: *Paluvettaraiyar*, *Vels*, *Malavas*, *Gangas*, *Banas*, etc. It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for *padi kaval* or protection of territory. In the post-Kulottunga period there is reference to *Nilamaittittu* or diplomatic agreement between two or more chiefs. These chiefs also had their soldiers and retainers. Their services were utilised by the Chola kings.

## 15.6 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN THE DECCAN

### Satavahana

The earliest state formation in the Deccan was the Satavahana state. Major part of the kingdom was under the control of royal officers but some portion was controlled by feudatories. The administrative divisions comprised of *Aharas* or *Rashtras* which

contained town (*nigama*) and villages (*grama*). Amatyas were governors of *Ahara*. The king was assisted in the task of administration by *rajamatyas* (advisers). Other officers were: *Mahamatra*, *Bhandagarika* (supervisor of stores), *Heranika* (treasurer), *Mahasenapati* (commander of forces). The *Lekhaka* was in charge of preparing documents and *Nibandhakaras* were also documentation officers. *Maharathis* and *Mahbhojas* were the feudatories. They could make grants without the sanction of the king. *Gramini* was in charge of villages. *Nigama Sabha* was the assembly of citizens of the town. *Srenis* or guilds of professions also existed (potters, oil millers etc.)

### Chalukyas of Badami

The titles of Chalukya kings were as follows: *Satyasraya*, *Sri-Prithvi-Vallabha Maharaja*, *Pramesvara* and *Maharajadhiraja*. It was not a centralized kingdom. We do not find reference to council of ministers but it seems that the royal family was placed in charge of official positions. Later the Eastern Chalukya kingdom and other kingdoms developed due to this policy. They emerged as offshoots of the original Chalukyas of Badami. Inscriptions give us information about the administrative system. *Rajasravitam* were the royal orders. The *Vijnaptis* (petitioners) and writers of the king's orders related to grants on stone or copper plates were important administrative personnel. They held the position of *Mahasandhivigrahika* (officer in charge of peace and war). The division mentioned in the epigraphical records are *Rashtra*, *Vishaya* and *Nadu*. The copper plate grants bestowed by the Chalukya kings refers to *Vishyapatis*, *Samantas*, *Gramabhogikas*, *Maharattaras* etc. Thus the administrative system was not centralised. However, *Vishayapatis* were royal personnel. Village was the smallest part of the administrative system. The *Gamunda* was the royal representative at the village level. He was the connecting link between king and village people. The *Karanas* were the village accountants. *Mahajans* constituted the village elders. The Lakshmesvar inscription gives us details regarding the links between the royal machinery and local administration. An *Achara vyasthe* (charter of rights and duties) was bestowed upon the *Mahajans*, *Nagara* (commercial interests) and eighteen *Prakritis* (classes). It refers to royal personnel, *Mahajans*, *Desadhipatis* (officers who collected taxes), *Sreni* (guild) of oil mongers etc. Various taxes are mentioned in the inscription which were to be paid to the king's officials: for great festivals, salt, tribute and gold. The Hyderabad grant of Pulkesin II refers to the village being granted together with the *Nidhi* (treasure), *Upanidhi*, *Klipta* and *Uparikara* (dues). Members of the royal family and trade associations also made gifts to the temples in kind (millet, betel leaves).

### Rashtrakutas

Under the Rashtrakutas also the administrative system was not centralised. The kingdom was placed in charge of royal officials as well as feudatories. The feudatories had to give regular tribute to the suzerain and had to render military service whenever required. The territory which was placed under the direct control of the central government was categorised into *Rashtras* and *Vishayas*. The *Vishayas* comprised of a number of *Bhuktis* which were further divided into villages. Thus the smallest component of the administrative hierarchy was the village. The officer in charge of *Rashtra* was the *Rastrapati*. He combined both military and civil functions. He was entrusted with the task of appropriation of land revenue. The maintenance of law and order was another responsibility assigned to him. The *Vishayapatis* and *Bhogapatis* exercised control over a smaller area as compared to the *Rashtrapati*. The former were incharge of revenue administration together with the *Nalgavundas* or *Desagramakutas* (hereditary revenue officers). The officials responsible for the

administration at the village level were headman and accountant. The functions of the village headman included maintenance of the law and order as well as collection of taxes. The village council which was represented by the elders of the village (*gramamahajanas* or *gramamahattaras*) constituted subcommittees for carrying out the public welfare activities like management of tanks, temples, roads and schools. The records of the period indicate that the provincial and local administration was carried out by the assemblies which comprised of elders of the district (*Vishaya mahattaras*), province (*Rashtra mahattaras*) or villages. These representative bodies were an important feature of the administrative system at the local level.

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## 15.7 SUMMARY

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This Unit deals with the administrative and institutional structures in Peninsular India from the earliest times to the early medieval period. The earliest political formation in South India referred to as “Sangam” polity, dated to early centuries of Christian era, was characterised by chiefdoms. The period from 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards witnessed the rise of monarchical polities such as the Pallavas of Kanchi, Chalukyas of Badami, Pandyas of Madura and Cholas of Tanjavur. The political structure which emerged under the Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas was quite similar in nature. The political formation of this period emerged in the river valleys which served as the economic resource base. The agrarian expansion of this period coincided with the establishment of *Brahmadeya* and *Devadana* settlements. The royal power sought legitimacy by several means viz. land grants to *Brahmans* and temples, claiming high descent and performance of rituals etc. The king had a bureaucratic machinery to assist him in administration but it was not a centralised system. In the above mentioned kingdoms feudatories played an important role in the administrative system. The most important feature of the polity of this period was the evolution of *Nadu* as an administrative unit which was a natural collection of agricultural settlements. The *Ur* (assembly of non-*Brahmans*) and *Sabha* (assembly of *Brahmans*) and *Nagaram* (assembly of traders) also played an important role in the administrative system.

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## 15.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) Analyse the local administration under the Cholas.
- 2) Give a brief account of the nature of Pallava kingship.

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## UNIT 19 THE DELHI SULTANATE

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18<sup>th</sup> Century Successor  
States

### Structure

- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Background
- 19.3 Sultan and the Capital City: Node of Administrative Apparatus
- 19.4 Nobility
- 19.5 *Ulema* and the Learned in the Political and Socio Religious Realm
- 19.6 Evolution of the Administrative Apparatus of the Delhi Sultanate
  - 19.6.1 Blend of West Asian and Central Asian Traditions
  - 19.6.2 Unique Features Introduced in the Indian Subcontinent: Change and Continuity
- 19.7 Central Administration
  - 19.7.1 *Wizarat*
  - 19.7.2 *Diwan-i-Arz*
  - 19.7.3 *Naib-ul Mulk*
  - 19.7.4 *Diwan-i-Insha*
  - 19.7.5 *Diwan-i-Riyasat*
  - 19.7.6 *Diwan-i-Risalat* and *Diwan-i-Qada*
  - 19.7.7 *Diwan-i-Mazalim*
  - 19.7.8 Smaller Departments
- 19.8 Provincial and Local Administration
  - 19.8.1 Position of Governor of the Province
  - 19.8.2 Local Administration: Role of *Khots*, *Zamindars*, *Rais*, *Ranas*, etc.
  - 19.8.3 Other Officers: *Shiqdar*, *Faujdar*, *Amil*, etc.
- 19.9 Army Organisation
- 19.10 Revenue Administration
- 19.11 Sultanate: A Complex Cohesive Administrative Network
- 19.12 Summary
- 19.13 Exercises

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### 19.1 INTRODUCTION

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Administrative and institutional structures are the extensions of the ‘state’ in all political formations. It is through these structures that political control is extended from a core area — such as the political capital of a kingdom — to the outer reaches of the kingdom or empire.

Political control of the kingdom, especially in the early phases of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, was often tenuous, and uprisings and challenges to royal authority were a frequent occurrence. The political foundation of the sultanate stabilised after more than 100 years and the important instrument of political control over the outlying areas of the sultanate were the various administrative structures introduced and maintained by the central government. After the armies of the rulers had annexed a particular territory, it would often be difficult to retain control over these newly conquered domains; it was here that the administrative structures of the centre, once introduced, would help in maintaining political control.

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### 19.2 BACKGROUND

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Islam spread outside Arabia since the time of the pious Caliphs (Abu-Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali). To begin with the newly conquered territories were governed by the



## Administrative and Institutional Structures

Governors appointed by the Caliph. In due course of time the dynastic ruler got established in most of the regions. The beginning of dynastic monarchy can be traced to the establishment of Ummayyid power. Ummayyid period was marked by the dominance of Arabs and the unity of Muslims. The Republican Caliphate had been transformed into a monarchy supported by a governing class around 661 AD. Abbasid period (with capital at Baghdad) saw the ascendancy of Persians in the administration and the gradual shrinking of the territorial control of the caliphate. Under the Ummayyids and Abbasids heredity and nomination were the norms which determined succession to the Caliphate. The Fatimid caliphate of Egypt (followers of Shia sect) emerged as a rival and posed a threat to the Abbasids.

During the Abbasid period an elaborate administrative system was established which consisted of several departments eg., *Diwan-ul-kharj* (board of taxes), *Diwan-ul-dhiyyal* (board of crown lands), etc. The Wizarat also existed in this period though it was Persian in origin.

According to U.N. Day (*Government of the Sultanate* p. 22) “when the Caliphate began to decline and distant provinces turned independent muslim kingdoms this pattern was adopted by them with necessary modifications. The Turkish Sultans of Delhi also adopted many offices from this pattern and made additions and alterations in them as demanded by the various administrative problems they were called upon to solve”.

With the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate many minor dynasties ruled over Persia for example the Samanids and Ghaznavids in eastern Persia. The kingdom of Ghazna was established by the Turkish slaves. The tradition of Turkish slaves as bodyguards can be traced back to Caliph Mutassim (Abbasid). Subuktagin the father of Mahmud of Ghazna had been taken captive in tribal conflicts and sold in the market as a slave. The Ghaznavid rule was consolidated by Subuktagin after he was elected as chief to the throne of Ghazna. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Ajam (non Arab lands) witnessed the rise of Sultanates (the lands of Persians and Turks) and the ascendancy of Turks as a military and governing class. However, the establishment of Turkish army is attributed to the Samanids.

Subuktagin’s position was subordinate to the Samani overlord who derived his authority over Sind, Khurasan, Turkistan, Mawaraunnahr, Jurja from the Khalifa of Baghdad. When Mahmud came to power he freed the state of Ghazna from the tutelage of the Samanids and adopted the title of ‘Amir’ and ‘Sultan’. His position was further reinforced by the sanction of the Khalifa of Baghdad.

Under the Ghaznavids both ability and heredity influenced succession to the throne however under Mahmud descent became more important. The Ghaznavids did not accept the policy of partitioning the Empire whereas the Ghorids did resort to it. The practice of the division of the kingdom and the nomination of the successor outside the royal house did not get acceptance under the Ghaznavids.

The Ghorids (in Afghanistan) belonged to the Shansabani dynasty. Though initially subordinate to the Ghaznavids they conquered Ghazna and subsequently invaded Multan in India which had been attacked by Mahmud of Ghazni earlier. The Ghaznavids and Ghorids traced their ancestry to the ancient families of Turan and Iran. Under the Ghorids general consent of the clan and might were important factors which decided the issue of succession.

Qutbuddin (slave of Ghorid ruler) was the governor of Hansi which formed a part of the Ghorid Empire. He was an efficient general and was the son-in-law of Yalduz the favourite slave of Ghorid Sultan. After the Sultan’s death Qutbuddin obtained the letter of manumission and the *Chatr* (royal umbrella) and *Durbash* (baton) and tried to assert his independence. Subsequently, Iltutmish (Turkish slave officer and son-in-law of Qutbuddin who was governor of Badaon) made Delhi the capital and established himself

as an independent ruler of India. Nomination, selection by nobles, ability, heredity and recognition from the Caliph were important parameters which shaped the succession issue.

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### 19.3 SULTAN AND THE CAPITAL CITY: NODE OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS

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The node of the administrative apparatus was the Sultan. He was the ruler of the entire realm, and after accession to the throne — he had absolute power in his hands. He was the supreme commander of the army, and it was he, or officers appointed by him, who led armies to conquer other areas. Thus, the sultan was in many ways the head of the administrative system. This is applicable to almost all the sultans of the Delhi sultanate, with some exceptions like Sultan Ruknuddin Firuz, Sultan Muizzuddin Bahram, Sultan Alauddin Masud, and Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud, in whose times cliques of nobles at the court are said to have been more powerful. But even in these infrequent instances, the sultan remained the ceremonial head of the entire political establishment of the empire.

Fatwa-I-Jahandari of Barni-II, Advice XV on the king's high resolve, according to M. Habib and Dr. Afsar Begum "... this advice deals with the following topics: (i) High resolve is the distinguishing feature of a great king; (ii) The king with high resolve is characterised by his generosity; (iii) Miserliness is incompatible with high resolve; (iv) Wise men have enumerated 11 characteristics of a King with high resolve; (v) Praises of Sultan Mahmud and (vi) five conditions which a King should observe when conquering foreign lands". *Medieval India Quarterly*; Vol. III, Nos. 3 and 4, January, April 1958, Prof. M. Habib and Dr. Afsar Begum, Pg. 151.

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

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

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### 19.4 NOBILITY

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Qutbuddin ascended the throne without any conflict since the Muizzi (Muizzuddin Ghori, The Ghorid ruler) nobles accepted him as their superior and offered their loyalty to him.

Iltutmish's accession to the throne of Delhi constituted an important landmark in the growth of Turkish nobility in India. This reflected the power of the nobles to select their leaders through armed strength. Now heredity and nomination the principles of sovereignty and leadership were relegated to the background. Nobles in Delhi acquired prominence in selecting the ruler and Delhi became the hub of political activity of Turkish rule. Iltutmish is credited with the establishment of a sovereign Turkish state in India and the nobility in his time consisted of efficient administrators who though slaves were imbued with merit and ability. After Iltutmish the hereditary principle again resurfaced with the accession of Ruknuddin Firoz, Raziya and Bahram Shah. During this phase the tussle between the Turkish and Tajik (Arab and Persians) nobles became intense. After Iltutmish's death (1235) till the accession of Balban (1269), the Chihalgani slaves (group of 40 nobles of which Balban was also a part) decided the succession issue. Balban tried to restore the supremacy of the crown by crushing the power of the Turkish nobility. Balban's accession demonstrated that the hereditary principle was no longer relevant. Both Qutbuddin and Iltutmish considered the nobles at par with themselves. Balban made a major departure. He maintained a distance from the nobility and believed in divine theory of kingship. He traced his ancestry to the mythical king Afrasiyab of Ajam (non-Arab lands). Balban tried to weaken the power of the Shamsi (Shamsuddin Iltutmish) nobles. The accession of Jalaluddin Khalji (1290) to the throne established that heredity was not always the basis of the sovereignty and kingship. Ability and force were also important factors in the succession to the throne.

During the rule of Khaljis and Tughlaqs the doors of nobility were opened to people of diverse backgrounds and it was no more the preserve of the Turks only. According to M. Habib (*Medieval India Quarterly*, pg. 230) "During the period of slave kings membership of the higher bureaucracy was dangerous for an Indian Musalman and impossible for a Hindu. But the Khilji revolution seems to have brought about a change. Amir Khusrau in his *Khazainul Futuh* tells us that Sultan Alauddin sent an army of thirty thousand horsemen under a Hindu officer, Malik Naik, the *Akhur-bek Maisarah*, against the Mongols, Alibeg, Tartaq and Targhi. The position of low-born men (whether Hindus or Muslims) in the government of Mohammad bin Tughlaq was the natural culmination of a process covering a century and a half." Barani criticises Mohammadbin Tughlaq and says "... He assigned the Diwan-i-Wizarat (Ministry of Revenue) to Pera Mali (the Gardner), the lowest of the low born and mean born men of the Hind and Sind and placed him over the heads of maliks, amirs, walis and governors (maqta's)" (*Medieval India Quarterly*, pg. 229). During the Lodi period except for the reigns of Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi, tribal concept of equality of the Afghans determined the official attitude towards the nobility.

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## 19.5 ULEMA AND THE LEARNED IN THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO RELIGIOUS REALM

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

There has been a lot of debate amongst historians about the nature of the state in the Delhi Sultanate. It seems reasonable to assume in the light of the available evidence that politics and religion functioned in separate areas despite appearing to complement one another. The *Ulema* as a group consisted of persons who performed the role of the preachers and guardians of Islamic religion, and [at least in the initial stages of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate] most of the them had come from outside the subcontinent. Traditionally, they were committed to upholding the Islamic religious order,

and thus acted as socio-moral censors for the Muslim community at large. The *Ulema* rose as a powerful political faction and on account of the high judicial positions held by them they could sway the king and the nobility in their favour. They held important positions in the administrative system particularly in the judiciary. Prof. Habib points out "...Under these conditions wise kings adopted a policy of compromise and moderation. They paid lip homage to the *Shari'at* and admitted their sinfulness if they were unable to enforce any of its provisions; they kept the state controlled *mullahs* disciplined and satisfied; over the whole field of administration concerning which the *Shari'at* is silent or nearly silent, they made their own laws; if the traditional customs of the people were against the *Shari'at*, they allowed them to override the *Shari'at* under the designation of Urf. Thus state laws called *Zawabit* grew under the protection of the monarchy. If these laws violated the *Shari'at* the principle of necessity or of *istihasan* (the public good) could be quoted in their favour. And the back of the *shari'at* was broken for the primary reason that it had provided no means for its own development". ('Politics and society during the early medieval period', *Collected works of Muhammad Habib*, Volume-II, p.312.)

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

This brought the interests of the *ulema* and the sultan in direct clash on frequent occasions, and the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq is particularly significant in this regard. Muhammad bin Tughluq had appointed a number of non-Muslims in royal service since they were meritorious, and alims like and Ziauddin Barani strongly condemned it in their writings. Fakhr-i-Mudabbir's *Adabu'l Harb Was'h Shujaa't* written in the honour of Sultan Iltutmish also lays emphasis on the noble birth of state officials. Mohammad Tuqhlqa's policies show that the upholding of religious ideals was not always the priority of the Sultan. Moreover, the interests of the Sultan and the *ulema* and the learned hardly coincided.

Barani emphasises on noble birth and says "On the noble birth of the supporters of the state... the person selected should for certain have the advantage of free, gentle and noble birth.... For to promote base, mean, low born and worthless men to be the helpers and supporters of the government has not been permitted by any religion, creed, publicly accepted tradition or state law. Fatwa-i-Jahandari, Advice XIX, Medieval India Quarterly, Prof. Muhammad Habib and Afsar Begum, p. 175.

Sa'id Fakhr-i-Mudabbir, in his *Adabul Harb was'h Shujaa't* (rules of war which deal with warfare and statecraft) writes that "... the king should consider it essential to investigate and thoroughly inquire into the antecedents of the members of the army and scholars ... the king should not allow those to occupy high posts whose forefathers have not been men of letters and have not served in the government or have not been in the service of kings, nobles and wazirs ... their actions lead to the fall of the kingdom and create trouble for the state and the people. (cf. Appendix in Yusuf Hussain's Indo-Muslim Polity, pp. 221 and 228.

The *Ulema* preached obedience to the Word of God, among common people, nobles and even to the sultan. Thus, as a corollary, they were an important instrument of social control since the message of obedience that they imposed on the Muslim subject population, as well as others engendered notions of obedience and hierarchy which worked towards formulating a royal political discourse. Of course, the sultan did not depend solely on the abstractions of religion for administrative control, but instituted a number of other offices to establish his control in the core areas and extend his control over the larger political realm.

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## 19.6 EVOLUTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS OF THE DELHI SULTANATE

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

### 19.6.1 Blend of West Asian and Central Asian Traditions

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

Before we proceed to discuss the administrative structure and institutions of Delhi Sultanate we would like to give you a brief idea about the impact of central and west Asian institutions on the Delhi Sultanate.

The administrative structures and institutions introduced in India by the Ilbari (tribe) Turks were Abbasid and Persian in origin which had been transformed under the Samanids, Ghaznavids, Ghorids and Seljukids (Turks who ruled in Persia).

#### Iqta System

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



It is generally accepted that the Iqta system was established at the end of the Abbasid period and got consolidated during the Seljuk period. Its origin has been attributed to various factors:

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

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

### The Mongol Influence

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

### 19.6.2 Unique Features Introduced in the Indian Subcontinent: Change and Continuity

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

Upendra Nath Day maintains that although the sultans of Delhi had to introduce particular measures to suit the conditions of the newly established sultanate, they did try to 'adjust them and keep them in conformity with the ideas and principles developed in Arabia and Persia' (U.N. Day, *The Government of the Sultanate*, (reprint) Delhi, 1993, p.2). This, however, seems to be more applicable to particular offices and institutions like that of the **wazir**, **qazi**, **iqta**, etc. rather than to the administrative system as a whole. At the local (village level) Patwaris and village head man continued to perform their traditional role.



The Sultanate as already indicated was spread in large areas with a core and outlying provinces. The large extent of the sultanate necessitated the evolution of administrative apparatus separately for the centre and the provinces. Therefore, it is useful to study the administrative institutions of the Delhi Sultanate at the centre and provincial areas separately. Those at the centre were the areas of direct administration, and the administrative apparatus developed and expanded with the territorial expansion of the empire.

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## 19.7 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

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

### 19.7.1 *Wizarat*

After the seat of the sultan, the most important office in the sultanate was the *Diwan-i-Wizarat*, headed by the *wazir*. He had under him a naib *wazir*. Derived from the Persian and Abbasid traditions, the *wazir* [prime minister] was the most important person in the royal court, and his role was of a general supervisor over all departments. He was the primary advisor to the sultan, and often gave advice which, in retrospect it is possible to say, may have shaped the course of history. For instance, Nizam ul-Mulk Junaidi, the *wazir* of Sultan Iltutmish is credited with the famous warning to the sultan that Muslims in India were like ‘salt in a dish’, i.e., a minority who could easily be overturned. The wisdom reflected in such a statement reveals both the strength required to occupy the position, as also the importance given to the office by the sultan. Theoretically, the *wazir* was supposed to take the sultan’s permission prior to every decision he made; however, in practice it may not have been so as is evident from the cases when *wazirs* would actually become more powerful than the sultans. The case of the *wazir* Khwaja Muhazzab [in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah] is one such example.

Sai’d Fakhr-I-Mudabbir’s, *Adabul Harb Was’h Shujaa’t* (Rules of war and bravery) Indo-Muslim Polity, Yusuf Husain, Appendix, Status of the Wazir, pp.229. “... The *wazir* is responsible for the prosperity of the kingdom, the collection of revenues, recruitment of the army, the appointment of tax collectors, the checking of accounts, the inspection of workshop – wards, the reckoning of horses, camels and other cattle, the payment of salary to the army, the retinue and other working people. He is responsible for the contentment of his subjects, the welfare of the well-wishers of the state, the payment of remuneration to scholars, the caring for the widows and orphans, the patronizing of the ‘ulama,’ the maintenance of order in the country, the organization of administration and for looking after the affairs of the people.”

The main function of the *wazir* was to look after the financial organisation of the state, give advice to the sultan, and on occasions to lead military expeditions at the sultan’s behest. Another important function included supervising the payment to the army, the largest “non-producing” class of royal retainers. His office also kept a check on land revenue collections from different parts of the empire. The *Wizarat* maintained a record of all the income and expenditure incurred by the state. therefore, the salaries of all royal servants in different parts of the empire were controlled and/or recorded by this office. Charitable donations such as *waqfs*, *inams*, etc were also handled by this department.

Further, the mints, the royal buildings, intelligence departments and other sundry affiliations of the royal court like the *karkhanas*, were all supervised by the Wizarat. They also had a number of minor departments working under their supervision with more specific functions. These included, for instance, the *Mustaufi-i-Mumalik* [Auditor General, incharge of expenditure], *Mushrif-i-Mumalik* [Accountant General, incharge of income] and the *Majmuadar* [keeper of loans and balances from treasury]. With the passage of time, however, the complexities of the greatly enlarged geographical territory saw further streamlining and introduction of new offices which were monitored by the wazir and wizarat. These included the *Diwan-i-Waqoof* [introduced by Jalaluddin Khalaji to supervise expenditure *only*; i.e, after separating ‘income’ records from ‘expenditure’ records]; *Diwan-i-Mustakhraj* [set up by Alauddin Khalaji to enquire into and realise arrears of revenue payments from the different parts of the empire]; and the *Diwan-i-Amir Kohi* [under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, this department was responsible for bringing uncultivated land into cultivation through state support].

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

### 19.7.2 *Diwan-i-Arz*

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

Firuz Tughlaq did away with the system of *dagh* and *huliyah* however Muhammad Tughlaq continued the system of *dagh*. Under Sikandar Lodi *huliyah* was referred to as *chehrah*.

### 19.7.3 *Naib-Ul-Mulk*

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

### 19.7.4 *Diwan-i-Insha*

Royal authority was conducted to a fair degree through declarations, announcements, *farmans*, and the like. The *Diwan-i-Insha*, headed by the *Dabir-i-Khas*, looked after the department of royal correspondence. He drafted and despatched royal orders, and

received reports from officers in various parts of the empire. This reflected the diplomatic perspective which conveyed in carefully chosen language the commands of the ruler. The *Dabir* was the formal channel of communication between the centre and the other areas of the empire, and at a time when transport and communication was underdeveloped, the job was made more difficult. The *Dabir* was also the private secretary of the sultan, responsible for writing the *farmans* [except in the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq when the office lost its importance].

#### 19.7.5 *Diwan-i-Riyasat*

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

#### 19.7.6 *Diwan-i-Risalat and Diwan-I-Qada*

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

#### 19.7.7 *Diwan-i-Mazalim*

It was headed by the *Amir-i-Dad* in the absence of the Sultan. His role was to supervise the *qadis*, *kotwal* (police) and *muhtasib* (Executive officer who supervised and enforced the public morals and public conveniences).

#### 19.7.8 Smaller Departments

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

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### 19.8 PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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

areas as a symbol of imperial presence, but every day administration most often remained in local hands. The interest of the centre in these areas was mostly economic, i.e., collection of revenue to sustain the larger imperial edifice.

### 19.8.1 Position of Governor of the Province

Sultanate comprised of provinces placed in charge of governors called *wali* or *muqti*. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century with the consolidation of the sultanate the provinces became unmanageable and were therefore, partitioned into *shiqs* for administrative convenience. They were administrated by the *shiqdars*. Subsequently the *shiqs* got transformed into *sarkars* in the Afghan period. The *sarkar* as a territorial unit comprised of a number of *paraganas*.

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

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

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

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

### 19.8.2 Local Administration: Role of *Khots*, *Zamindars*, *Rais*, *Ranas*, etc.

A number of villages formed a **pargana** (this term becomes common in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is Indian in origin). The villages were under the administrative supervision of the

following set of officials: *muquddam* (the village head man); *patwari* (village accountant); *khut* (village headman). It is important to note that the village and pargana were independent units of administration, and yet inter-related areas over which officials commanded administrative powers. The important pargana officials were *chaudhary* (highest local rural magnate accountable to the government for land revenue collection), *mutasarrif* or *amil* (revenue collector) and *karkun* (accountant).

*Khot*, *Muqaddam*, *Patwari* and *Choudhary* were the local officials who worked in conjunction with the governor in the collection of revenue and maintaining law and order, etc. Before the Bengal Expedition in 1353 Firuz Tughlaq in his proclamation suggested that *zamindars* constituted the *muqaddams*, *mafrozis* and *maliks* (*Insha-i-mahru*, letters of the early years of Firuz Tughlaq's reign). Thus the word *zamindar* encompassed the entire superior rural class. In certain cases the province also had a local ruler [*rai*, *rana*, *rawat*, *raja*] who supported the governor in his duties. In such instances, the local rulers were usually recognised by the sultan at the centre as being his subordinate, albeit the local rulers were allowed to act as sovereign powers in conducting the administrative affairs of the region. This practice was adopted in the Delhi sultanate because it allowed the sultanate to expand geographically on the basis of nominal sovereignty, coupled with an assured financial contribution to the central treasury.

### 19.8.3 Other Officers: *Shiqdar*, *Faujdar*, *Amil*, etc.

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

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

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

The financial accounts of the provincial income and expenditure were maintained by the *Sahib-i-Diwan*, who was appointed by the sultan on the recommendation of the



*wazir*. He was the book-keeper of provincial revenue, and was assisted in his task by *mutassarifs* and *karkuns*. The nazir and waqf were officers who looked after the collection of the revenue and expenditure respectively.

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

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## 19.9 ARMY ORGANISATION

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

Barani in *Tarikh-I-Firoz Shahi* says that Muhammad Tughlaq told the governor of Dhar (Malwa) ‘ I hear that everyone who rebels does so owing to the support of the amiran-i-sadah (Sadah amirs: commanders of one hundred) and the amiran-i-sadah support him owing to their anger (at the imperial policy) and love of plunder.’ Medieval India Quarterly, Prof. M. Habib, p.288.

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

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## 19.10 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

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



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

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

The taxation principles followed by the Delhi Sultan were to some extent based on the Hanafi School of Muslim Law. The revenue was broadly categorized into two by the Muslim Jurists: *Fay* and *Zakat*. *Fay* was further subdivided into *Khams*, *Jizya* and *Kharaj*. *Zakat* comprised of tax on flocks, herds, gold, silver, commercial capital, agricultural produce, etc. *Khams* represented one fifth of the booty acquired in war or mine or treasure trove (found) to be handed over to the state. *Jizya* was imposed on non-muslims “in return for which they received protection of life and property and exemption from military services”. (R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p. 339) *Kharaj* was the tax on land. Initially this tax was not levied on muslims however due to the need of the state for revenue it was later not practical to give immunity to muslims from the payment of this tax. Theoretically, the holders of *Kharaj* land were to pay land tax whether land was cultivated by them or not. The Muslim law and state followed a liberal policy towards the land holders and they could not be evicted easily and the state tried to encourage cultivation by giving them loans. These theoretical postulates got modified in actual practice in the Delhi Sultanate.

#### **Agrarian taxation in the Delhi Sultanate**

As already suggested the Muslim theory of taxation was adopted in India with modifications. We get proper information about the taxation system from the period of Alauddin Khalji. Barani in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* gives a description of Alauddin Khalji’s agrarian policy in North India’. “The sultan decreed that 3 taxes were to be levied on the peasants viz. the *Kharaj* (also called *Kharaj-I-jizya*) or tax on cultivation; *charai*, a tax on milch cattle; and *ghari* (a tax on houses). As for *Kharaj*, all who engaged in cultivation whether of lands of large or of small extent were to be subject to (the procedure of) measurement (*masahat*) and (the fixation of) the yield per biswa (*wafa-I-biswa*) and were without any exception to pay half”. (Irfan Habib and T.R. Choudhary (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Volume I*, p. 61). It seems that generally tax was collected in cash though it was sometimes also collected in kind for specific purposes. An important consequence of Alauddin Khalji’s tax administration was that *Kharaj* or *mal* henceforth became the main source through which revenue was exacted from the peasants by the ruling class. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq introduced changes in the earlier policy and tried to win over the peasants and village headmen by providing relief measures (exemption from additional levies, tax on cattle, etc.).

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

### Grants (*Iqta*, *Milk*, *Idrar*)

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

Tusi (a Seljukid statesman of 11<sup>th</sup> century) in *Siyasat nama* gives the classical description of the *iqta* as follows “*Muqtis* who hold *iqtas* should know that they have no claim on the subjects/peasants (*riaya*) other than that of collecting from them in a proper manner the due mal (tax, land tax) that has been assigned to them (the *muqtis*). When the revenue has been realised from them, those subjects/peasants should remain secure from (any demands by) them (the *muqtis*) in respect of their persons, wealth, wives and children, cultivated lands (*ziya*) and goods. The *muqtis* do not have any (further) claims on them. The subjects/peasants, if they so wish, can come to the (king's) court and represent their condition. They should not be prevented from doing so. If any *muqti* does anything other than this they (the kings) take away his power (literally, cut away his hands) and resume his *iqta* and visit their wrath on him, so that others might be warned thereby. They (the *muqtis*) should in truth realise that the country and peasantry (*raiyat*), all belong to the sultan, with the *muqtis* (simply) placed at their head”. (The Cambridge Economic History, I. Habib)

During Balban's reign an attempt was made to enquire into the income of *Muqtis*. An important change took place in Alauddin Khalji's period. With the expansion of the Empire far off areas were assigned in *Iqta* and the areas closer to Delhi were brought under *Khalisa*. The Sultan's troops were now paid in cash. This practice continued till Muhammad Tughlaq's reign. The changes in the *Iqta* administration during Alauddin Khalji's period are reflected in the following passage from Irfan Habib (*Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol.-I, pg.70). “The tax income (*Kharaj*) from each *iqta* was estimated at a particular figure by the finance department (*Diwan-i-wizarat*). The department remained on the constant look out for an opportunity to enhance the estimate. Out of the estimated income of the *iqta* a certain amount was allowed for the pay (*mawajib*) of the troops (*hasham*) placed under the *muqti* or *wali*. The area expected to yield this amount was apparently set apart by the *Diwan*. The remainder was treated as the *muqti's* own personal *iqta* i.e. for his own salary and the expense of his personal establishment of officials. He had to pay into the treasury all realization above the amount allowed for the pay of the army and for his own income”. During Ghiyasuddin

Tughlaq's time the estimated income of the *Iqta* was not raised by the finance department and the *muqtis* and other officials were allowed to appropriate for themselves small sums over and above the sanctioned income.

Under Muhammad Tughlaq the dual task of collecting revenue and maintaining soldiers was divided. The *Masalik-al-Absar* gives a detailed account of the institution of *Iqta* under Muhammad Tughlaq. It points out that "all army commanders from Khans heading 10,000 cavalry troops to *sipah salars* placed over less than 100 were assigned *iqtas* in lieu of their salaries. The estimated income of *iqta* against which the salary was adjusted was always less than the actual. The significant point is that the troops are said to have been always paid in cash by the treasury and that the *iqtas* was given only in lieu of the commanders' personal salaries". (cf. Irfan Habib and T.R. Choudhary (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. I*, pg. 72). Due to his policies Muhammad Tughlaq faced problems in Deogir when the *Amiran-i-sada* (centurians) became disaffected.

Firoz Tughlaq adopted the policy of remuneration of soldiers through assignment of revenue of villages known as *wajh* (a new assignment given in lieu of salaries). In cases where soldiers were not assigned *wajh*, cash salaries were paid from the treasury or through drafts on the *iqtas* of nobles which were to be drawn through the surplus payment which were due to the central treasury from the *iqtas*. These drafts could be sold at a price to speculators. The hereditary aspect was strengthened in this period as against the transfer principle. Under the Lodis the term *iqta* was still used for areas held by *wajhdars*.

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

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## 19.11 SULTANATE: A COMPLEX COHESIVE ADMINISTRATIVE NETWORK

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Despite the paucity of evidence for the Delhi Sultanate, it is possible to suggest that the central political power located in the capital city asserted political hegemony over the core areas through direct control via its officers. The sultan's presence was felt most strongly over here, and was visible not only through his physical presence, but also through the complex network of officers and military retainues which worked towards maintaining sovereign royal power. The authority of the sultan also acquired more concrete forms, especially in the construction activities which were initiated at his behest. These included architectural constructions of various types but, especially in the early phases, the building of mosques which brought the community [*ummah*] together for prayer. Through such a complex and interwoven series of symbolic and architectural activities, the newly established sultanate managed to retain its hold over a core political area and create a base for itself from where it could expand. This expansion was possible through the large army it had mustered, and whose military prowess and efficiency was kept to a level through particular offices created for the purpose. The administrative structure, along with the religious discourse of the *ulema*, therefore allowed for the creation of an obedient population upon whom sovereign political authority was exercised. This structure was kept in place through the system of the bureaucratic network established.

The same system was at work in the provinces of the sultanate, but with one important difference. Here, the central authority was exercised by a handful of officers. The internal cohesion of this body of officers was weakened by the fact that each was

appointed as a check on the other, so that they may not turn recalcitrant given that they were so far removed from the centre. Further, the governor in these areas was dependent upon local officials for carrying out many of his duties, and often the 'system' established by the Delhi Sultans was actually a continuation of the prevalent 'customs' in the area, be they regarding collection of revenue or civil and criminal arbitration (traditional practices). Too much interference had the risk of fomenting opposition, which the sultan could ill-afford; therefore, it seemed tactful to work in association with the local power groups for the fulfilment of their own interests.

These two rungs of administration, at the centre and at the provinces, included a host of officers who worked to maintain imperial power and sovereignty. Of course, there were situations in which they themselves worked against their master's interests. But otherwise, it was a system which worked well to provide a cohesion to the political structure. This was significant because at a time when there were no other common binding factors within the disparate sections and regions of the entire Delhi sultanate, administrative measures and officers provided a common imperial reference point, an imperial scaffolding which held together the entire political edifice.

Finally, the various offices and posts, the land measurement and revenue assignments and the relationship with the local power brokers, etc. laid the foundation for a more intensive and integrative bureaucratic system that was to become a defining feature of the Mughal empire from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The administrative efficiency of the Mughals would not have been possible without the foundation of it having been laid by the Delhi Sultanate in difficult conditions.

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## 19.12 SUMMARY

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

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

The most significant new institution that evolved and played an important role in effective governance was the *Iqta* system. *Iqta* was a territorial assignment given to the officials in lieu of their salaries. The holders of *iqtas* were called *muqtis* and enjoyed their position as long as the Sultan wished. They had no hereditary claim and were subject to transfer at the will of the Sultan. They were entrusted with the responsibility of collecting revenue and administering the territories assigned. They were also required to maintain a certain number of soldiers which were to be placed at the service of Sultan when needed. The holders of large territories were almost akin to provincial governor and the

nomenclature applied to them was *iqtadar*, *muqti* or *wali*.

A separate department *diwan-i-arz* looked after the organisation and supervision of army. The department maintained exclusive contingents as the Sultan's army. It also supervised the contingents of the *muqtis*.

Since land revenue was the main source of the income of the State its administration was given priority. Officials were appointed to look after assessment and collection of revenue from the lands either directly administered by the centre or assigned to *iqta* holders.

The Sultanate managed to develop a complex cohesive administrative network which could sustain it, with fluctuating actual control, for over three hundred years of its existence.

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### **19.13 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Discuss the nature of the administrative apparatus of the Delhi Sultanate.
- 2) Describe the provincial and local administration under the Delhi Sultans.

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## UNIT 20 VIJAYNAGAR, BAHAMANI AND OTHER KINGDOMS

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### Structure

- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Vijaynagar Central Power: King as the Monarchical Head
- 20.3 Administrative Divisions: Provinces, Sime, Sthala
- 20.4 *Nayaka* System
- 20.5 Local Administration: Ayagar System
- 20.6 Continuity and Change
- 20.7 Establishment of Bahamani Kingdom: Background
- 20.8 Organisation of Administration
- 20.9 Rise of Mahmud Gawan to Power
- 20.10 Decline
- 20.11 Bengal: Administrative Structure
  - 20.11.1 Central Administration
  - 20.11.2 Provincial Administration
- 20.12 Malwa: Administrative Structure
  - 20.12.1 Territorial Extent
  - 20.12.2 Sultan and Other Officers
  - 20.12.3 Military Organisation
  - 20.12.4 Finance
- 20.13 Summary
- 20.14 Glossary
- 20.15 Exercises

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### 20.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit we propose to consider the administrative and institutional structures of Vijaynagar, Bahmani and other kingdoms (viz. Bengal and Malwa). Thanks to the interest of scholars and historians who worked on the subject for several years, we have a fairly good knowledge about the Vijaynagar and Bahmani kingdoms. However, we must admit that still there are some gaps in our understanding of these areas of study. The reason for the lacunae in our knowledge about the details of administrative and institutional aspects has to be sought in the nature of the sources, including literary works and epigraphical records and the researches conducted. For the Vijayanagara state the literary works are available in two languages, Kannada and Telugu while the inscriptions are scattered over an immensely vast area in three languages – Kannada, Telugu and Tamil. Scholars proficient in one language made use of the sources available in that language with the information pertaining to that particular culture region. The language barrier prevented individual scholars from providing a comprehensive analysis taking into account all the material available on the subject. As a result there is some confusion in our knowledge of some administrative divisions and the nature and functions of some offices. Nevertheless, we will try to take into account all the available source material, to discuss the administrative and institutional aspects of the Vijayanagara and Bahmani and other Kingdoms. Scant attention has been paid by scholars to the independent sultanates which emerged as a consequence of the decline of Delhi Sultanate. Due to paucity of material dealing with these states and limitation of space in this unit, we will not be able to cover all independent states of the period. For the present discussion we have selected the Kingdom of Malwa and Bengal by the way of illustration.



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## 20.2 VIJAYANAGAR CENTRAL POWER: KING AS THE MONARCHICAL HEAD

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Vijayanagar empire was established by the sons of Sangama, Harihara and Bukka in 1336. It had its capital on the banks of river Tungbhadra. Some scholars ascribe to the theory of Telugu origin of Vijayanagar rulers, Others believe that they belonged to Karnataka. The former believe that the empire was established by Harihara I and Bukka I (the sons of Sangama) who were employed under the Kakatiya ruler. When Warangal was taken by Ulugh Khan (later Mohammad-bin-tughlaq) in 1323, they got employed under Kampildeva of Anegondi and when Anegondi was conquered by the Delhi Sultan, they were deputed there to restore order but instead they founded the Vijayanagar empire. According to one view, they were feudatories of Hoysalas and after the dissolution of Hoysala power in 1342, they emerged as their successors.

Nilakanta Sastri has observed that in theory the empire was a hereditary monarchy and the political situation within the territory and outside made it imperative that the king should possess high attainments in diplomacy and war. A weak ruler could not continue for long since there was pressure from within and outside. This resulted in usurpations by either members of the royal line or some able commander of the military force. Such a situation arose, during the reign of the weak king Mallikarjuna (1447-65), who succeeded Vijaya Raya II on the throne. Saluva Narasimha captured the throne after overthrowing the incompetent King Mallikarjuna and putting an end to the confusion and dissensions in the Kingdom. Narasimha the military commander founded the Saluva dynasty. Thus, such instances of intrigues and conspiracies were an important feature of the Vijaynagar kingship. The last ruler of Saluva dynasty was assassinated by the powerful noble and regent Vira Narasimha who laid the foundation of Tuluva or third dynasty. The most important ruler of this dynasty was Krishnadevaraya. The Aravidu dynasty began to rule over Vijayanagar in 1572. It was the fourth dynasty and this ruling house was related to Krishnadevaraya since Rama Raya an important scion of this house was Krishnadevaraya's daughter's son.

The king was advised by a council of ministers but the supreme authority was the king himself who was at liberty to accept or reject the advice of ministers. On certain occasions the king punished his most powerful ministers as in the case of Saluva Timma who was punished by Krishnadevaraya for his lapses.

The royal princes were often appointed to important official positions with a view to training them in the administration. As a result some princes became highly efficient and well versed in the state affairs. Krishnadeva Raya exemplifies this practice. He is the author of the didactic text *Amuktamalyada* in which he says:

“A King should improve the harbours of his country and so encourage its commerce that horses, elephants, precious gems, sandalwood, pearls and other articles are freely imported. He should arrange that the foreign sailors who land in his country on account of storms, illness and exhaustions are looked after in a manner suitable to their nationalities.... Make the merchants of distant foreign countries who import elephants, and good horses be attached to yourself by providing them with daily audience, presents and allowing decent profits. Then those articles will never go to your enemies” (R. Saraswati, *The Journal of Indian History*, 4, part 3, 1925). The passage shows how sympathetic the royal author was to the traders, and how sharp he was in assessing the importance of items of trade.

The King's army was stationed at the capital. The army consisted of an elephant corps, a cavalry and an infantry. There were two treasuries at the Capital, one for current remittance and withdrawal, and another, a large reserve, which was used only when the king was in great need. Every king made it a point to add something to this reserve.

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### 20.3 ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS: PROVINCES, SIME, STHALA

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The territory was organised from the very beginning of the establishment of the kingdom into administrative units called rajyas or provinces. These provinces were put under *pradhanis* who were a category of superior officers. In the initial stages the *pradhanis* were princes of the royal line but later, the post was occupied by military officers. Subbarayalu informs us that the headquarter of each rajya was called uccavadi or simply cavadi which denoted a rajya and that the rajyas incorporated in them already existing divisions of *nadu*, *parru* etc. of the Tamil region. The exact number of rajyas in the Vijayanagara Kingdom has not been convincingly calculated. However it may be suggested safely that the rajyas were important administrative and revenue units. The *rajyas* ceased to serve the function of important administrative units when the *nayaka* system was established by the time of Krishnadevayara. However, the names of rajyas figure in the records even later but only as geographical names. In the later stage the headquarters of the earlier rajyas are found along with several other towns as fortified garrisons under the military officers called *amara nayakas*.

Apart from the *rajyas* there were other smaller divisions like *sime*, *sthala*, *nadu* etc. Interestingly in some records, the terms rajya and sim are used interchangeably as in the case of Terekanambi sime and Terekanambi rajya. Some of these divisions are said to be existing within another division with the same territorial nomenclature such as Kundahatta Sthala of Nagavali Sthala. These and similar epigraphical reference to such complicated nomenclature and divisions prevents us from suggesting any hierarchy of administrative divisions. It seems to be possible to observe that for administrative convenience governmental authorities introduced the peculiar nomenclature system for identifying various territorial divisions. However, the changes are an indication of the variation in the pattern of administrative machinery in different periods.

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### 20.4 NAYAKA SYSTEM

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The *Nayaka* or the Nayankara system which matured in the later period of the empire brought about some changes in the status of the rajyas or provinces. The *nayakas* were a category of officers appointed by the king with rights over land. Generally, it was held by scholars and historians that the *Nayakas* enjoyed control over the land held by them and so they could parcel out a part of it to others in return for some remittance of revenue and other services to the superior authority. Epigraphical records speak of different kinds of *nayakas* such as *dannayakas* (military official), *durga-dannayakas* (military official in charge of fort) and *amaranayakas*. It seems there was some hierarchical relation among them. *Durga dannaiks* were Brahman commanders in charge of strategic fortresses. The landholding allocated to the *nayakas* was called *nayakattanam*. Recently Karashima and Subbarayalu have studied the Tamil epigraphical sources of the Vijayanagara period and they have presented a more logical picture of the *nayakas* and the institution of *nayakattanam*.

Nuniz, the portuguese Chronicler had stated that there were two hundred *nayakas* in the Vijayanagara empire. Karashima refers to more than three hundred *nayakas* in the northern part of Tamil region which consisted of five rajyas and these *nayakas* are attributed to the post 1485 period. All these *nayakas* were in possession of *nayakattanam*. These chiefs controlled production in their *nayakattanam* territories by encouraging settlers including cultivators, artisans and other service groups, who on their part enjoyed some tax concessions. These *nayakas* were obliged to be present in the royal headquarters and therefore they looked after their territory through their agents or *Karyakarta*. In return for the territory received from the king the *nayakas* had to maintain troops, ready to be sent to the battlefield, in addition to remittance of a portion of revenue from their territory to their superior.

The structure of the land tenure as prevalent under the *nayaka* system seems to have taken a shape as follows: The king gave territory to a *nayaka* who distributed it in three ways. A sub-*nayaka* who received land from the *nayaka* was called *amaranayaka*. He was responsible for maintaining troops. He had to remit a fixed amount to the *nayaka*. The *nayaka* employed cultivators on the land. This land under his direct possession was called *Bhandaravada*. In Tamil, these cultivators were known as Kaniyalar while in Kannada they were called garuda praje. Often the *nayaka* gave away a portion of land to temples or some religious institution free of tax. Such grants are called *manya*. In this way, the institution of *nayakattanam* involved a system of land tenure consisting of three tenurial rights, *amaram*, *bhandaravada* and *manya*. The *amaram* land in possession of the *amaranayakas* was cultivated by employing *Kaniyalar* who engaged the *kudi*, primary cultivators as well as forced labour. The *nayakas* engaged *kaniyalar* (or *garudapraje* in Kannada) for cultivating the *bhandaravada*. These intermediaries employed *kudi* and forced labour for cultivation. The *manya* land, enjoyed by religious institutions was cultivated by the *kudis*. Generally, the *kudis* were occupant cultivators. In the *manya* tenure there were several service groups such as the accountants, the priests etc.

The discussion of the *Nayaka* system is contained in the contemporary European sources i.e. the description of Portuguese Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz who were contemporaries of Krishnadevaraya and Achyutraya in 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Paes account is given hereunder:

“Should any one ask what revenues the king possesses, and what his treasure is that enables him to pay so many troops, since he has so many and such great lords in his kingdom, who, the greater part of them, have themselves revenues, I answer this: These captains whom he has over these troops of his are the nobles of his kingdom; they are lords and they hold the city, and the towns and villages of the kingdom; there are captains amongst them who have a revenue of a million and a million and a half of pardaos, others a hundred thousand pardaos, others two hundred, three hundred or five hundred thousand pardaos and as each one has a revenue so the king fixes for him the number of troops he must maintain, in foot, horse and elephants. These troops are always ready for duty whenever they may be called out and whenever they may have to go; and in this way he has this million of fighting men always ready. Each of these captains labours to turn out the best troops he can get because he pays them their salaries; and (in the review of troops by Krishnaraya)...there were the finest young men possible to be seen, for in all this array I did not see a man that would act the coward. Besides maintaining these troops each captain has to make his annual payments to the king, and the king has his own salaried troops to whom he gives pay”. (Robert Sewell: *Vijayanagar A Forgotten Empire*, p. 280-1)

Nuniz points out “.....all the land belongs to the king, and from his hand the captains held it. They make it over to the husbandmen who pays nine tenths to their Lord; and they have no land of their own for the Kingdom belongs entirely to the king....”. (Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, pp. 379).

The description of Paes and Nuniz cannot be corroborated by the evidence from the inscriptions or literary sources. D. C. Sircar (*Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as revealed by Epigraphic Records*, p. 32) on the basis of his study of inscriptions analyses the *amaram* tenure. He suggests “...the *amara* tenure was similar to the allotment of land to the priest, barber, washerman, carpenter and others for the services to be received from them regularly... The *Amaranayakas* gave their lands to minor landlords on similar terms of military service just as the subordinate rulers had various grades of vassal chiefs under them”. The reassertion of Vijayanagar suzerainty in the Tamil region was again brought about under Krishnadevaraya (subjugated previously under Kumara Kampana. Saluva Narasimha etc.) and his Telegu army. This created an important transformation i.e. the substitution of the pattern of governors (mahamandalesvaras) by four military commanders, *nayakas* to function according to

the wishes of the king with the help of the dependent warriors called *palaiyagars*. The penetration of Telegu warriors to Tamil country resulted in the emergence of chiefs who were either Telegus or Tamils in collaboration with Telegus. The study of inscriptions of the Vijaynagar period upto 1530 enabled Krishnaswami to conclude that there were a large number of *Nayakas* in Tamil Country. These inscriptions belong to the category of gifts to temples, refer to building of tanks etc., collection of taxes from temples.

Referring to *Nayakas* as pillars of support for the kings who at times also rebelled against them, Burton Stein says “When his brother the great Krishnaraya died, Achyuta’s position was secured against the powerful Aliya Ramaraya, a brother in law of the late king, by two of Achyuta’s own brothers in law: Pedda and Chinna Salakaraju. The Salakaraju brothers continued to serve Achyuta as among his most successful and reliable generals as did another brother in law Cevappa *Nayaka*. ....The Brahman commander and minister Saluva Narasimha *Nayaka* or Sellappa who, with the Salakaraju brothers, assured the Vijaynagar throne to Achyuta in A.D. 1529 was rewarded with the control of Tanjore, the richest territory in the empire. Sellappa revolted against Achyuta in A.D. 1531 in alliance with the other *nayakas* of the south. The reasons for this revolt appear to have been differences with Aliya Ramaraya; Sellappa had thwarted RamRaya’s ambitions to the throne at the death of Krishnaraya and was now being made to pay for that by the still powerful Ram Raya” (Peasant, state and society in medieval South India, Burton Stein, p. 399 and 400)

Venkataramaraya in his book, (*Studies in the history of the Third dynasty of Vijayanagar*, pp 171-172), suggests, “The nayankara system has no doubt strong affinities to feudalism but it has also many differences. ...land was held immediately or mediately of the emperor on condition of military service”. The concept of fealty and homage did not exist and therefore it is characterised as a military system under a central power. Krishnaswami in his work, (*The Tamil country under Vijayanagar*, p. 181), points out, “.....this *nayankara* system of the feudal arrangements in the Tamil Country seems to have been in existence from the time of the conquest of the region by Kumara Kampana.” In his earliest work (*Further Sources of Vijayanagar history*, V. 3, p. 299,) N. K. Sastri distinguishes between the *nayakas* before 1565 and after 1565 thus: “The *nayakas* who were absolutely dependent upon royal will... (until 1565) acquired a status of semi-independence”. Sastri in his book (*History of South India*, pp. 296-7) says that “.... Crown lands, annual tributes from feudatories and provincial governors..... military fiefs studded the whole length and the breadth of the empire, each under a nayak or military leader authorized to collect revenue and administer a specified area provided he maintained an agreed number of elephants, horses, and troops ever ready to join the imperial forces in war”. In a recent study (*Sources of Indian history*, p. 79), N. K. Sastri has pointed out, “.....The empire is best looked upon as a military confederacy of many chieftains cooperating under the leadership of the biggest among them”. According to Burton Stein, (*Peasant state and society in Medieval India*, p. 408) “*Nayaka* authority in Tamil country certainly hastened or perhaps even completed the demise of those local institutions which together provided each locality segment of the Chola state with basic coherence: the local body of *nattars* acting corporately through their territorial assembly, the *nadu* or, latterly, combined with other locality bodies in the greater *nadu*, the *periyannadu*; brahmadeyas acting as the ritual and ideological cores of each locality”. He further points out, (B. Stein, *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India*, p. 409) “Telegu *nayakas* quickly became locality figures in their own right, encouraging the settlement of other Telegus to strengthen their control over local Tamil and Karnataka chiefs as well as to buttress their relations with the distant but still intimidating power of the Rayas”.

N. Karashima in his work (*A Concordance of Nayakas*, p. 16), points out that the “*nayaka* system... was established as a ruling system in the Vijayanagar kingdom during the last quarter of the fifteenth century and continued till the first quarter of the seventeenth century. This is supported by the appearance of the term *nayakkattanam*, meaning territory given to a nayak, from Krishnadevaraya’s reign ..... Although we



have one stray reference to some *nayaka*'s sirmai bestowed by Bupparasar in 1442, most of the references to *nayakattanam* or sirmai come from the reigns of Krishnadevaraya and Achyutdevraya, and therefore there is no doubt that the *nayaka* system was well established and functioned satisfactorily during the first half of the sixteenth century. Even after the defeat of Rakshasi-Tangadi in 1565, which led to a political situation of the weaker kings vis-à-vis strong *nayakas*, we have references to the bestowal of *nayakattanam* on some *nayakas* by Sriranga (1572-85) and Venkata (1586-1614)."

Nuniz (Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, p. 370) gives a list of *nayakas* and the sum which they remitted to state treasury and writes: "In this way the kingdom of Bisnaga is divided between more than two hundred captains who are all heathen, and according to the lands and revenues that they have so the king settles for them the forces that they are compelled to keep up, and how much revenue they have to pay him every month (year?) during the first nine days of the month of September". B. Stein, (*Vijayanagar*, p. 61) however, points out "... while it is true that revenue from much of agriculture is in cash, as were inland customs and dues extracted from merchants and artisans, there is no evidence that this money or much of it is found its way to Vijaynagar and the treasury of the kings". Although Nuniz refers to King's (central) officials who were entrusted with the task of assessing and collecting revenue but Stein denies the existence of such officials.

Karashima in his work, (*A Concordance of Nayakas*), refers to 3 levels of tax authorities: king, *nayakas* and *nattavars*. *Jodi* and *sulavari* (imposed on temples) were the king's responsibility. *Pattadai-nulayam* (an important revenue item) and *Kanikkai* were remitted by *nayakas*. *Nattu-viniyogan* and *nattu-Kanikkai* (*nadu* or *nattavar* level taxes) were remitted by *nattavar*. However, *nayakas* were also made responsible for remitting other taxes (*jodi*, *sulavari* and *nattavar* level taxes) by the king and *nattavars*. Nobuhiro Ota in his work *State and Kinship in Early Modern South India*, mentions revenue records called *raya-rekha* which contained information of the amount of tax collected by Vijaynagar kings from the villages. It has not been conclusively established by scholars whether the office of *Nayakas* was transferable or not.

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## 20.5 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION: AYAGAR SYSTEM

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Scholars like T.V. Mahalingam were of the view that during the Vijayanagara rule the village administration was organised in the form of the 'ayagar system'. According to this system every village was a separate unit. Twelve functionaries, collectively known as 'ayagars' were appointed by the government in each village and once allotted, the office became hereditary. The ayagar could sell or mortgage their office. Tax free lands or *manyas* were granted to them for their maintenance for perpetuity. Regarding their payments, Col. Wilks writes that "they received the compensation of their labour either in allotment of land from the corporate stock or in fees consisting of fixed proportion of the crop of every farmer in the village" (*Historical Sketches of Mysore*, I p.73). What is noteworthy in this description of village functionaries is the fact that they are referred to as having been "appointed by the Government". The term ayagar is only rarely found in Kannada inscriptions as noted by Subbarayalu and it is not found in Tamil inscriptions. However it may be noted that the village functionaries of the so called "ayagar system" carried out the economic activities in the local communities. The question is whether it was a system and if so, whether it was introduced during the Vijayanagara rule. Inscriptional evidence has not been found to support the view that the "system" was introduced during the Vijayanagara period.

Burton Stein (*Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, p.373) raises an important question "...whether 'local institutions' continued to flourish during the Vijaynagar period as they had, especially in Tamil country, prior to that time". Saletore,

(*Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire*), based his study on Karnataka during the Vijayanagar period and suggests “Purvamariyade (ancient constitutional usage)”, continued under the Vijayanagar rulers as earlier. Scholars who have analysed Vijayanagar polity at the pinnacle of territorial expansion (when Tamil areas were subjugated) viz. K. V. Subramanya Aiyar, Nilkantha Sastri and T. V. Mahalingam and A. Krishnaswamy refer to the transformation in the functioning of local institutions like Ur, Sabha and *Nadu* in Tamil areas due to the prevalence of *Nayaka* tenure. Stein agrees with the proposition of Sastri, Mahalingam etc.

Burton Stein, (*Peasant, State and Society*, p. 423), suggests that “*ayagars*, the body of village servants displaced villages of the Chola period (Sabha and Ur) as the local management institutions”. Krishnaswami (*Tamil Country under Vijayanagar*, p. 103) states that “the introduction of the Nayankara and Ayagar systems in the provincial and local spheres by the Vijayanagar rulers brought about the decline and disappearance of the local institutions in the Tamil country”. Ayagars constituted important official functionaries like headman (maniyam, reddy or gauda), accountant (karnam, senabhova) and watchman (Talaiyari). They held rights over tax free plots of village land (*Manya*) from which a part of village income was given to them. But they might have paid a quit rent (rent paid in lieu of income share received as rights over tax free land). The other village servants potter, blacksmith, carpenter etc. who did not perform administrative functions but performed essential services for the village were also given income shares. These Income shares were called *umbali*, *kodage* and *srotiya*. These income shares from agricultural production were not taxed but served as payments for other services performed. Payments in kind were referred to as *danyadaya* and those in money were called *suvanndaya*, *kasu kadamai*.

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## 20.6 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

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Recent studies of the Vijayanagara polity have pointed out that there were some structural changes as noticed in the transformation of a system of administration based on center, provinces and an officialdom comprising of (Mahamandaleshwar and Mahapradhani) Governors, Generals (*Dandnayaka*) and revenue officers (*adhikari*) in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries to the *nayaka* rule of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the earlier phase, the revenue was remitted to the respective rajya headquarters. In the *nayakattanam* territories *nayakas* directly controlled revenue administration. A network of officers for keeping accounts and for assessing the land revenue and collecting revenue were under his control. Inscriptions of the *nayaka* phase refer to rates of different taxes on crops, crafts and households. Subbarayalu informs us that the total revenue assessment, called *rekha* (*rekai* in Tamil) of individual villages is found mentioned in several inscriptions. Karashima points out that the *Nattavars* played an important role in the local production system and administration. However, under *Nayakas* they lost the eminence they had enjoyed under the Cholas. In this period ayagar system came into existence. Karashima (*Concordance of Nayakas*, p. 53) suggests, “The *Nattavar* or *Nattar* of this period need not always be taken to be the leading landholders of a certain territory but there seems to be little doubt that they had certain rights to the land through the office which they held in local administration and obtained an allotted portion of income from the land”. *Nattar* now included apart from Vellala landholders (non-Brahmin community), Reddis and Settis also. The change in the composition of the land holding class is attributed to the immigration of people to the new regions conquered by Vijayanagar armies in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The migrants acquired land through purchase, lease etc. in the locality.

Regarding the mode of collection of revenue (various taxes) it has been suggested by scholars (like Nilkanth Sastri) that the practice of tax-farming existed. This has not yet been ascertained by the supporting evidence of inscriptions. However, Nuniz has an interesting reference to the annual payment the *nayakas* made to the king. Burton



Stein does not accept the view that the royal officials existed who sent the tax collection to the central treasury. In the earlier phase *adhikaris* existed however later *nayakas* directly conducted revenue administration. Karshima however refers to three categories of tax collecting authorities viz. king, *nayaka* and *nattavar*.

More recently another change is suggested for the last phase of the Vijayanagara and its immediate successors (*Nayaka* states). According to this view, a new layer of mercantile entrepreneurs became politically important. These groups of intermediary level of the power structure had their involvement in long distance trade, revenue – farming etc. Recent scholars like Sanjay Subramaniam describe this group as ‘portfolio capitalists’. Whether such developments could be traced to the heyday of the Vijayanagara is a problem to be investigated further.

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## 20.7 ESTABLISHMENT OF BAHAMANI KINGDOM: BACKGROUND

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The Deccani amirs had become refractory. Their insurrections could not be quelled and they laid the foundation of an independent kingdom. According to H. K. Sherwani, (*The Bahamanis of the Deccan*, p. 28) “The new kingdom became the center not only of the nobles of the Deccan but of the amirs of Baroda and Dabhoi in Gujarat as well, and the first thing the new government did was to redivide the jagirs and iqtas in the Maharashtra provinces among the new masters of the country.” The Deccani amirs selected one amongst themselves as their sultan.

Alauddin Hasan established the Bahamani dynasty. The organisation of administration under the Bahamanis was initiated by Muhammad I. To consolidate his position in the region Alauddin Hasan subdued those who favoured Tughlaq rule and tried to win over the local chiefs. Let us now review the administrative system in the Deccan under the Tughlaqs and highlight the changes introduced under the Bahamanis.

Under the Tughlaqs the Deccan provinces or *aqalim* were subdivided to *shiqs* (rural districts) and urban districts (*madinas* or *Shahrs*). The *shiqs* were further subdivided into *hazaris* (1000 villages) and *sadis* (100 villages). The officer in charge of province was wali whereas *shiq* was placed under *shiqdar*, *sadis* were governed by *amiran-I-sadah*. *Amils*, *mutasarrif* (pargana level revenue collector), *karkun* (pargana official, accountant), *patwari* (village accountant), *chowdhary* (pargana level rural magnate accountable for land revenue collection) were other provincial and local officials. The provincial governor was invested with considerable power and though he owed his position to the sultan he enjoyed some measure of autonomy in the provinces. He had a large retinue of provincial officials manning the judiciary, army and other departments. The revenue obtained from the provinces was sent to the central treasury after making provisions for provincial expenditure.

The *amiran-i-sadah* comprised the military commanders responsible for revenue collection. They became dissatisfied with Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq and laid the foundation of the independent Bahamani kingdom in the Deccan. The policy of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq to pay the troops directly through the central treasury in cash and to give the commanders iqtas whose income was adjusted against the commanders’ personal salaries caused resentment among the commanders.

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## 20.8 ORGANISATION OF ADMINISTRATION

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Alauddin Hasan Bahman founded the kingdom in 1347. The new ministers and officials in the period of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah were *wakil-I-mutlaq* (Prime Minister), *amir-ul-umara* (commander in chief of army), *Barbek* (king’s private secretary), *Hajib-*

*I-Khas* (Lord chamberlain), *Sar pardar* (master of ceremonies) etc. In due course many other offices were created and an elaborate administrative system came into existence. Muhammad I is credited with organising the administrative and institutional structures.

The king stood at the pinnacle of the administrative system. He was assisted by a host of officials for discharging his duties viz. *Wakil* (Prime Minister), *Wazir* (Minister), *Dabir* (Secretary), *Sarhaddar* (Warden of Marches), *Qiladar* (Commander of Fortresses), *Bakshi* (paymaster), *Qazi* (Judge), *Mufti* (interpreter of law), *kotwal* (police), *Muhtasib* (censor of public morals) etc. These offices bear striking resemblance to the administrative structure of Delhi Sultanate. Several other officers are also mentioned in this period viz. *Barbak* (king's private secretary), *Hajib-I-khas* (Lord Chamberlain), *Sarpardar* (Master of Ceremonies) etc. The above mentioned examples of various offices illustrate that the administrative structure of the Bahamanis was constituted on the same pattern as the Delhi Sultanate.

Under Muhammad I the kingdom was partitioned into four *atraf*s or provinces which had their headquarters at Daulatabad, Berar, Bidar and Gulbarga. These were placed under the charge of governors. The nomenclature for governors varied viz. *Musnad-i-Ali* (Daulatabad), *Majlis-i-Ali* (Berar), and *Azam-i-Humayun* (Bidar) and *Malik Naib* (Gulbarga). The province of Gulbarga was of strategic importance and it was placed in charge of a governor, whose loyalty was unquestionable, called *Malik Naib* or Viceroy.

The troops directly under the king comprised of *yakka jawanan* or *silahdaran* (200 men). The bodyguards of the king were 4000 in number and are referred to as *khasakhel*. The *Amirul Umara* was the commander in chief of the army and the officers called *barbardaran* were responsible for mobilizing troops whenever the need arose. *Munhiyan* or secret service agents of the Bahamani kings kept him informed about the developments both within the kingdom and outside.

### **Nobility: *Afaqis* and *Dakhnis***

The reign of king Shihabuddin Ahmad I (1422-1436) is significant because of the change of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar. The Bidar period of Bahamani rule witnessed the weakening of Tughlaq influence and also the law of primogeniture being applied in accession to the throne. His predecessor Firuz is credited with promoting the *Afaqis* (nobles who were newcomers and had come from outside India) who came to the Deccan from Persia, Iraq and Arabia. The reign of Tajuddin Firuz (1397-1422) is particularly important for the induction of Hindus (Brahmins) in administrative system. He also entered into matrimonial alliances with the Hindu Kingdom (viz. Vijayanagar ruler). The other group of nobility from north India was called the *Dakhnis*. The influence of newcomers increased in the administration of Bahamani kingdom. During the reign of Ahmad I (1422-36), Khalaf Hasan Basri was made *wakil-I-sultanate mutlaq* (Prime Minister) and was bestowed the title of *Malik-ut-Tujjar* (Prince of Merchants). He also inducted in the king's army archers from Iraq, Khurasan, Transoxiana, Turkey and Arabia. The importance given to *Afaqis* created resentment among the *Dakhnis* which resulted in factional struggle thereby resulting in instability.

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## **20.9 RISE OF MAHMUD GAWAN TO POWER**

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The relations between the two groups *Afaqis* and *Dakhni* had deteriorated to such an extent that it was now important to bring about a balance between the two for ensuring stability in the kingdom. During the reign of Alauddin Ahmad II (1436-58), the conflict between *Afaqis* and *Dakhni* further continued to increase. Alauddin Humayun Shah's reign (1458-61) is noted for the rise of Mahmud Gawan to prominence and power. The *Burhan-i-Maathir*, (of Syed Ali Tabatata compiled in 1592) refers to the appointment of

Mahmud Gawan as chief or prime minister by Alauddin Humayun Shah (1458-61). In the text the king says (Sherwani p. 175) “Nobles of my kingdom! I am confident that it is impossible to carry on the government of the kingdom efficiently without the appointment of a minister who should be well known the world over and who should excel in wisdom among the Arabs as well as ‘Ajamis. We are on the threshold of a new epoch in the history of the country and I cannot do better than follow the advice of one who should be clothed with the outward attributes of truth and good faith and who should inwardly be free from vice and vanity. I have therefore made up my mind to appoint Khwaja Nizmuddin Mahmud Gilani, one of the best known in the state for his sense of justice and equity as well as for his deep thought to be my chief minister”. Mahmud Gawan was bestowed with the title of *Malik-ut-tujjar*, and made *tarafdar* of Bijapur. The policy of bringing about reconciliation between the two factions (Afaqis and Dakhnis) was pursued by chief minister Malikut tujjar Mahmud Gawan during the period of Regency (when Nizamuddin Ahmad III, the king, was a minor) – 1461 to 1463. In the period between 1461-63 Mahmud continued as *tarafdar* of Bijapur. The other important afaqi noble was *Khwaja-i-jahan-turk* who was appointed as *tarafdar* of Telangana.

The nobility comprising of the Dakhins and afaqis had always been hostile to each other. However all through this period constant attempts were made to bring about rapprochement between the two. During the reign of Shamsuddin Muhammad III (1463-1482 and the end of regency in 1466) Mahmud Gawan again became the Chief Minister. Burhan-I-Maathir (Sherwani, p. 200) gives a description of the king’s view on government: “It should be known that both religious and worldly affairs require the help of advisory councils, and the laws on which the organization of every state or country is based need great thought and circumspection. Thus it is necessary that care should be taken to acquire the opinion of the wise in matters pertaining to the affairs of the government. For God almighty himself ordered the Apostle of Islam (Peace be upon him and his descendants) that he should take counsel in worldly affairs. The Apostle laid down that counsel was like a fortress against repentance and a refuge from reproach, and the Caliph ‘Ali has said: The best of ministers is counsel and the worst of powers is self-will. The purport of all this is that it is best to act upon the advice of a wise minister, for his opinion would be like a mirror of truth and honesty. The philosophers of old have said that kings and successful leaders should not interfere with the policy of the state without the advice of wise elders”.

With the rise of Mahmud Gawan to power the Bahmani Kingdom witnessed unprecedented territorial expansion. It covered the whole of Konkan coast in the west to Andhra in the east, river Tungbhadra in the south to Berar in the north and Khandesh became its Protectorate. The provincial administration was reorganised by Mahmud Gawan. The bigger *tarafs* were now divided into 8 *sarlashkarships* or provinces of medium size. Gawil and Mahur were created out of Berar, Daultabad comprised of Daulatabad and Junnar (territories covering Daman, Bassein, Goa and Belgaum), Gulbarga was divided into Bijapur and Ahsanabad-Gulbarga (included Naldurg and Sholapur); Tilangana comprised of Rajamundhry (Nalgonda, Masulipatam) and Warrangal. The older provinces were partitioned and certain areas were placed under the crown as *khasa-I-sultan* or Royal territory. This measure was introduced to reduce the power of the older *tarafdars* or provincial governors. Mahmud Gawan tried to accommodate *Dakhnis* and afaqis in the nobility by giving them important assignments. Malik Hasan Nizamul Mulk was made *sarlashkar* of Tilangana and Imad-ul-mulk was made *Sarlashkar* of Berar. Yusuf Adil (Afaqi) was made *Sarlashkar* of Daultatabad, Junnar and Chakan. He also made attempts to befriend the Hindu rulers for political gain (Vijayanagar against Hindu rulers of Orissa). These assignments were not permanent and the nobles could be shifted.

The reforms of Mahmud Gawan were aimed at curbing the power of the *tarafdars*. They were in charge of military administration of the province and mobilized troops and appointed commanders who were in charge of garrisons and forts. Mahmud Gawan

attempted to restrict their authority by bringing most of the forts and their commanders under his direct control. The *tarafdar's* control was now limited to only one fort in the province. These were also meant to bring the revenue resources assigned to commanders under the direct scrutiny of the central government. Mahmud Gawan was also responsible for adopting revenue assignment on the basis of measurement of land. The policy of accommodation and equilibrium is reflected in Mahmud Gawan's efforts to induct equal number of old comers habshis, *Dakhnis* and newcomers – Iranians, Circasian and Central Asian immigrants in the nobility. *Sarlashkar* was appointed from amongst both the groups i.e. *Dakhnis* and *Afaqis*. He made Fathullah Imdaulmulk and Malik Hasan Nizamulmulk (*Dakhnis*) *sarlashkar* of Mahur and Gulbarga respectively. Yusuf Adil Khan (*afaqi*) was made *Sarlashkar* of Daulatabad and Prince Azam Khan was made *Sarlashkar* of Warrangal and Fakhrul-mulk Gilani (*Dakhni*) was made *Sarlashkar* of Junnar. Mahmud Gawan's reforms were not appreciated by the nobility and after his death the conflict among the nobles acquired a new dimension and was now no longer based on racial considerations. The conflict was now purely based on the desire to seize power by whatever means. This element of ruthlessness in the nobility brought about the downfall of the Bahamanis.

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## 20.10 DECLINE

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Nobility played an important role in the polity under the Bahamanis, succession was generally based on heredity but the nobles exercised considerable power over the Sultan and acted as kingmakers and policymakers. They also brought about instability in the kingdom.

The clash of the Bahamanis with Vijayanagar was for the control over Tungbhadra doab (between Krishna and Tungbhadra), Krishna and Godavari deltas (ports, foreign trade) and Marathawara country (konkan, goa ports). At times Bahamanis joined hands with rulers of Telingana against Vijayanagar.

It appears that the Bahamanis like any other political power in the region were vying for political supremacy. Thus they were involved in hostilities against the Muslim states of Malwa, Gujarat and Khandesh and also joined hands with the Hindu chiefs (Telingana) against Vijayanagar rulers. Political expediency was the major criteria which determined relations with other states. The relation of Bahamani sultans with other political powers in the region kept vacillating. They could not be static since the political alliances and hostilities were based on securing the frontiers or boundaries of the kingdom and also further extension of territory against encroachment by any expansionist political power. Frequent military engagement proved detrimental to the Bahamani state.

The decline of Bahamanis paved the way for the establishment of a number of Deccan kingdoms ruled by different dynasties. They were: Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar, Barid Shahis of Bidar, Imad Shahis of Berar, Adil Shahis of Bijapur and Qutab Shahis of Golconda. They continued as independent kingdoms till they were slowly conquered by the Mughals over a long period of time.

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## 20.11 BENGAL: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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In Bengal (Lakhnauti) the governor who first adopted the title of Sultan was Ikhtiyaruddin-Yuzbek in 1252. The hold of Delhi sultans over Bengal was fragile. Malik Tajuddin Arsalan also ruled almost independently over Bengal with the title of Sultan and died in 1265. Proably his son owed nominal allegiance to Balban. The governors of Bengal very often adopted the title of Sultan. The important ruling houses which ruled over independent Bengal were Iliyas Shahis (1342-1415, 1442-58) and Husain Shahis (1493-1538).

Due to the paucity of sources we are not in a position to give a detailed analysis of the administrative system of Bengal. However, we will try to reconstruct the administrative history of the Bengal sultanate on the basis of limited sources available to us. The independent sultanate in Bengal emerged as a result of the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate. During this period the two dynasties which ruled in independent Bengal were Iliyas Shahis and Husain Shahis. The administrative system that emerged in Bengal was in some ways similar and also different from the Delhi Sultanate.

### 20.11.1 Central Administration

The highest office of the sultanate was that of the Sultan. There were a number of officers attached to the Sultan or to the royal establishment to help in the central administration. There were: *Jamdar-I-Ghair-Mahalli* (The Bearer of the cup outside the palace), *Sar-I-Naubat-Ghair-Mahalliyan* (The chief of the guards outside the palace), *Mahalliyan-I-Naubat-I-Ali* (The chief of the Guards of the Royal Household), *Kar-I-Farman* (officer on special duty), *Dabir-I-khas* (personal secretary), *Vaidya* (Royal physician). Other officers employed in the central administration were: Chief *Wazir* (Prime Minister) *Sar-i-Lashkar* (commander of the army), *Qazi* (Justice) *Mudir-i-Zarb* (superintendent of the mint).

All executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the Sultan and emanated from him. Sultans like Alauddin Husain Shah regarded themselves as agents of God on earth. However *Ulema* and *Qazis* acted as a curb on the King's power.

The *Jamdar-i-Ghair-Mahalli* or *Sharabadar-i-ghair-Mahalli* supervised the eatables given to the king when he was on tour military or otherwise. This office was attached to the office of Governor.

*Sar-i-Naubat-Ghair-Mahalliyan* was the head of the royal army stationed outside the palace.

*Mahalliyan-i-Naubat-i-Ali* performed the task of supervising the household establishment of Sultan including remuneration to the king's personal staff.

*Kar-i-farman* was the official who carried out the orders of the king with regard to implementation of certain tasks.

*Dabir-i-Khas* (Personal secretary) – He was responsible for correspondence in connection with state affairs between the king and his officials. During the reign of Husain Shah his Personal Secretary was a Hindu Brahmin called Sanatan Goswami. *Dabir-I-Khas* had *Katibs* (writers) under him.

Vaidyas were employed by sultans and were referred to as *Antaranga* (intimates). Mukunda Das was the chief physician of Husain Shah.

The officers in the central administration were:

Chief Wazir (Malik-ul-Wuzra) (Bada Wazir): There wazirs adopted exalted titles: viz. *Al-khan-Al-Azam-Khaqan-ul-Muazzam* (the great khan, the exalted khaqan), *Muin-ul-muluk wa-s-salatin* (the aider of the kings and monarchs), *Naseh-ul-muluk wa-s-salatin* (the adviser of the kings and sultans), *Bahlawi-ul-Asrwa-z-zaman* (the hero of the age and the time), *Sahib-us-saif-wa-l-qalam* (the lord of the sword and the pen) and *Masnad-i-Ali* (the great prop or support of the king).

They guided the king and were responsible for general administration. They were the most important functionaries in the administration system placed next in hierarchy to the king and royal family. They also controlled the revenue administration and military administration.

*Sar-i-Lashkar* was the commander of the army. Sometimes he was attached to the post of the *wazir*.



*Qazi*: were responsible for administration of justice. He supervised, controlled and managed the trust (awqaf) of orphans, lunatics etc. and handled civil cases.

*Mudir-i-zarb*: He performed the task of supervising the mint where coins were struck.

### 20.11.2 Provincial Administration

Towards the end of Turko-Afghan rule the provinces came to be called sarkars. They were known as *Iqta*, *Iqlim* or *Arsah* earlier. *Ain-i-Akbari* tells us that there were 19 sarkars in Bengal. Towards the end of Sultanate rule, these sarkars were: Lakhnauti, Purnea, Tajpur, Srihatta, Sunargaon, Chatgaon, Satgaon, Madaran, Tanda etc. The *Iqlim* was further divided into mahals and *Shiqs*. These were basically revenue and territorial divisions. The important provincial officers were:

**Wazir (governor)**: Wazir was in charge of *Iqlim* or *Shahr*. He was the provincial governor. He sometimes combined the office of *Sar-i-Lashkar*. Sometimes he was responsible for administration of two provinces.

Wazir/Governor	Place of Posting	Year of Posting (AD)	Reigning King
Sarfraz Khan	Exterior in the east	1443	Nasir-ud-din Mahmud IV
Ahmad Khan	Shahr Sajla	1450	-do-
Iqrar Khan	Arsah Sajla Mankhabad and Shahr Labala Bar– Bakabad (on transfer from the last place)	1455	Rukn-ud-din <i>Barbak</i>

**Source:** S.E. Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate*, p. 228

**Mir-I-Bahr** (commander of the sea or Navy)

An inscription dated 1526 found in Bangladesh of the reign of Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah refers to the post of Mir-I- Bahr.

**Sar-I-Khail** (Chief of Cavalry): The sultan of Bengal possessed a strong cavalry.

*Qazi*: Provincial *Qazis* performed the same function as the *Qazis* at the center.

**Sar-I-Gumashta** (Revenue Inspector cum chief accountant): He monitored the work of Gumashta and performed the duty of supervising the agricultural production and assessing the state's share of production. The gumashtas were helped by the *amil*s in their work. *Sar-i-Gumashta* in Bengal supervised the accounts of Gumashta.

**Nazir** (supervisor): He was in charge of accounts of revenue department.

*Al-Khazan* (Treasurer) kept the accounts of income and expenditure of government.

**Kotwal Bak-Ala** (The chief police officer): Many *kotwals* were subordinate to him and helped him in securing law and order and stability. Junior Police Magistrate was called *Kotwal Bak*.

**Munsif Diwan-I-Kotwali** (Judge of Police or criminal courts): He was responsible for settling criminal cases. Devkot inscription of 1512 which refers to the building of mosque and minaret during the period of Alauddin Husain Shah mentions Khan-I-Muazzam Rukn Khan as holding the position of Munsif Diwan-I-Kotwali of Firuzabad.

**Shiqdar** (administrator of *Shiq*)



In an Arabic inscription Dinar Khan is referred to as occupying the position of *Shiqdar* in 1427.

*Jangdar* (warrior): An Arabic inscription of 1460 of the period of Ruknuddin Barbak Shah refers to Ulugh Nusrat Khan as *Jangdar* a post which was held along with *shiqdar*. He kept an armed contingent under him.

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## 20.12 MALWA: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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Malwa as an independent Sultanate was established when the governor of the Tughlaqs, Dilawar Khan Ghuri, declared himself independent from the Delhi Sultanate and adopted the royal insignia viz. white canopy and scarlet pavilion and got the Khutba read in his name (1401-2). In 1436 Ghuri rule came to an end with the accession of Mahmud Khalji to the throne of Malwa.

The administrative system of Malwa was similar to the Delhi sultanate. This independent kingdom also emerged as the consequence of decay of the Delhi sultanate.

### 20.12.1 Territorial Extent

The sultanate of Malwa exercised control over territories such as Bayana, Kalpi, Chanderi, Raipur, Ratanpur, Banswara and Mandasor etc. Most of the areas were indirectly controlled by the Sultan and had accepted the nominal suzerainty of the sultan. They made an annual payment as tribute in return for protection (Ajmer, Bayana, Kalpi, Raipur etc.). Ranthambhor, Mandasor, Chanderi were the frontier and strategic regions. Other administrative units (provinces) were Ujjain, Bhilsa and Hoshangabad. Mandu, Dhar and Nalcha were placed under the direct control of the Sultan.

### 20.12.2 Sultan and Other Officers

Sultan: At the apex of the system of administration was the Sultan. His personal staff or private establishment comprised of officials like *Hajib* (chamberlain), *Dabir* (secretary), *Dawatdar* (keeper of ink pot), *Amir Akhur* (amir commanding the horse), *Mir-Shikar* (helped the king in hunting expeditions) etc. These officers were responsible for supervision of Majlis, protection of king, royal correspondence and assisted the king on hunting expeditions.

The collection of letters called *Maktubat-i-Ashrafi* contain the counsel of the saint Sayid Ashraf Jahangir Samnani on the theory of state. This counsel was sought by Sultan Hoshang Shah.

The advice is given hereunder:

“When you become lord (King) act honestly to please God so that he may favour you with my blessings. Justice is the only proper means of offering your thanks to God for his great blessing”.

“Amir (king) should lead the army at its head. He must shun wine and luxury. He must complete the day’s work without leaving it for the morrow”.

“In important works he must consult good, honest and learned men”.

“Consultation may appear as the divulgence of a secret, but in reality it is the right method of keeping a secret. In consultation he must listen to all without at once expressing approval of any of the opinions. He should move in such a way that each one of them may feel that he has acted upon his advice.”

“Nothing can be more destructive for the king than the following four things: a) indulgence in sensuality, b) Loss of one’s own moral character, c) Persistent and severe punishment, d) Terrorisation of the subjects”.

“The amir (king) must get up one Pas (3 hours) before sunrise and after offering his prayers he should meet the Ulama, but he should carefully avoid irreligious ‘*Ulama* (‘*Ulama-I-Mudahina*). He should then allow plain speaking truthful darveshes to meet him and should listen to them. But all this work he must finish before sunrise and allow them leave. He should then meet his *wazirs* and other officers who have important works of the state and attend to them. He should then allow the common subject to approach him and should do justice to them.”

“The *Amir* (king) should appoint only learned and trustworthy persons, who should also be popular.”

“Whatever I could remember at this moment I have written to you and hope that it would be useful for the present as well as for the future kings to come.”

Court: The royal court had the *Bar-i-am* (public chamber) or *Majlis-i-am*. The issues related to administrative affairs were deliberated upon in *Majlis-i-Khas*. *Mahfil-i-Uns* was the king’s private chamber in the Royal court.

The succession to the throne was determined on the basis of nomination within the royal family. However, rule of primogeniture was not always applied.

Ministers/Officials: The most important official was *wazir*. He was responsible for financial administration and also the overall administration. *Ariz-i-Mumalik* was the head of the army organisation. The *Shaikh-ul-islam* looked after the religious matters whereas *Qazi* was responsible for administration of justice.

### 20.12.3 Military Organisation

*Ariz-I-Mumalik* was in charge of the army. The sultan’s army was directly recruited and controlled by the center/Sultan. When army was mobilized for special purposes a separate *Ariz* was deputed. The governors of provinces mobilized their own forces. The troops recruited and maintained by governors were to be made available to the sultan whenever required. The infantry, cavalry and elephants constituted the wings of the army. The army mobilized for war had an organised system of movement in the battle field with specific responsibilities. *Maimna* and *Maisra* were the right and left wings of the army, *Qalb* was the center, *Junah* was the front of center, *Yazak* was the advance guard and *Saqa* the rear guard. *Muntajib* under the Sultan’s direction monitored the various wings. The weapons used were: *Atish-i-Naft* (Catapult for throwing fire), *Sang Manjaniq* (Catapult for throwing stones) etc.

### 20.12.4 Finance

*Maathir-I-Muhammad shahi* compiled by Shihab Hakim (official history of Mohammad Shah Khalji) and *Tarikh-I-Nasir shahi* (written by a courtier contemporary of Nasir Shah (sultan)) inform us that the territory was distributed as *iqta* to officers. *Khalsa land* was held by the sultan and the revenue administration was under the control of revenue officers deputed by Sultan/center. The revenue officers were responsible for collection of revenue from cultivators and it was paid to the state. Probably the revenue was collected at the time of harvest. *Diwan-i-wizarat* looked after the organization of revenue administration. Income was also obtained from tribute paid by small chiefs and *Khidmati* (presents) given to the king by officers and chiefs. Plunder and raids into other territories also brought in booty (income). The administrative positions were held by both Hindus and Muslims. During the reign of Mahmud II (Khalji), Hindu officers (Salivahan and Medini Rai) held important offices in the government. The rulers of Malwa also offered protection to the Rajputs and gave them shelter in times of need.

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## 20.13 SUMMARY

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In this unit we have discussed the administrative structure of Vijayanagar, Bahamani and other Kingdoms viz. Malwa and Gujarat. We have tried to analyse the important features of Vijayanagar administrative system especially Nayak and Ayagar systems. The Vijayanagar kings ruled over a vast time span from 1336-1649. We have tried to trace the continuities in their administrative system with the Cholas and changes introduced during the vast period of their rule. The Bahamani kingdom was established as a result of rebellion of Amirs of Delhi Sultanate. The administrative system under the Bahamanis was to some extent based on the pattern of Delhi Sultanate but with the consolidation of Bahamani power, many changes were introduced in the administrative structure, which became quite elaborate. Malwa and Bengal were the provinces of Delhi sultanate, which became autonomous as a result of weakening of Delhi Sultanate. Their administrative system was quite similar to that of Delhi Sulanate. The peculiar characteristic of Bengal was that many governors viz. Bughra Khan, the son of Balban, had adopted the title of sultan.

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## 20.14 GLOSSARY

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<b>Ajamis</b>	:	Non Arab lands
<b>Kanikkai</b>	:	Tax for maintenance of army
<b>Nadu</b>	:	Territorial unit, non-brahman agrarian settlements constituted a nadu in a locality
<b>Nattar</b>	:	Dominant non-brahman land holders and tax payers of nadu
<b>Periyadolu</b>	:	Supralocal assemblies of the 13 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Sabha</b>	:	an assembly which represented the Brahmadeya villages (of land owning Brahmins)
<b>Ur</b>	:	assembly of the nattar

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## 20.15 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the characteristics of *Nayaka* system under the Vijayanagar rulers.
- 2) Describe the administrative structure of the *Bahamanis*.

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## UNIT 21 THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

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### Structure

- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Background
- 21.3 Initiating Stable Systems
- 21.4 Reworking the Revenue System
- 21.5 New Hierarchical Order/The Mansab System
- 21.6 Assignment of Revenue / The Jagir System
- 21.7 The Nobility
- 21.8 Reorganising Administration
  - 21.8.1 Central Administration
  - 21.8.2 Provincial and Local Administration
- 21.9 Summary
- 21.10 Exercises

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### 21.1 INTRODUCTION

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The political structure which developed during the sultanate period and under the Afghans (Lodis and Surs) was the forerunner of the Mughal system under Akbar and his successors. The most important constituent of the Administrative system of the Delhi Sultanate was the *Iqta*. However, since the time of Ibrahim Lodi we get reference to *Jagirs* (Abdullah : Tarikh-I-Daudi) which developed into a system of revenue assignment during the Mughal period. The administrative machinery which evolved since the time of the Ilbaris underwent many changes and many new units of administration were introduced in the time of Tughlak and Afghans; *shiq* came into existence during the Tughlak period and *sarkar* was introduced in the Afghan period. Several new administrative offices emerged viz. *shiqdar* and *faujdar*. *Shiqdar* and *Faujdar* were officers incharge of *shiq* and *pargana* in the Tughlak period. Initially *shiqdar* was incharge of a *shiq* but later *shiq* was subsumed into *pargana* and *shiqdar* became a *pargana* official in the period of the Afghans. *Shiqdars* were appointed in the *khalisa parganas* and cities (headquarter of *sarkar*) under the Afghans.

During the Lodi and Sur period *iqta* was no longer a territorial unit and it was replaced by *sarkar*. *Sarkar* comprised of a number of *parganas*. *Hakim* was the officer incharge of the *sarkar* in the Lodi period although this term is used interchangeably with *muqti* for those holding land assignments called *iqta* in the sources. *Iqtas* continued to be granted to assignees from *khalisa parganas* during the Afghan period and the *wajahdars* or *muqtis* or *amirs* exercised military and executive powers in the *iqta*. Under the Surs the *wajahdar* appointed their own *shiqdars* and *amils* in their *iqtas*. During this period *iqtas* could be as big as a *sarkar*, of the size of the *pargana* or smaller than a *pargana*. They were not permanent and hereditary but were subject to transfer but not frequent transfer. *Iqtas* could also be retained by nobles as ancestral *iqtas* in accordance with the desire of the king during the Sur period. However, Islam Shah, the Sur ruler, tried to bring more and more land under *khalisa* by encouraging cash payment.

The assessment of revenue on the basis of measurement of land which had been introduced since Alauddin Khalji's time was further consolidated in the Lodi and Sur period. The administrative machinery under the Lodis and Surs was quite extensive. Although the administrative system of the earlier period continued under the Lodis but some new officials came into existence viz. *amins* (who measured land). Under Sur's too several new offices came into being at the *pargana* level: the *munsif-I-khazana* (treasury inspector), *khazandar* (treasurer) and *qanungo* (maintained the revenue papers).

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

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## 21.2 BACKGROUND

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A simple military victory is like erecting an edifice without a foundation. Such a structure collapses with the first blow. Military forces under Babur's command did succeed in achieving significant victories, first against the most prominent political power in north India under the Lodis, followed by others. Yet he could find no time for organising administrative structures or institutions to consolidate the gains. Humayun struggled and failed to hold this structure. However, the Mughal forces regrouped themselves, and with the assistance provided by the Safavid ruler of Persia, they recaptured the Delhi throne in July 1555. Accidental death of Humayun within a few months of this success did not allow him any time for the designing and development of political institutions or administrative structures suitable for resource mobilisation and evolution of a cohesive social structure, if he at all had any such plan. His successor, Akbar was only about fourteen years old when he was entrusted with works for which he was yet not adequately prepared and trained, that too in somewhat an alien land. But within four-five years time he appears to have acquired remarkable maturity. Gradually he not only extracted himself from endless intrigues of his nobility but also initiated steps towards maximisation of resource potential and a standardised distribution mechanism for the officials of the state. Simultaneously, he worked towards securing territorial integrity and organising nobility that was fully under his command and represented cohesiveness amidst heterogeneous social structure. To achieve these multifarious objectives he successfully carried out measures that constituted his administrative system and institutions.

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

The accidental death of Humayun placed Akbar on quite an insecure throne at a tender age (born in October 1542, accession in February 1556). Around next four years were

spent under an over-arching personality of Bairam Khan. This period was witness to contestations between different groups of kinsmen of Turani background for control over greater share of revenue from large contiguous areas, possibly for carving out an independent principality at some future date; along with no discernible control over the size of contingents under their control for which individual nobles had set their own salary-packets. For example, after removal of Bairam Khan while Munim Khan was appointed *wakil-us saltanate*, Shamsuddin Atka was awarded a *jagir* valued at one crore *tanka* without specifying how this amount was to be distributed among his supporters and the rate of payment for the troopers. Till about 1560 the position of Akbar, or the base of the Mughal empire, was unsound. Available information does not help in knowing what training or guidance prompted Akbar, in 1561, to initiate measures to assess afresh the resources of the controlled territories, and accordingly devise modes or systems of its distribution which would also not appear to be whimsical or totally arbitrary. Through different stages and arrangements these systems acquired their final shape, and with that the Mughal ruler positioned himself as the only source of patronage and supreme authority.

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### 21.3 INITIATING STABLE SYSTEMS

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Removal of Bairam Khan, as *wakil-us saltanate*, and appointment of Munim Khan (September 1560–November 1561) in his place had apparently made no visible improvement in the administration or income of the state. Rather, the situation had worsened. Around November 1561 Akbar revied upon Shamsuddin Atka and entrusted him with certain responsibilities. Soon it was followed by his formal appointment as *wakil-us saltanate* (November 1561–June 1562). From this time onwards some clarity of thought and approach towards governance comes into view. Such persons who had established their reputation as professional in approach and competent in their work were appointed in the revenue department irrespective of their past association with discredited nobles or officials. The revenue department initiated scrutiny of records to ascertain the value of nobles' land assignments (*jagirs*). Apparently some corrective steps were also initiated, leading to resentment. Added to this, the recall of Adham Khan from Malwa at this juncture precipitated the matter. Adham Khan who could not hold himself any longer engineered the assassination of Shamsuddin Atka (June, 1562) while the latter was in his office. Without loss of any time Adham Khan was executed at the express orders of Akbar. Munim Khan and Shihabuddin Ahmed Khan fled from Agra. Their flight, in a way, demonstrated their complicity in the murder of Shamsuddin Atka.

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

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



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## 21.4 REWORKING THE REVENUE SYSTEM

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

The collection of data relating to revenue, which started during the *wikalat* of Shamsuddin Atka, continued unabated. It is reproduced as the *Ain-i nozdahsala* (nineteen year regulation) in the *Ain-i Akbari* starting in the 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year through 24<sup>th</sup> year (1561-79), without any break. State prescribed rates for individual crops for all the 'provinces' are recorded in the *Ain*. It is noticeable that these rates were evaluated at regular intervals and revisions were made. For instance, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year, covering all the 'provinces' except Malwa, single and identical rates for each crop were approved; between 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> year, rates are lower than the earlier phase, for most of the crops two rates (minimum and maximum) are given, and that these rates vary from 'province' to 'province'; last phase relating to 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> year registers rates that are still lower (in case of inferior crops there is a marked decline) and the difference in rates is quite pronounced between different *subas*. After completion of the evaluation process final *dasturs* were announced. Listed separately, however, harvest-wise final *dasturs* (cash revenue rates for crops) for the provinces indicate an upward movement in the rates; the increase is about 11%. However this increase matches with the increase, by about 11%, in the size of the unit area (*bigha*) implemented around 1586 and, thus, reflects only an adjustment.

The movement in crop rates does not appear either to be arbitrary in the sense that the ruler was after the hard earned labour of the producers or that he wanted to project himself as philanthropist. The changes were based on careful study of available data. Writing for the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year, Abul Fazl says that around this time *jama'* (assessed revenue) was highly inflated and had caused great distress. Further, that under the directions of Muzaffar Khan and Todar Mal local revenue officials had submitted, to the central administration, area and revenue statistics (*taqsim*) for their respective jurisdictions; these were utilized to work out the *jama'*. Based on the measures initiated a few years later it can be said that the central revenue department was not fully satisfied with the information on account of large differences between *jama'* and *hasil* (collections) on a very large scale. They appear to have also identified the *zamindars* and the *jagirdars*, two functionaries of different nature, as the sources of interference. It may not have been considered practicable to remove the *zamindars*, who enjoyed hereditary superior rights over the produce in their areas, altogether from the country side scene, as Alauddin Khalji had attempted in earlier times. The position of the *jagirdars* was different as they could be paid in cash for their services to the state and be thus kept away from interfering in the intended measures for the rural sector. As a result, land assignments to the Mughal officials were terminated from the entire north Indian territories and this land was converted into directly administered territory or *khalisa* (1573-4).

If we look back at the revenue measures of Alauddin Khalji it is not very clear what precautionary steps he had taken to counter the prejudicial role of influence groups (*iqta'dars* and the *zamindars*) before he conducted measurement of land. Also, whether he classified the cultivated land according to the productivity of soil and whether his records gave any information relating to the extent of measured area under various jurisdictions, etc. In case of the Mughals, Abul Fazl is not very helpful in conveying the details about the survey work conducted by the *karoris*. This has led scholars to term the work carried out by the *karoris* as '*karori* experiment', which would mean that the

work was tentative in nature and thereby inconsequential. However, Badauni and Nizamuddin Ahmad are unanimous in providing such information that altogether alters our understanding and shows the thoroughness of the exercise that in the end produced results establishing firm control of the state over the resources of the empire, and thereby extremely useful in meeting the expenses of the state.

Accordingly, new territorial units were created. The sum total of this measure produced estimated revenue of one *kror* (10 million) *dams* for each territory. Each such unit of *khalisa* land was put into the charge of a *karori*. A *karori* was entrusted to carry out measurement of entire open lands reaching up to heavy forests, and clearly indicates land use under separate heads, like under habitation, water bodies (river, *talab* etc.), small hillocks, uncultivable waste (*usar*) for each village under his jurisdiction. In all likelihood, it is during the course of the above operation that productivity of different crops per unit area from good, middling and low fertility soil, a system introduced during the time of Sher Shah, was valued and fixed. *Karori* or some other state official monitored prices of food-grains in the local *mandis* during harvesting seasons and conveyed these to the central administration. To absorb seasonal fluctuations both in productivity and prices, data were collected over a period of five years. For the preceding five years similar information was obtained from 'knowledgeable persons', or from those local officials, including perhaps the *zamindars* also, who were actively engaged in revenue management. The entire process has been termed as *Ain-i dahsala*. Ten years' average, computed out of multiple of productivity and price, data was considered as the value of produce per unit area (known as *bigha*) and one third of this value, in terms of cash, was promulgated as the final crop rate for individual crops. Suppose one *bigha* of land produced 12 *maunds* of a certain crop, which was sold at the rate of 12 *dams* per *maund*, the total value of this crop will be (12 x 12) 144 *dams*. As 1/3 of the value of the produce was collected by the state the crop rate would be 48 *dams*. We shall come back to discuss the utility of the results of this exercise later.

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## 21.5 NEW HIERARCHICAL ORDER/THE MANSAB SYSTEM

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

Akbar had inherited a system in which there does not appear to be much clarity on the hierarchy of the Mughal nobles and the size and salary at which they maintained armed contingents under their command. Remuneration and expenditure on these two entailed huge financial liability on the State. Right from the time of the establishment of the Sultanate, payments for these two were made through alienation of state revenue from assigned territory to individuals. The Mughals too followed the same practice. Arrangement appears to have been very flexible. Evidence for the early years show that land or revenue assignment to a noble was announced first and thereon he spent a proportion of the income on the maintenance of his contingent. From all accounts it appears that each noble or commander was free to fix the size of his contingent as well as rates of payment for his soldiers. Following from this, if one or a group of nobles surreptitiously maintained a large or small sized contingent (for some evil design in their minds) they could do so. One wonders if the rebellious behaviour of some of the groups of nobles during the early years of the 1560s was one of the manifestations of this kind? The possibility cannot be ruled out. The remedial step, which could not be considered radical but appears

to take cognizance of revised yet highly inflated *jama*’, was standardisation of rates for the troopers in the 11<sup>th</sup> regnal year. Remuneration or allowances of individual nobles was not touched in order to avoid general discontentment among the very section that had provided strength and military support the state.

In 1573-4 an innovative scheme was introduced that streamlined the position of the nobles in the state hierarchy. The arrangement was called *mansab* system. Under the *mansab* system ranks were expressed in numerical terms. The *Ain-i Akbari* has listed 66 ranks, though in practice only 33 were utilized. The entire hierarchical ordering of the state officials, irrespective of office and their work, was covered under the scheme, starting with the lowest rank of 10 reaching the highest of 5,000. Above 5,000 and up to 7,000 were reserved for the princes of royal blood. Though reference about numerical ranks from earlier times could be found, nothing was as elaborate and comparable to the Mughal *mansab* system.

Abul Fazl points out in the *Ain* “*For this cause( to help him) did His Majesty establish the ranks(mansabs) of mansabdars from the dahbashi (commander of ten) to the dahhazari (commander of ten thousand), limiting however, all commands above five thousand to his august sons.....*”

*The number of mansabs is sixtysix ,the same as the value of letters in the name of Allah which is an announcement of the eternal bliss .... His Majesty sees through some men at the first glance and confers upon them high rank. Some times he increases the mansabs of a servant but decreases his contingent-(sawar). He also fixes the number of the beast of burden .The monthly grants to the mansabdars vary according to their contingent (sawar). An officer whose contingent(sawar) comes up to his mansab is put in the first class of his rank. If his contingent(sawar) is one half and upwards (of the mansab) he is put to the second class ;the third class contains those contingents which are still less.....”* (S. Athar Ali, ‘**Foundation of Akbar’s organization of Nobility**’ *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. No. III, No. 3 and 4 pp.296-297)

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

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

accordingly. The schedule of pay for the *mansabdars* given in the *Ain-i Akbari* was obviously redrawn after these changes were introduced. The schedule of pay in the *Ain* also lists size of stables, specifying species and numbers of war and transport animals, to be maintained by the *mansabdars*. The configuration that appears after the 40<sup>th</sup> regnal year is considered the classic form of the *mansab* system. The expenditure on the maintenance of these was borne out by the *mansabdars* out of their *zat* salary. Though it cost about twenty five percent of the *zat* salary, the balance left with the *mansabdars* was still very substantial by any standard. The overall assignments given to *mansabdars*, around the year 1600, out of the total revenue of the Mughal empire is estimated at around seventy five per cent.

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

However, the systems and institutions so assiduously built by Akbar could not receive similar attention and modifications to meet the challenge of the changing time and situations. During the entire seventeenth century there does not appear to have been a single attempt to re-evaluate the revenue potential. We do find *jama'* figures for different years of the seventeenth century and note that these are higher than those available in the *Ain*. However, factors responsible for the upward revisions are not known. If we take c. 1595 as the base year, the increase in *jama'*, recorded in 1628, was 81%; it shot up by 251% around 1656. By all account these were massive increases that could only have been caused by very marked upward movement in prices, substantial expansion in cultivated area and remarkable increase in the cultivation of superior crops. However, we have no information on any of these. Contrary to this, during Shahjahan's time assessed value of different areas were identified in terms of time-scale. Accordingly, *jagirs* were termed as nine-monthly or six-monthly and the like. This was done to compensate the gap between the estimated revenue (*jama*) and actual collection (*hasil*). The ranks were assigned on the calculation of estimated revenue while actual collection was much less than the estimate. In other words, officially it was accepted that yield from these stood at 75% or 50%, respectively, of the recorded *jama'* for them. While such a high magnitude of inflation in *jama'* figures, recorded at the centre, was a common knowledge, it appears quite strange that the ruler did not initiate any corrective step.

The obligations of the *mansabdars* underwent changes during the time of successors of Akbar. Jahangir had introduced a new provision in the *sawar* rank. According to it a part of *sawar* rank was termed *du-aspa sih-aspa* (currently written in its short form as 2-3h) in case of select *mansabdars*. For this part additional payment at the same rate of 8,000 *dams* per *sawar* was sanctioned. Thus, if the *sawar* rank was 4,000 out of which 1,000 was *du-aspa sih-aspa*, salary for this rank was calculated as  $3,000 \times 8,000 + (1,000 \times 8,000 \times 2) = 40,000,000$  *dams*. Without *du-aspa sih-aspa*, salary for the same 4,000 *sawar* would have stood at  $(4,000 \times 8,000)$  32,000,000 *dams* only. The debilitation is more visible during the time of Shahjahan. The numbers of *du-aspa sih-aspa* awards are on a much larger scale. In addition, a still more serious step taken was, what could be termed as, the Rule of Proportion. The *mansabdars* were allowed to maintain 1/5, to 1/3 of the sanctioned strength of the *sawar* rank without any accompanying reduction in their claim on the maintenance amount for the *sawar* rank. While Aurangzeb continued with all these changes, an additional rank, called *mashrut* (conditional), was affixed. Apparently due to the Rule of Proportion the size of contingent available with a *mansabdar* was, at times, not considered adequate. Therefore, on appointment to *qila'dar* or *faujdar* like positions the concerned official was given *mashrut* rank. It was withdrawn on removal from the office.

Holders of Du-aspa sih-aspa ranks during Jahangir’s reign

	Total	holders of du-aspa sih-aspa ranks
10 <sup>th</sup> year of the Reign	191	12
20 <sup>th</sup> year of the Reign	219	23
30 <sup>th</sup> year of the Reign	253	25

Ref. *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, M. Athar Ali.

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

*Mansabdari* and *Jagirdari* systems explain the organisation of the Mughal nobility. Mansabdars receive their pay either in cash or in the forms of Jagirs. However most of them were *jagirdars*. They realised the revenue from their *jagirs* (which were normally assigned outside the province where they were posted) and imperial officials were appointed to keep a check over them. It seems that *zat* rank was generally always higher than the *sawar* rank. In the Mughal system the main distinction was not between civil and military as Athar Ali points out “... there was no division between civil and military services as such” (*Medieval India Quarterly*, p. 299.) The main dividing line was between the executive and financial duties i.e *Subedar* and *Diwan, Amil* and *Faujdar*.

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## 21.6 ASSIGNMENT OF REVENUE / THE JAGIR SYSTEM

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Assignment of revenue from a limited and specified territory had been considered as the most convenient arrangement in lieu of payment for services to the state. *Iqta* was the term used during the Sultanate period. Prior to 1570s the Mughals appear to have continued with the arrangement that was not substantially different from administrative-cum-military appointments of the Lodi period for territories assigned to its commanders. A recent study has shown that in those years *hukumat, hirasat, hakim, sardari* etc. were more commonly used terms than *jagir*; and that their jurisdiction extended over much larger areas in size. Apparently this was one of the reasons for the growing tensions between the central authority and the *hakims/sardars* who considered themselves free to make revenue assignments in territories under their administrative jurisdictions (see Box). Prevailing over initial difficulties, from the early 1560s the central administration took control over the assignment of revenue in its own hands, it also started to distribute it over different localities.

In the early phase we have examples of assignments made by jagirdars from their jagirs. For instance, when Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka was awarded additional ‘*jagir*’ area, valued at one *kror* (10,000,000) *tankas* in the Punjab he, apparently, was at liberty to distribute it among his kinsmen and followers. The ‘*jagir*’ of Mir Hashim located in Kahmard, Ghorbund and Zuhak was under the jurisdiction of the *hakim* of Kabul (Munim Khan); Munim Khan, as *hakim* of Kabul, removed Khwaja Jalauddin Mahmud from the ‘*jagir*’ of Ghaznin in 1557; Ali Quli Khan, commandant of Lucknow assigned a ‘*jagir*’ to Ismail Khan in Sandila (1558).



Major changes, like those in the revenue administration and the finalisation of the *mansab* system, also took shape in the *jagir* system during the 1570s. As pointed out earlier, all the *jagirs* in northern India were abolished in 1573-4 to neutralize the influence and interference of the nobility in carrying the extensive work primarily related to revenue assessment. Assignment of revenue, or *jagirs*, was re-introduced once details about the sum total of assessed revenue for villages attached to the lowest fiscal-cum administrative units, *parganas*, had become available to the central *diwani*. Salary entitlements of a *mansabdar* were calculated on the basis of his *zat* and *sawar* ranks. The salary was paid either in cash or through the assignment of a *jagir*, the latter being the preferable mode. In case the payment was made through the assignment of a *jagir*, the office of the central *diwan* would identify *parganas* the sum total of whose *jama'* was equal to the salary claim of the *mansabdar*. Accordingly assignment order for the *jagir*, listing these *parganas*, was issued. In case recorded *jama'* was in excess of salary claim the assignee was required to deposit the balance with the central treasury. On the other hand, if it was less than the salary claim the short fall was paid from the treasury. However, none of these assignments were permanent or hereditary. The ruler could shift part or the entire *jagir* from one part of the imperial territory to another at any time. Based on French traveller Bernier's statement, made towards the middle of the seventeenth century, it has generally been assumed that *jagirs* were frequently transferred, on an average of three years. However, evidence from contemporary sources indicate that some of the *jagirdars* were allowed to keep their *jagir* assignments in one locality for as long a period as eighteen years; for instance Itibar Khan for 15 years and Saiyid Khan Jahan for 18 years held their *jagirs* in Gwalior, Abdullah Khan for 17 years in Kalpi, Raja Bithal Das held the *jagir* in Dhaulpur for 10 years.

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

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## 21.7 THE NOBILITY

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Generally, in analysing the organisation of the Mughal nobility two major points have been highlighted: 1) patronage of Rajput chieftains at an unprecedented scale and their unfailing loyalty to the Mughal rulers, and 2) Akbar's brilliance in accomodating regional or ethnic groups till it reached a stage when all of them were almost evenly balanced. However, these suggestions do not adequately explain unfailing allegiance and faith of the Mughal nobility towards the ruling house during post-Akbar period. The Mughal relations, including matrimonial, with the Rajput chieftains continued for several generations reaching well into the eighteenth century, and yet it could not arrest the crisis of the Mughal empire. On the other hand, if Akbar's mobilization skill is considered to have produced a subordinate nobility, how could it have such a lasting effect that successive generations of political elites continued to accept their subordination to the Mughal rulers. Some of the Sultans of Delhi, who had risen from the ranks of nobles, too appear to have attempted to create or organise a dependent nobility, by promoting and patronising one kind of group against another, to ensure their loyalty to the ruling house. The fate of the successors of all these rulers is too well known and, therefore, we need not go into those details here. Akbar was a visionary and had clear thoughts on how to establish structures with near permanent roles for nobles irrespective of their regional or ethnic lineage.



The main group of camp followers, or nobles of Babur and Humayun, were trained and brought up in a different tradition. Their allegiance to the ruler was limited; the underlying principal was acceptance of their near autonomous authority over a territory in return for military support. Taking advantage of Akbar’s immature age and inexperience, some of these nobles had manoeuvred to obtain contiguous areas, in lieu of their services, for themselves and their kinsmen. The Mirzas in Sambhal, the Uzbeks in Awadh, the Atkas in Punjab are a few examples. So long as they were allowed near autonomous authority over their respective regions they continued to remain loyal. However, they did not hesitate to take to arms against the central authority when the process to re-evaluate revenue potential (1561), engaging trained meritorious personnel, was initiated. They considered it as interference, and erosion of their autonomy. Paradigm shift in the attitude of the nobility, from confrontation to cooperation, was needed. This transformation in the attitude could only be achieved through assurance of security and lucrative compensation by the state. To meet this prerequisite the *mansab* system clearly defined available hierarchies for the entire state officials, irrespective of ethnic, regional or any other kind of consideration. It also assured substantial compensation for their services. For example, a rank holder of 5,000 *zat* was allowed Rs. 30,000 per month. After meeting expenses for the maintenance of obligatory war and transport animals and equipage, around 25% of this amount, the balance of Rs. 22,500 per month was still very high and attractive by any standard for that age. The system was, in many ways, transparent and that removed suspicions of undue favours and rewards to others. It also did not make any distinction between an old associate and a newcomer, including the Indian elements.

**Percentage of Hindu nobles out of the total nobles**

	<b>Akbar</b> 1595	<b>Shahjahan</b> 1628-58	<b>Aurangzeb</b> 1658-78, 1679-1707	
5000 and above	14.3	24.5	19.6	32.9
3000 to 4500	10.0	25.0	20.0	27.1
1000 to 2700	35.3	21.3	22.3	33.1
500 to 900	21.8			
Total	22.5	22.4	21.6	31.6

Ref. *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, M. Athar Ali.

This table shows that during Aurangzeb’s reign the percentage of Hindu nobles increased due to the induction of Deccanis (Marathas etc.) into Mughal service.

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

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## **21.8 REORGANISING ADMINISTRATION**

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Information obtained during the survey of the territories, under the supervision of the *karoris*, was further utilised for re-organisation of administrative divisions. Though we come across territorial classifications from the Sultanate period, paucity of related details would frustrate any attempt to demarcate either the ‘provinces’ of Alauddin or the

*sarkars* of the Lodi period. It is a misnomer to call them provinces. Many of these appear to be similar in size to *sarkars* of Mughal period or present day districts; for example Delhi, Meerut, Baran (modern Bulandshahr), Kol (modern Aligarh), Amroha, Bahraich, Gorakhpur etc. Bengal and Orissa in the east to Kabul in the northwest and Gujarat in the southwest Mughal territories were divided into twelve *subas* (provinces) in 1582. Each *suba* was further divided into *sarkars*, each *sarkar* encompassing large numbers of *parganas*. Apparently geo-political considerations were the main determinant in the shaping of a *suba* and its lower divisions. Mughal demarcations of territories in many cases were maintained subsequently during the British period. Later on three new provinces were added i.e. Berar, Khandesh and Ahmednagar.

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

### 21.8.1 Central Administration

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

Another important office at the centre was that of *bakshi*. The *bakshi* was responsible for keeping strict watch over proper maintenance of the sanctioned size of armed contingents and war equipage by the *mansabdars*.

The office of *sadr*, bestowed on one of the most respected theologians of the time, on account of its almost unlimited authority to distribute allowances and stipends, had become very lucrative during the first twenty-five years of Akbar's reign. In the eyes of a contemporary, the largess squandered by this office, from about 1556 till around the middle of the 1570s, was far larger than the total value of earlier three hundred years. In a way this office had started to become another power centre. However, the promulgation of *mahzar* (declaration according to which in case of conflicting views on religion Akbar's view would prevail) in 1580 ended their domination in matters of religion. It was followed by severe restrictions on the authority of a *sadr* for award of revenue-free grants etc.

### 21.8.2 Provincial and Local Administration

The Mughal empire was divided into twelve *subas* or provinces by Akbar in 1582. These were Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Ahmedabad, Bihar, Bengal, Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan, Malwa.

Later on three more added after the conquest of Deccan. These were Ahmednagar, Khandesh and Berar. Subedar, diwan, bakhshi, *miradl (qazi)*, *sadr*, *kotwal*, *mirbahr* (incharge of port duties, customs etc.) and *waqianavis* were the key officials of *suba*.

The *subedar* (governor or *sipahsalar*) was the head of the *suba* administration. The governor was entrusted with wide range of powers relating to provincial administration. In 1586-87 as a part of new experiment two governors were appointed in each *suba*. According to Abul Fazl in the case of inability of one the other could take his place. But the experiment was abandoned after sometime.

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

Next in importance was the *diwan*. Like the central *diwan* (*diwan-i kul*) provincial *diwan* was in-charge of all matters relating to revenue affairs. The diwan had under him a number of subordinate and local officials, such as *amin*, *qanungo*, *chaudhari* and *muqqddam* who assisted him in the revenue administration of the *parganas* and villages. He directly reported to the *diwan-i kul* (central *diwan*). This position of *diwan* in the *suba* independent of the governor, sometimes created administrative problems. In case the *diwan* and governor of the *suba* did not work in harmony, the administration suffered. However, this separation prevented the governor from becoming very powerful. Another *suba* level official was *bakshi* who carried out the task assigned by *Mir Bakshi*, or central *bakshi*. The representative of the central *sadr* (*Sadr us Sadr*) at the provincial level was called *sadr*. He was responsible for the welfare of those engaged in religious activities and learning. As he was considered a learned person he was entrusted with the work of judiciary and in that capacity supervised the work of *qazis* appointed at lower level administrative divisions.

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

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

The important officers of the province were appointed by imperial order. These were governor, *diwan*, *sadr*, *qazi*, *bakshi* and *muhtasib*. The subordinate officers in the *diwani* were also appointed by imperial order viz. *daroga* (superintendent) of office, *mushrif* (head clerk), *tahvildar-i-daftarkhana* (treasurer of office). The *waqianavis* were posted in the provinces and kept the emperor informed of the happenings there.

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## 21.9 SUMMARY

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Seen in its totality it comes out very clearly that Akbar undertook the onerous task of building an empire by engaging competent and experienced persons from various areas

of specialisation to frame and execute innovative systems of governance. When needed, he did not hesitate to adopt measures initiated by earlier rulers. He, however, fine-tuned them through long surveys and deliberations to make them acceptable, transparent and effective instruments of administration. Thus, without resorting to coercive methods, he maximised the resource potential of the state. These were implemented, through a transparent hierarchical machinery, to organise a distinctly subordinate and cohesive nobility out of heterogeneous social groups to supervise and maintain the territorial integrity of the Mughal state. However, his successors do not seem to have had either his calibre or foresight. They did not challenge the root cause and instead took recourse to such measures that at best could provide temporary relief to the ailing systems of governance.

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## **21.10 EXERCISES**

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

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## UNIT 22 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SUCCESSOR STATES

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### Structure

- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Bengal's Unique Position as a Mughal Province
- 22.3 Mughal Administration in Bengal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Role of *Zamindars*, *Jagirdars*, *Mansabdars* etc.
- 22.4 Murshid Quli Khan: Administrative Measures
- 22.5 Later *Nazims*
- 22.6 Mughal Administration in Hyderabad: Role of Provincial Governors between 1707-1724
- 22.7 Administrative System in Deccan under the Mughals and the Nizam
  - 22.7.1 Some important Officers: *Subedar*, *Diwan* and *Wakil*
  - 22.7.2 Local Administration
  - 22.7.3 Nobility
  - 22.7.4 Revenue Administration
- 22.8 The Development of a New *Subedari*: Awadh
- 22.9 Mughal Administration in Awadh 1707-1722
  - 22.9.1 *Zamindar* Rebellions
  - 22.9.2 *Madad-i-mash* Grant Holders
  - 22.9.3 Loyal *Zamindars*
  - 22.9.4 Changes in *Jagir* Administration
- 22.10 Nawabi Rule in Awadh – 1722-54
  - 22.10.1 *Jagir* Administration
  - 22.10.2 *Faujdar* Administration
  - 22.10.3 Role of *Zamindars*
  - 22.10.4 Role of *Madad-i-mash* Holders
- 22.11 Summary
- 22.12 Exercises

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### 22.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit, we will discuss the administrative and institutional structure of the successor states, which emerged as a consequence of the decline of the Mughal power. These states were Bengal, Hyderabad and Awadh. The process and transformation leading to the emergence as autonomous units from the position of *subas* of the Mughal Empire will be highlighted. The continuity with the classical Mughal administrative system and the changes introduced will also be analysed. The study of these regional states or successor states would help us to understand how the regional dynamics of polity, economy and society operated within and later outside the Mughal imperial framework.

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### 22.2 BENGAL'S UNIQUE POSITION AS A MUGHAL PROVINCE

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During the Mughal period as a frontier province Bengal had not been totally incorporated into the classical Mughal system of administration. Raja Todarmal, Akbar's finance Minister had brought out a revenue settlement for Bengal which was quite different from the system prevalent in upper India. The settlement was based on the system prevalent in the past especially the records of the Afghan period. New measurements of the landholders possessions and new calculation of state demand were not done. The ability of the peasants to pay revenue was also not scrutinized. Bengal's position as a

Mughal province was unique since the Mughals did not attempt to carry out village wise measurement and direct state appropriation before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is clearly demonstrated from the statistics related to Aurangzeb's reign. In Bengal only 1538 out of 112,788 villages had been measured for the state's revenue fixation whereas in the central provinces 93% of the villages had undergone measurement for fixing the state demand.

The revenue administration in large areas of Bengal was carried out through the intermediaries e.g. hereditary rajas, chiefs and landholders and Mughal officials viz. *jagirdars*, *amils* and *qanungoes*. Due to incorporation of new territorial areas into Bengal and a fresh fixation of demand in 1658 Bengal's revenue assessment in the late years of Aurangzeb's reign was higher than the previous settlement made by Todarmal in 1582. However, this rise was much less than the average increase in the rest of the empire. Historians like Irfan Habib, are of the opinion that the state demand was not as land tax but as tribute.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bengal the state's revenue collection fell and it was much less as compared to other provinces of the empire. The political situation in Bengal was peaceful after the subjugation of the refractory landed chiefs by the Mughal forces. Population had increased and large areas of land had been brought under plough. The economy of Bengal received a major impetus with the rise in demand for Bengal's cotton, silk and food items in the European and Asian countries. The underpaid but skilled artisans played an important role in giving a boost to trading activities. The European trading companies and the Mughal authorities tried to derive benefit from the trade which led to silver imports into India.

Though the economy of Bengal was thriving however this prosperity did not get reflected in the living standard of artisans, peasants etc. The economic prosperity in Bengal was offset by the growth in population and the appropriation of large amounts of money by Mughal officials in Bengal (through agriculture, trade and also illegal claims).

It is important to point out that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bengal the power of the Mughal *mansabdars* (Mughal officials who had *jagirs* in Bengal) was weakened vis-à-vis *zamindars*. This was due to the fact that less land had been assigned in *Jagir*. Bengal's unique position as a province of Mughal empire was because the revenue demand since Akbar's time had not been revised through actual measurement. Though production had increased (increase in cultivation) but revenue remitted to Delhi was in accordance with the older rates of demand whereas the actual collection (through field collection) was more than the official rate of demand. This difference was not reflected in the Mughal revenue statistics and was appropriated by the hierarchy of officials: *mansabdar*/*Jagirdar*, *zamindar*, *amil*, *qanungo* etc.

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### 22.3 MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION IN BENGAL IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: ROLE OF ZAMINDARS, JAGIRDARS, MANSABDARS, ETC.

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The administration of late Mughal Bengal was under the charge of a Governor (*Nazim*) and *Diwan*. Both were appointed by the Emperor and the *Diwan* acted as a curb on the Governor's power. *Nazim* was accountable for law and order administration and *Diwan* for revenue and judicial administration. Murshid Quli Khan became the *Diwan* of Bengal in 1700. He combined the office of *Diwan* and *Nazim* from 1716 till 1727 and established the rule of the Nawabs of Bengal. In the heyday of Mughal power the administration of the province was carried out thus: it was divided into *sarkar* placed under a *faujdar*; who was directly appointed by the center and was responsible for maintaining law and order whereas the *amil* performed the role of revenue collector; the *Sarkars* were further divided into *parganas* where the *qanungoes* functioned as accountants. At the village level *Patwari* carried out the task of keeping accounts.



The Mughal administration in Bengal was characterised by a specific trait. A very small part of the province was entrusted to transferable imperial officials. During Aurangzeb's reign 4/5<sup>th</sup> of the empire had been granted as *jagirs* in lieu of salary to *mansabdars*. The revenue collected from the *jagirs* was utilized to provide for the personal expenses of the official, to maintain troops and to organise the judicial, executive and revenue administration. In Bengal only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total revenue was collected from *jagir* assignments. The rest of the amount (2/3<sup>rd</sup>) was collected by the hereditary *zamindars* and chiefs from the Khalisa land to be deposited in the provincial treasury from where it was transferred to the imperial treasury. Theoretically the Mughals had developed a very fine system of checks and balances to monitor the *zamindars* in the khalisa lands. *Faujdar*s (military commanders) were appointed in several places to keep an eye on the refractory *zamindars*. The *faujdar*s were supposed to ensure that the *zamindars* did not try to enhance their jurisdiction and power by building forts and indulging in unauthorized activities such as mobilizing and maintaining troops. The Governor also depended on record keepers (*qanungos*) and revenue officers (*amils*) to control the *zamindars*. The *qanungo*'s duty was to keep a detailed description (account) of records of cultivation and revenue. It was a hereditary post and each fiscal unit (paragana) in Bengal had 1 or 2 *qanungoes*. Theoretically they provided useful assistance to the Provincial *Diwan* to audit accounts, and give information on local customs to check malpractices in revenue collection. Before the appointment of Murshid Kuli Khan as *Diwan* to Bengal the *jagirs* of the Mughal *mansabdars* were transferred after 3 or 4 years. The assignment of the *mansabdars* was transferable and, they depended on the local subordinate officers, eg. *amil* and *qanungoes* for collection of revenue and maintenance of accounts. The hereditary *zamindars* represented the traditional local revenue collecting and paying agency.

The province of Bengal did not witness any major confrontation between the *mansabdars* and the *zamindars*. The reason for the non-occurrence of this problem could be located in the few number of *mansabdars* and *jagirs* in Bengal and the low jama (revenue) assessment. This was a period of crisis especially is the working of the *jagir* system in the Empire, when the Empire's revenue collection was at a precariously low level since most of the land had been assigned in *jagirs*. Therefore, Murshid Quli Khan tried to crush the *mansabdars* and enhance the power of some of the *zamindars*. He had the consent of the Emperor in his attempt to bring order to the revenue administration of the province. He was an adept revenue administrator and very soon the province was in a position to transmit 1 crore each year to the imperial treasury. The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 was a watershed in the history of 18<sup>th</sup> century Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan was free to govern Bengal in his own way since the imperial power at the center had also weakened.

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## 22.4 MURSHID QULI KHAN: ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

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Murshid Quli Khan took several measures to streamline revenue administration in Bengal. The *zamindars* who were defaulters were sternly dealt with. Several villages were measured and assessed afresh. Revenue officers collected revenue from the *zamindaris*. Due to his strict policy the annual revenue collection increased. He introduced a new settlement in 1722 for his province. This was higher than the previous settlement of 1656. The *jagirs* of imperial *mansabdars* were transferred to Orissa although Murshid Quli Khan did oblige his relatives from Persia by assigning them *jagirs* and offices. Thus the land assigned in *jagir* decreased and Khalisa land increased thereby reducing the threat from the Imperial *mansabdars* whose power was crushed. Steps were taken to decrease the size of the imperial forces and their perks and allowances were also slashed. To further weaken the *mansabdars*, Murshid Quli Khan was able to secure sufficient revenue to be sent to the imperial treasury and could ensure a friendly and cooperative attitude of the imperial government towards Bengal. The reason for

transferring and removing imperial *mansabdars* may be seen as a step towards consolidating his power in Bengal and reforming the revenue administration. After 1713 the Emperor did not transfer *mansabdars* to Bengal. This policy was meant to improve the revenue administration so that sufficient funds could be made available to the emperor for his campaign against the Marathas.

Bengal's agrarian relations were transformed due to Murshid Quli Khan's policy which permitted some landholders to confiscate the lands of others thereby increasing the size of the holdings. Earlier several small *zamindaris* had existed but now a few extensive *zamindaris* predominated. Murshid Quli Khan also granted *ijaradari* rights for collection of revenue. The revenue farmers generally hailed from the category whose relatives had in the recent past held posts related to revenue administration in the provincial government. Every revenue farmer was expected to have a *malzamin* or security. This security was often represented by a banker (e.g. Jagat Seth banking house) who undertook to vouch on behalf of the revenue farmer for a small commission. Tax collection through trade and agriculture were either managed by the *zamindars* or through contracts with revenue farmers who pledged to raise a certain sum from specific areas. Murshid Quli also appointed Hindu *Mutasaddis* (revenue administrators) in his treasury at the capital. They were also posted in districts as *amils* and local *Diwans*.

During Murshid Quli Khan's period some *zamindars* and *ijaradars* were allowed to encroach upon and confiscate the lands held by others. The extension of *zamindaris* was made possible through military force, transfer and purchase. All these methods were made legitimate by Murshid Quli Khan. It is clear that stress was laid on making the process of revenue collection more organised and efficient by introducing measurement for working out the jama and hasil. The *Zamindars* and *ijaradars* who did not delay payments and who had the support of the banking houses were given preference and were allowed to acquire large *zamindaris*. These measures improvised the revenue administration. The local *zamindars* were favoured as compared to the Mughal *mansabdars*. The gradual decline of imperial authority after 1707 had weakened the control of Delhi over the provinces. This was reflected in the autonomy gained by Bengal under Murshid Quli Khan.

The comparative peace and stability in Bengal can be attributed to Murshid Quli Khan's policies. The task of revenue collection was entrusted to the Hindu *zamindars* in the western part, in the eastern and northern part the *jagirdars* and the small Hindu and Muslims *zamindars* were employed. The Marwari Hindu banking house of Jagat Seth performed the task of bankers, minting money and remitting revenue to Delhi. The posts in the sphere of military administration were assigned to Murshid Quli Khan's Shia relatives from Persia whereas posts in the revenue administration were given to Bengali Muslims and other Hindus. Thus various kinds of ethnic groups were incorporated in the administrative machinery. This was the scenario before the Maratha attack of 1740's.

The large estates and *zamindaris* in Bengal came into existence in the mid and late 18<sup>th</sup> century during the period of Murshid Quli Khan. It has been explained how new big *zamindaris* were created in the time of Murshid Quli Khan. In 1728 Bengal's paraganas (fiscal units) were readjusted around the big *zamindaris*. The four large *zamindaris* were Burdwan, Dinajpur, Nadia and Rajshahi. These provided the highest revenue assessment in Bengal. These *zamindaris* were now virtually the autonomous domain of the *zamindars* who had now acquired the nomenclature of Rajas. Out of these four *zamindars* the Rajas of two were non-Bengali Hindus whereas the Rajas of the other two *zamindaris* were Bengali Brahmins. The ancestors of these four big *zamindars* or rajas had a modest background as revenue or administrative personnel. These big *zamindaris* now accounted for a third of Bengal's jama in 1728.

J.N. Sarkar describes these new big *zamindars* as "a new landed aristocracy" and assigns their genesis to the policies of Murshid Quli Khan. Philip Calkins considers the

rise of *zamindars* and Hindu officials and bankers as the formation of “a regionally oriented ruling group”. The curbing of the power of the Mughal (*mansabdars*) and their elimination in the regional power struggle created a new group of regional elites (including domiciled elites) in whose hands power, wealth and status were vested. These big *zamindars* were now on equal footing with the Mughal governor and in their administrative capacity they commanded small contingents (troops), administered justice, built palaces, forts, temples, etc. These Rajas were transformed from traditional landholders to administrative appointees to the realm of local kingship.

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## 22.5 LATER NAZIMS

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The reorganisation of the *zamindaris* initiated by Murshid Quli Khan in the Nawabi period continued during the company rule. The *nazim* of Bengal who succeeded Murshid Quli Khan (Shijauddin Khan; Mushid Quli Khan’s son-in-law) continued with the policy adopted by his predecessor and introduced a new revenue settlement for Bengal in 1728. The increase in actual collection by 9% in 1722 was reasonable if we take into consideration the inflation and population increase. This was the increase or the target achieved by Murshid Quli Khan. However, Shujauddin (1727-39) and Alivardi Khan (1740-51, he became governor of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1740) also exacted *abwabs* (additional cesses). This proved ruinous for the peasantry. Thus the three *nazims* Murshid, Shujauddin and Alivardi increased the pre-1722 jama by 40% through their administrative measures. During Shujauddin’s and Alivardi’s tenure revenue was collected through the big *zamindars* in western Bengal and smaller *zamindars* in other areas. The *abwabs* imposed by the later *nazims* led to an increase in the *zamindar*’s profits but had a detrimental effect on the peasants whose rents increased by 50%. British observers (James Grant studied the fiscal system of Bengal and John Shore wrote on the role of zamindars) did not speak highly of the imposition of *abwabs* because their extraction was not based on the actual produce of land.

The alliance between the governor and the loyal *zamindars* was strengthened during the time of Shujauddin (1727-39). An important feature of his tenure was the subjugation of Bihar. The stern regime of Murshid Quli Khan gave way to leniency under Shujauddin. Some defaulters who had been arrested by Murshid Quli Khan were granted pardon and these *zamindars* were also provided a *khilat* (robe of honour) according to their status and were made to sign written bonds regarding payment of revenue through the banking house of Jagat Seth. They were to provide *nazr* (offerings) to the *nazim*. Although a lenient policy was adopted towards the “interior” (central) *zamindars* Shujauddin tried to tighten his grip over the chiefs stationed in Bengal’s outlying areas.

Alivardi Khan was Shijauddin’s Deputy in Bihar and seized power in 1740. His position was however sanctioned by Emperor Muhammad Shah. In the period of Alivardi Khan a new trend of withdrawing the remittances to the imperial treasury was started during the period of Maratha incursions and it continued till the invasions stopped in 1751. Thus now a major portion of the state’s revenue was hoarded or utilized within the provinces. Non-payment to the central treasury benefited the provincial government and half of the Alivardi’s *jama* was saved annually. However, the *Nazims* and their relatives continued to amass huge fortunes for themselves. This wealth was sometimes ploughed back into the economic cycle so it did not always hinder the economic activities. This money was however not utilized in welfare activities such as flood control, irrigation, building roads, relief measures in the wake of disaster etc. So it never percolated down for the benefit of the peasants and artisans.

From the above account we get an idea about the administrative policy of Murshid Quli Khan especially his revenue reforms, which brought about a new revenue settlement in 1722. He successfully curbed the power of the Mughal *mansabdars/jagirdars* by

transferring their *jagirs* to Orissa. The recalcitrant *zamindars* were punished. More land was brought under *Khalisa*. His measures resulted in the creation of large *zamindaris* in Bengal. He also promoted *ijaradari* and through these measures he was able to increase the revenue collection and remitted huge amounts to Delhi. His successor carried forward his policy and introduced another revenue settlement for Bengal. However he initiated the policy of imposing *abwabs* and granted pardon to the “defiant” *zamindars* (of Murshid Quli Khan’s period). But the policy of alliance with the “loyal” *zamindars* was furthered though the *zamindars* in the outlying provinces were brought under close scrutiny. The revenue collection increased and remittances to Delhi continued.

Alivardi Khan’s period was important since it represented the total erosion of Mughal authority in Bengal. He appointed his *naibs* or deputies in Patna, Cuttuck and Dhaka (eastern Bengal). He also appointed *faujdar*s in certain places. However, the *faujdar*s of Purnea had become independent of the Nawab which indicates the decay of *faujdar*i system. *Mutaseddis* (mainly Hindu revenue administrators) had been appointed since the period of Murshid Quli Khan to manage the Treasury or *Khalsa* at Murshidabad. They were also sent to the districts to collect revenue as *amils* or local *diwans*. Alivardi established an army comprising of Pathans, upcountry sepoys and cavalry. Within the *zamindaris* militia or forces maintained by *zamindar* through lands assigned to them in villages performed the policing, judicial and law and order related functions. Security and peace were therefore of utmost importance for ensuring proper functioning of revenue collection process. Initially to get recognition from the Emperor heavy payments were made in favour of Delhi. However, payments had decreased or stopped during the Maratha invasion of Bengal. Imperial authority in Bengal had suffered a setback but nominal allegiance to the Mughal power continued. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century in Dacca there existed several small tenure holders called *talukdar*s. They paid revenue either straight to the government or through the agency of *zamindars*. These rights originated due to settlement of new lands or sale of existing *zamindari* rights for money or out of “older” rights finding place in the new *zamindari*.

The study of the Mughal province of Bengal which moved slowly towards autonomy under the Nawabs or *Nazims* helps us to understand the dynamics of the alliance between the loyal *zamindars*, Nawabs and the Mughal aristocracy (only in the initial phase; period of Murshid Quli Khan). *Zamindar* rebellions and defiance were a threat which the Nawabs tried to prevent and solve by adopting suitable measures. The peace and security and smooth flow of revenue was related to cordial relations with the *zamindars*. The bankers gave loan on interest to the *zamindars* and the Nawabs for defraying their expenses. Bankers (*mahajans*) dealt in currency and bills of exchange for remitting funds to central treasury and Delhi. Merchants’ buying capacity made it possible for peasants to pay in cash. They promoted cultivation of cash crops on which higher tax could be imposed. Merchants procured silver for Bengal’s currency through trading activities. Thus the 18<sup>th</sup> century political system in Bengal was delicately balanced on a partnership between merchants, bankers, *zamindars* and Nawabs.

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## 22.6 MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION IN HYDERABAD: ROLE OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS BETWEEN 1707-1724

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Aurangzeb’s death in 1707 was marked by war of succession. Kam Baksh the youngest of the contestants for the crown declared himself ruler of Golconda after Bahadur Shah’s accession to the Mughal throne. Earlier Aurangzeb had appointed Jan Sipar Khan as the governor of Hyderabad. However, after his death prince Muhammad Kam Baksh was made the governor of Hyderabad. Jan Sipar Khan’s son Rustam Dil Khan was made the deputy governor of Hyderabad. This measure represented a major



shift in the Mughal policy of not converting the offices of governor etc. into hereditary assignments. Muhammad Kam Baksh acted as an absentee governor and held *jagirs* in Hyderabad and appointed his men to manage his possessions. In 1703 Aurangzeb had removed Rustam Dil Khan from deputy governorship of Hyderabad and had sent him to the coastal districts. Sayyid Muzaffar Khan was made the new deputy governor of Hyderabad. Rustam Dil Khan had incurred the Emperor's displeasure and now an attempt was made to strengthen the hands of Kam Baksh to establish effective Mughal control over Hyderabad. In 1705 Sayyid Muzaffar Khan was removed and Daud Khan Panni (the Afghan *mansabdar*) was appointed as the deputy governor of Hyderabad. Very soon Rustam Dil Khan was reinstated as the deputy governor of Hyderabad due to Daud Khan Panni's ineffectiveness.

Till Aurangzeb's death Rustam Dil Khan was not able to directly oppose Kam Baksh but as deputy governor of Hyderabad he tried to consolidate his position by amassing personal fortunes. He was not a loyalist as far as Mughal imperial power was concerned and he tried to enter into negotiations and compromises with the rivals of the Mughals. He had been reappointed as the deputy governor on account of his long association with the region. It was felt that his experiences would help in strengthening the imperial control but it seems that this step proved detrimental. The earlier policy of frequent transfer had prevented the officers from developing vested interests in the region. It had restrained them from turning rebellious. This was important for maintaining the stability of the empire and for efficient functioning of the centralised administrative control and system. Around the time of Aurangzeb's death in 1707 Rustam had been in Hyderabad for several years. His political acumen, his long familiarity and association with the region and his official status helped him to create a new kind of independent and autonomous political order in the event of decline of the Mughal power.

In 1707 the hold of the imperial administration over the province was weakening and the officials in charge of the administration in the provinces strengthened their position. Emperor Bahadur Shah was compelled to appease Rustam Khan since he did not trust Kam Baksh. Rustam Khan was bestowed honours and his rank was elevated. This was in conformity with the acceptance of the hereditary principle in administration which had earlier been deliberately avoided and ignored to strengthen a centralised administrative system.

Rustam Khan had emerged as a strong factor in the provincial administration but not strong enough to defy Kam Baksh or the imperial power. He was ultimately executed by Kam Baksh. On account of lack of coordination between the Empire and the province it became difficult to effectively control the provincial administration. The governor's hold over the provincial officials also became weak. The chaos encouraged the various sections to take advantage of the situation. Thus tax payments were not remitted, villages were "raided", internecine conflicts took place and Mughal authority was challenged. Rustam tried to forge alliances with non-official groups eg. rebellious leaders (ex-Mughal *faujdar*s, etc.) to strengthen his position as a regional political figure. In 1708 the prestige and power of the Mughals was still strong enough to resist attempts by officials to ignore Mughal authority. The relations between the Emperor Bahadur Shah and Prince Kam Baksh were not very cordial and the prince was not able to establish effective control over the administration in Hyderabad. There was widespread resistance to Mughal power and *zamindars* marauded villages, refused to pay taxes and indulged in factional conflicts. The period of Rustam and Kam Baksh was marked by rapacity and breakdown of imperial provincial administration in Golconda. Therefore, Yusuf Khan (the Afghan *mansabdar*) was appointed by the Emperor as the governor of Hyderabad. The province had posed a substantial threat to imperial power and restoring order was a difficult task for the new governor of the province. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century the social organisation of the province comprised of Muslim gentry (*ulema*, officials, merchants) in towns, Telugu warrior aristocracy who enjoyed military power, hereditary local officials (*deshmukhs* and *muriwars*) who held authority over the rural areas and Mughal officials

(town officials, fort commanders and *faujdar*s) who commanded the military contingents. It is generally held that the partnership between the military chiefs (*nayaks*) and the Mughal administration was fragile and the provincial administration was generally characterized by divergence of interests between Mughal imperial power and local aristocracy. However, Yusuf Khan's period was represented by an alliance between Mughal administration and local *nayaks*. Still he did not prove to be a successful administrator and the provincial administration of Hyderabad failed to streamline the fiscal system and sufficient revenues could not be arranged for local and central administration. The structure of revenue administration was based on a link between the local *deshmukhs* or hereditary tax collectors and provincial treasury. This structure was very delicate. During this period it developed several cracks. Around 1709 most of the *zamindars* were 3-4 years in arrears on tax commitments. The traditional tax paying agencies *zamindars*, *rajas*, *deshmukhs* and village headmen resorted to tax evasion. Yusuf Khan's governorship proved disastrous for the province, which was on the verge of bankruptcy.

In 1712 Ibrahim Khan was appointed as governor of Hyderabad. In this period the Mughal officers were transformed from their respectable appointments to mere marauding agents and their soldiers and armies represented mercenary groups. This picture gives the gist of the total collapse of provincial and imperial administration in the province.

Thus the imperial and provincial administration suffered a setback in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The powers and position of the Mughal officials were eroded and bandits and Telugu warriors enhanced their activities. The chaos was reflected in the increasing lawlessness which made the life of ordinary peasants, artisans and merchants unsafe and uncertain.

In the period between 1713-24 Mubariz Khan was made governor of Hyderabad. He was a Turani officer. He tried to reestablish the glory and power of the provincial government which had suffered a tremendous setback in the past years. Another significant contribution made by this historical figure was that after his defeat at the hands of the first Nizam Asaf Jah he bestowed upon the latter an organized political structure which was the forerunner of the future independent Muslim kingdom or successor state. The *farman* of Emperor Farrukhsiyar gave the governorship of Hyderabad to Mubariz Khan. He was also conferred the *faujdar*i of Muhammadnagar. All the districts administered by the previous governor and certain coastal districts were placed under him. His *mansab* (rank) was also elevated. He was directed to reorganise the provincial administration in Hyderabad. The *farman* categorically indicated that the districts of Musulipatnam, Nizampatnam, Sikakul, Rajmundry, Elum, Kondapalli, Kondavidu, Khammamet and the diamond mines categorised as *khalisa* could not be given as *jagirs*. Around 17 sub districts were controlled by the governor. He had to contend with the power of the warrior chiefs (*nayaks*) and the provincial *diwan* in charge of *Khalisa* lands. There was a tussle for supremacy between the governor, provincial *diwan* and the *zamindars* also.

In 1713 Nizam-ul-mulk became the viceroy of the six provinces of the Deccan. The Nizam seemed to be a loyal imperial official interested in safeguarding imperial power in the Deccan. The western part of the Deccan was being destroyed by the Maratha chiefs, bandits and revenue collectors. Through his diplomacy and military acumen he was able to reduce them to submission. Towards the eastern part of the Deccan in Hyderabad Nizam was favourably inclined towards the provincial *diwan* due to his conflict with Mubariz over the control of coastal *khalisa* districts. In 1715 the Nizam was removed from the position of viceroy of Deccan and he was replaced by Husain Ali Khan the Sayid brother who had placed Farukhsiyar on the throne of Delhi. The new viceroy faced hostility on reaching the Deccan and the Emperor secretly connived with the local officials and imperial officers in resisting the new viceroy. He had been



invested with enormous powers in the sphere of provincial administration. He could appoint, transfer, and remove provincial *Diwans* and commanders of strategic fortresses. These powers had earlier been the preserve of the emperor. Although he possessed tremendous power but the clandestine conspiracies of the imperial officials and the factional power struggle at the imperial court subverted his authority. Both Husain Ali and Mubariz Khan tried to form an alliance in the era of instability. Mubariz succeeded in securing the status of *Diwan* of all the territories in Hyderabad. His son was made the commander of the Golconda fort. Thus the special powers granted to Husain Ali by the emperor were used to win over the loyalty of Mubariz and thereby the central control (military and fiscal) over the Hyderabad province was further weakened. The position of Mubariz was further strengthened when the governor of Bijapur, Bijapur Karnatik and Hyderabad Karnatic also defied Husain Ali Khan's power and allied with the emperor. Though this was a period of instability and chaos but the imperial power and prestige had not totally collapsed and the symbols of royal power and authority and legitimacy continued to be used as a source of legal sanction by authorities at the provincial/local level. Mubariz Khan's tenure witnessed the suppression of the local *zamindars* and the Marathas. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the position of the viceroy of the Deccan had become a very attractive proposition for the nobles. After the death of Emperor Farrukhsiyar Nizam-ul-mulk, the Turani noble, was removed from the governorship of Malwa by the Sayid brothers. The Nizam decided to shift to the Deccan due to offer of the alliance with the Marathas (of Kolhapur group) and Mubariz Khan (who was not favourably inclined towards the Sayid). The expedition of the Nizam to the Deccan against the Sayid brother (Viceroy) was historic as this victory established the undisputed supremacy of Nizam-ul-mulk in the whole Deccan. Around this time the Sayid brother died and Nizam's uncle became the Wazir at Delhi.

Now a situation had arisen when the two nobles (the Nizam and Mubariz Khan) in their struggle for supremacy had become rivals. The Nizam wished to be the supreme lord of the entire Deccan whereas Mubariz was simply trying to preserve his power in the province of Hyderabad. Thus clash was bound to occur. However, it was averted for sometime due to the appointment of Nizam as the imperial *wazir*. The Nizam tried to pressurize Mubariz (governor) to pay his outstanding dues and tried to transfer him when he failed to pay his dues. In this period it was not easy to make the local/provincial officers obey orders and therefore, armed action was resorted to. In 1725 after defeating Mubariz Khan Hyderabad was taken over by the Asaf Jahi dynasty. Nizam was appointed *subedar* of the Deccan by the Emperor Muhammad Shah.

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## 22.7 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN THE DECCAN UNDER THE MUGHALS AND THE NIZAM

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The Deccan was divided into six *subas* and the *subas* were further sub-divided into *sarkars*, *mahals*, *parganas* and *dehs* (villages) for administrative convenience. Various sources in the state archives of Hyderabad pertaining to Aurangzeb's time or later give us information about the administrative structure of the Deccan from the period of Aurangzeb to that of Nizam. The six *subas* of the Deccan in this period were Aurangabad, Muhammadabad, Khandesh, Berar, Bijapur and Hyderabad. The *suba* comprised of a number of *faujdaris* and *sarkars*. The *sarkar* was formed by combining many *parganas* (also referred to as *mahals* in fiscal terminology). A group of *deh* or small territorial units (or mauza) formed a *pargana* or *mahal*. Dr. M.A. Nayeem in his "*Mughal Administration in Deccan under Nizam-ul-mulk, Asaf Jah (1710-48 AD)*" on the basis of the manuscript sources gives a table showing the total number of administrative units of the six *subas* of the Deccan.

<i>Subas</i>		<i>Deh-be-Dehi</i>		<i>Sawane-i-Deccan</i>	
		No. of <i>Sarkars</i>	No. of <i>Parganas</i>	No. of <i>Sarkars</i>	No. of <i>Parganas</i>
1.	Aurangabad	12	138	12	147
2.	Bidar	7	76	6	76
3.	Khandesh	4	134	6	136
4.	Berar	11	202	11	252
5.	Darul Zafar Bijapur	18	281	17	252
6.	Hyderabad	42	405	43	410

Each of the six *subas* of the Deccan had a capital or headquarter. However there was only one regional capital located initially at Aurangabad but later shifted to Hyderabad. Thus the structure of the administrative system of the Mughal Deccan was vertically arranged into six categories: capital of six *subas*, *faujdaris*, *sarkars*, *parganas*, *dehs* (villages). The forts and *mandis* were also components of a *mahal*. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had become a practice to combine the *faujdari* with the *subedari*. This is best illustrated in the career of Nizam who was given the *subedari* of Deccan together with *faujdari* of Karnataka in 1713. The *faujdaris* were also combined with the offices of *amin* and *shiqdar*. Thus Mughal Deccan was a big region and its *subedari* was further parceled out into several *naib subedaris*. The office of the *Diwan* of the Deccan supervised the six *Diwans* subordinate to him. The main officers of the provincial administration were the (1) *Subedar*, (2) *Diwan*, (3) *Bakshi*, (4) *Qazi* and (5) *Kotwal*, etc. They were supported by the offices of *naibs* or deputies. At the lower level (*sarkar*) the administrative head was the *faujdar*. Another provincial office was that of the *amil* or *amalguzar*. Apart from these other offices existed such as those of the *kotwal*, *qazi* and *bakshi*. The *pargana* was under the charge of a *shiqdar*. It also had separate *amil* and *qazi*.

### 22.7.1 Some Important Officers: *Subedar*, *Diwan* and *Wakil*

The *sipah salar* or *subedar* was the most important officer in the Deccan. The next important office in the provincial administration was that of the *diwan*. These two officers were mainly responsible for the smooth functioning of the administrative system. The *subedar* was incharge of the executive, military, criminal and judicial administration. The *diwan* was entrusted with the task of revenue administration. Initially the provincial *diwan* was appointed by the imperial court and was accountable directly to the central *diwan*. Nizam-ul-mulk brought about a major change in this system. He himself appointed the provincial *diwan* in 1721 and later removed him. Thus a new precedent was established and the *subedar*'s position was strengthened since he could now appoint and remove the *diwan* without reference to the imperial court. Similarly the *bakshi* who had earlier owed his position to the imperial court was now directly under the control of the *subedar*. An important feature of the administration was the *mansabdari* system. Hierarchical rank or *mansab* was accorded to officials and their ceremonial position was based on the rank they had been assigned. They were paid either in the form of *jagir-tankhwah* or in cash *tankhwah* every month which they obtained via the *wakils* from the *mustasaddis* (Hindu revenue administrators). The *mansabdars* held important posts in the administration. Sometimes a *mansabdar* held many offices viz. executive, revenue and military.

It seems that the *wakils* played an important role in the administration of Deccan. Some *wakils* were the representatives of the local powers in the regions such as the Marathas or the Nawab of Arcot. They enjoyed the patronage given to them by the Nizam and the nobility and served as their agents at the court. The local *wakils* received patronage from the Nizam as well as the nobles in the Nizam's administration at

Hyderabad. Most of the nobles had *wakils* to transact business with a Nizam. These *wakils* (external) provided employment to many in their master's estates. They were also granted *jagirs* by the Nizam. *Wakils* of Peshwa, Scindia, Holkar (Maratha chiefs) and British residents were prominent among them. The Samasthans (Hindu royal houses) who had acquired this position from the previous Deccani rulers (Bahmani, Vijayanagar), continued to exist in the Nizam's dominions especially in Telingana and Sholapur. They were tributaries of the Nizam and maintained their links through *wakils* at the Hyderabad court.

Let us now discuss the nature of administrative organisation in the lower tiers of administrative hierarchy. The *sarkar* or *pargana* or *mahal* can be categorized as both administrative and revenue division. The *sarkar* was headed by a *faujdar*. His prime responsibility was to look after the law and order situation in the area. He had under his control troops which could be used in times of emergency to suppress rebellions and ensure peace and stability. He also supervised the *thanas*, which were placed under the *thanadars*. It was his job to ensure prevention of crime and lawlessness on highways roads and elsewhere. He was also supposed to obstruct the collection of illegal cesses by strong measures. He had to keep an eye on the *zamindars* who built fortifications under their charge or tried to renovate old fortifications. The production of guns and ammunition was also to be strictly supervised by him. He also assisted the *amalguzgar* in carrying out the task of revenue administration. The refractory *zamindars* who refused to pay the dues were subdued.

An important office which emerged in Hyderabad by 1760 or earlier was that of the hereditary record keeper (*daftardar*). The *daftardars* were recruited from two Hindu noble families and although they were accountable to the *Diwan* but in course of time they subverted the power of the *diwan*. They kept a record of income and expenditure. They also kept an account of *jagir*, *mansab*, *inam* grants and revenue assessment and issued orders for appointment of revenue contractors and grant of *jagirs*. *Talukdars* were the revenue contractors who played an important role in the administration of the Deccan under the Nizam. They were an independent intermediary group between the *Diwan* and the local officials and operated through the agency of the *daftardars*.

### 22.7.2 Local Administration

The land revenue administration of the Deccan at the local level was controlled by hereditary officers. These were *sardeshmukh*, *sardeshpandia*, *deshmukh*, *deshpande*, *patwari*, *qanungo*, *muqaddam*, *deshkulkarni*, etc. The *qanungo* was the officer who kept the revenue records and he recorded the statistical details of revenue receipts. The information related to *jamabandi* of each village was gathered and recorded by him. The *amin* fixed the revenue demand but the deed containing the *jamabandi* had the signature of the *qanungo* together with the *deshmukh* and *deshpandia*. The *deshmukhs* and *deshpandias* basically held *zamindari* rights but through Mughal *farmans* they had been formally incorporated into the Mughal administration as officers who were responsible for collecting a fixed land revenue and maintaining law and order. The *zamindar* was incharge of collecting revenue and maintaining law and order and thus they were entitled to several perquisites and privileges for the various functions performed by them. An important feature of administration in the Deccan in this period was that several functions were performed by a person (official), which could range from revenue to executive to military. The practice of *ijaradari* seems to have been prevalent since there is reference to the word *ijara* (contract) in the documents of this period. A unique characteristic of the administrative system was that the appointment to certain offices (*deshkulkarni*, *muqaddam* etc.) could be obtained through the payment of *peshkash*.

### 22.7.3 Nobility

The nobles who were given *mansabs* by Nizam emerged as a loyal group and this was reflected in the words Asaf Jahi referred to in the seals of this period. Initially the seals mentioned the names of both the Nizam and the Mughal Emperor, which meant that the nobles were subordinate to both. However, the later seals refer to only Asaf Jahi “which indicates that the supremacy of the government in the Deccan was a foregone conclusion. *Mansabdars* were appointed to various offices viz. that of the *qiladar*. Sometimes the office of the *qiladar* combined either the *faujdari* or the *thanadari*.

Regarding the composition of the nobility Karen Leonard, *Journal of Asian Studies* (1971) p. 569-582, points out “By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century a distinctively Hyderabad nobility tied to the Nizam’s court can be discerned. Some of the men who constituted this nobility were recruited from the Mughal service, from the Maratha service and from the families traditionally associated with the Deccan Sultanates. The first Nizam’s highest *mansabdars* were almost all military commanders. There was no definite and exclusive correlation between *mansab* rank and noble status. Of the ten families consistently considered the *umra-I-azzam* or highest nobles of Hyderabad at least two or three families held only average *mansab* ranks.” The Hyderabad nobility by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century comprised of Shia Muslims and Hindus. Earlier the rulers of samasthan had occupied high position in the nobility, however, later in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century their position was taken by North Indian (kayastha and Punjabi khatri) and Maharashtrian Hindus (Chitpavan Brahmin) who had risen from low administrative positions to the status of *Daftar-I-Diwan* and *Daftar-I-Mal*. Later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Marathas represented one of the ten families holding high noble status. Sunni were few in comparison to Shia and Hindus.

#### **Mansab System**

In the Mughal empire, the status of the nobility was related to the *mansab* (rank). Within this category, *zat* rank (personal) determined the hierarchical status of the nobles. In the classical *mansab* system *zat* rank was generally higher than *sawar* rank. Though in the Mughal system, both *zat* and *sawar* ranks were an integral part of the *mansab* system, but in reality at times the *sawar* figure did not coincide with the number of troops maintained by a *mansabdar*. In Hyderabad, *mansab* system did not provide *sawar* rank to the officials on a uniform pattern. Moreover, military officials possessed higher *sawar* ranks than civil officials. Clerical officials had no *sawar* rank but only *zat* rank. The *zat* rank indicated the hereditary occupation of the clerical official and represented a fixed salary. Promotion for these officials meant extra work and more salary as a remuneration for additional work. The person acquiring a higher administrative position would not necessarily acquire a higher *Zat mansab*. *Zat* rank was not related to a *mansabdar*’s administrative job or salary but to his ritual (ceremonial) rank. The ‘symbolic’ military character of the *mansabdari* system and the accompanying “numerical correlates” were no longer applied in Hyderabad.

*Mansabs* were conferred by the Nizam in the Deccan and a *mansabdar* held office at the pleasure of the Nizam. They were paid in cash or through assignment of *jagirs*. However, there was no fixed rule for increasing or decreasing the *mansab* at any point of time. The orders related to the appointment of *mansabdars* were made at the command of the Nizam and were issued by the *diwan*. *Jagirs* had been transformed into hereditary assignments from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Karen Leonard “if there was a legitimate and competent heir, *jagirs* in Hyderabad stayed in the family of the original grantee.”

### 22.7.4 Revenue Administration

The land revenue administration during the period of Nizam was categorized into two distinct phases (1) of assessment, (2) of actual collection. The assessment of revenue

demand was done and an estimate was arrived at. On the basis of the estimate derived in the period of Aurangzeb the assessment was done by the Nizam. Thus the assessment carried out on the basis of a fixed previous years estimate (standard assessment) provided the basis of the land revenue administrative of Nizam. Since the standard assessment was not a very reliable method of assessing the demand therefore to avoid problems related to its becoming outdated and inflation, revenue was later assessed every year taking into account the actual revenue receipts and balance.

### System of Land Revenue Assessment

When Murshid Quli Khan was *diwan* of a Deccan province he laid the foundation of the system of measurement for the revenue assessment of the Deccan. The rate of every crop was identified and the revenue rate per *bigha* was determined on the basis of the prices. The method of crop-sharing also existed in the Deccan. The *zamindars* were taken into confidence while making the revenue assessment.

### Various Taxes

Various taxes were exacted by the Nizam in the Deccan. These can be put into two broad categories. (1) *Mal* and (2) *Wujuhat*. The *wujuhat* can be further divided into two groups (1) *jihat* (2) *sair-i-jihat*. *Mal* was the tax levied on the cultivated land. *Jihat* were the levies exacted to maintain the revenue machinery employed for assessment purposes. *Sair-i-jihat* were the cesses obtained by taxing markets and trade. The government gave irrigation facility (water tanks or reservoirs) to the villages (cultivators) and for this it charged an irrigation tax (*dasband*). In case the water tanks were privately owned government paid a charge for utilising this service.

### Methods of Land Revenue Collection

During the Nizam's period revenue collection was done in two ways: either directly through the officials (*amils*) or by revenue farming. However, for collection of revenue from *khalisa* lands *karoris* were deputed. Revenue farming was practiced in *khalisa* or *jagir*.

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## 22.8 THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW *SUBEDARI*: AWADH

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The disintegration of Mughal power led to the emergence of several regional states which played a crucial role in the new political milieu of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Let us trace the history of Awadh during the Mughal period. Abul Fazl refers to the *suba* of Awadh in 1594: "Its length from the *sarkar* of Gorakhpur to Kanauj is 135 *kos* (270 miles). Its breadth from the northern mountains to... the *subah* of Allahabad is 115 *kos* (230 miles). To the east is Bihar to the north, the mountains, to the south, Manikpur; and to the west, Kanauj. Its climate is good... Its principal streams are Sarju, the Gogra, the Sai and the Gumti... Agriculture is in a flourishing state, especially rice of the kinds called *sukhdas*, *madkhar* and *jhanwah*, which for whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness are scarcely to be matched... In this *Subah* are five *sarkars* divided into 138 *parganas*." Awadh was divided into five *sarkars* during the Mughal period: Awadh, Gorakhpur, Bahraich, Khairabad and Lucknow.

The classical description of the Mughal *subedar* is given by Abul Fazl in the chapter on *sipahsalar* in the *Ain*. The supreme responsibility of administration of Awadh was entrusted to nazim or governor also called *subedar* whose main duties included the collection of revenue, maintenance of law and order, building and maintaining roads and communication links and providing basic military help to the Mughal emperor whenever required. The *subedar* was subordinate to the emperor and remained in the office at the will of the Emperor. It was a normal practice to transfer *subedars* after every three years. However it seems the theoretical status of the *subedar* could not always



be fully transformed into practical reality. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the *subedar's* control was limited to the province from where he was normally transferred after every 4-5 years. The governor of a large province held a higher *mansab* and normally *subedars* were in direct contact with the Emperor and a system of checks and balances acted as a curb on their power. They were subject to scrutiny by central officials. The other officials at the provincial level were the *diwan* and the *bakshi*. The *diwan* looked after the revenue administration and was answerable to the imperial *diwan*. *Diwan* or chief revenue officer of the province was also appointed by the Emperor and owed his position to the Emperor. His duties in the capacity of the *diwan* included looking after administration of *jagirs*, making charitable grants, controlling the treasury and mint and also adjudicating disputes in revenue courts. He was also in charge of disbursing the payments to the imperial officers, expansion of cultivation and dispatching the reports related to the *subah* to the imperial *diwan*. The *bakshi* was responsible for branding of horses and verification of cavalry. He was subordinate to the Mir *Bakshi* at the center. In fact the position of the *diwan* was almost at par with the governor and acted as a restraint on his power. The *faujdar*s, *amils*, *diwans* and *waqainigars* (intelligence officers) were not appointed by the governor. The governor could not take major decisions (eg. regarding military campaigns) without the consent of the center.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the power configuration in the provinces underwent a change and this was reflected in the change in the status of the governor. A new type of provincial administration emerged in different states which was shaped by the political activities at the court and the increase in the governor's power in the provinces. During Bahadur Shah's reign the governor of Awadh Chin Qilich Khan (Nizam-ul-mulk) consolidated his position by acquiring a number of *faujdaris* in and outside the province. He also tried to increase his power by getting a higher *mansab*. However the above mentioned privileges did not mean that Chin Qilich Khan's (Nizam-ul-mulk) power in the *subedari* was now supreme. In fact he was able to obtain privileges because he was the leader of an important group (Turani group) at the center. In the province his power was kept in check by the *diwan* who belonged to the opposite faction (Irani faction). Muhammad Amin Khan succeeded him as *subedar* but he turned out to be an absentee *subedar* which increased the problems in the provincial administration.

### New *Subedari*

The precedent of special privileges given to the *subedar* of Awadh under Chin Qilich Khan became a permanent feature of Awadh *subedari* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the position of the governor in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was transformed. Amin Khan's successors Qilich Muhammad Khan and Sarbuland Khan were able to combine governorship of Awadh with more than one *faujdar*. The emperor bestowed additional power on the governor to quell the uprising of the *zamindars*. However the Chhabele Ram (1714-15) tried to augment his power by taking advantage of the dissensions and the divisions at the court. The clash between the Emperor (Farrukhsiyar) and *Wazir* (Sayid brother) allowed the governor to get his close associate appointed as provincial *diwan*. This depicts the loosening of centre's authority over the province since the provincial *diwan* had always acted as a curb on the power of the governor. The governor wished to augment his power by combining the two *subedaris* (of Awadh and Allahabd) and a few *faujdaris*. However imperial consent could not be obtained. During the subsequent period there was rift between the governor Muzzaffar Ali Khan and the *diwan* regarding the *sair* (taxes other than land revenue) viz. on trade etc. of the *paibaqi* (land to be assigned in *jagir*) areas in 1716. The governor thus was trying to encroach upon the power of the *diwan*. At the same time the *diwan* by acquiring *faujdar* rights was arrogating too much power for himself, which was not appreciated by the governor.

These examples are clear illustrations of the fact that there was conflict between the governor and *diwan* over administrative rights and power and also shows that the interests of the central and the provincial authority never coincided. Centre's aim was to keep in check the power of provincial authorities whereas the latter wished to acquire



more administrative rights and privileges. In fact the idea of the new *wizarat* of Sayid Abdullah Khan, the *wazir* of Farrukhsiyar was also not in conformity with the emergence of the new *subedari*. The *wazir* tried to restrict the power of the governor since any augmentation of his power was a threat to the centre. The next governor was Aziz Khan Chaghta who was the leader of the Afghans of Shahabad. The *diwan* was made the deputy *subedar* of the province. This was meant to act as a restraint on the authority of the *subedar* who was not allied to the new *wizarat*. The *wazir*'s aim was to prevent the provincial administration from becoming strong at the cost of the centre. The growth of the new *subedari* was in fact a product of the circumstances prevailing in the province at that time i.e. conflict among the various power groups in the provinces and also between center and provinces. The activities of the *wazir* to weaken the power of provincial governor and attempts to sap his energies by engaging him in conflict with the provincial *diwan* could not have helped in strengthening imperial power. The *wazir* was merely guided by the narrow aim of safeguarding the interests of a section of nobility to maintain his power.

Aziz was replaced by the *wazir* due to fear of threat to his power. The governorship went to two of the *wazir*'s close associates Khan Zaman and Mahabat Khan (December 1717 – February 1718) (February 1718). In 1719 Muhammad *Amin* Khan was appointed governor of Awadh. However he did not take charge of the governorship as directed by the imperial centre. He was an aspirant for the *wizarat* and had conspired against the *wazir*. Earlier too Awadh had been subject to absentee governorship in 1718. All these developments show that there was a sharp divide between the emperor and the nobility and between the center and the provinces. This naturally had its implications in the form of strained and weakened centre – province relationship. In 1719 the governor of Allahabad (Giridhar Bahadur, nephew of Chhable Ram) rebelled against the Sayyids. Although he surrendered to the imperial power but on his own terms. The fort of Allahabad was handed over to the imperial authorities but he was granted the governorship of Awadh together with the office of *diwan* and *faujdari* of the province. The fort of Allahabad was of strategic importance since it was located on the road which was used for the transport of remittances from Bengal to imperial court. The governor of Allahabad in return for the surrender of the fort was able to wrest or secure the *subedari* of Awadh. The chief features of the new *subedari* were; extensive tenure, absolute power in financial administration and military sphere. This new trend of combining of *subedari* and *faujdari* had emerged in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century. This phenomenon was a response to the *zamindars* disturbances in this period. As a measure of administrative convenience and security and stability *faujdaris* were jointly held with the *subedaris* or were granted to the close associates of the governor. The assumption of the office of *diwan* by the *subedar* was intended to keep an eye on the grant of *jagirs* and revenue resources of the province. In this period the *jagirdars* had forcibly acquired *faujdari* rights over their *jagirs*. This meant the existence of dual authority as the imperial *faujdar*'s position was weakened. In those circumstances it was necessary for the governor to combine the offices of *faujdar* and *diwan* with *subedari* to ensure administrative stability. In contrast to Bengal where the *diwan* created a new type of provincial administrative system, in Awadh the governor was responsible for redefining centre – province relationships. In Bengal the revenue administration was reorganised and the *diwan*'s unfettered powers were a consequence of this process. A large number of *jagirs* were converted into *khalisa* and many were transferred to Orissa. In Awadh the situation was entirely different. Most of the province was assigned in *jagir*. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the proportion of *jagir* to *khalisa* was increasing. The *khalisa* continued to decline and its *jama* had fallen sharply.

In Awadh the difficulties in the provincial administration were mainly concerned with *jagir* administration. The governor of Awadh was probably not in favour of bringing land under *khalisa* since these lands were controlled by the *karoris* (*khalisa* officials) who mainly belonged to the group of local *shaikhzadas* who consistently opposed the power of the governor or *faujdar*. Since the revenue administration of Awadh was

largely based on collection from the *jagirs* of *mansabdars* which was theoretically under the charge of provincial *diwan* but the proper functioning of the *jagir* administration was dependent on the effectiveness of the governor's power to ensure stability in the province. Theoretically Tankwah *jagir* could not be assigned without the seal and signature of either the Emperor or the governor. In the case of slackening of imperial authority the governor took contract of *jagirs* of outsiders in his province. Thus in such cases the governor's power was absolute.

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## 22.9 THE MUGHAL ADMINISTRATION IN AWADH 1707-1722

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The *zamindars* represented the group which appropriated the agrarian produce through the mechanism of the hierarchical pattern of land rights which existed in the rural areas. They were the local rural magnates and ruling class. The term *zamindars* as described in the Mughal sources refers to a diverse category of superior rural classes which included even the rajas who had independent territories under their control. Thus, this is the blanket term for those holding superior rights over the produce of the land.

With the emergence of a unified monolithic administrative and economic structure under the Mughals the *zamindars* also slowly got assimilated into it and both were mutually dependent upon each other. Although the *zamindars* as the traditional holders of land rights had been incorporated into the Mughal local administrative machinery however at the slightest opportunity they were willing to change loyalty as long as their hereditary rights were left undisturbed. The *zamindars* remained faithful to the Mughals till such time that their interests were safe. However, the emergence of regions within the Mughal system as powerful political and economic entities brought forth conflicts within the state system with the regional elements aspiring for greater power and autonomy.

### 22.9.1 The *Zamindar* Rebellions

In the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Awadh was turbulent and unmanageable. A very significant portion of the province witnessed armed defiance to Mughal authority by the *zamindars*. The sources of the period refer to the problems faced by the Mughal government in administering the province. However, it appears that though the *zamindars* uprisings were posing a threat but their scale and dimensions were not so vast. Until 1712 many *zamindars* were still among the supporters of the Mughal state. The *zamindaris* in Awadh were predominantly held by Rajput clans. The *Ain-I-Akbari* refers to Muslims including Afghans, Brahmin and other castes as *zamindars* in many *parganas*. In some *parganas* the Rajputs and Afghans were the main opponents whereas in other areas, the different castes unitedly led the banner of revolt. Among the important rebellious *zamindars* were the *zamindars* of Baiswara, Gaur of *parganas* of Sadarpur, Laharpur and Sandi and the Kanhpurias of *pargana* Ibrahimabad. The *taluqdars* of *pargana* Bar in Baiswara established a fortress and organised armed resistance to Mughal authority in 1714 but it was crushed. Other instances which can be gleaned from the sources inform us that *zamindars* resisted the payment of revenue to the *jagirdars* which was the major cause of concern to Mughal authority. The defiance and armed opposition of Afghan *zamindars* of *sarkar* Lucknow was also a serious threat to Mughal power. Therefore the Mughals were compelled to appoint capable military leaders to Awadh's governorship and the post of *naib subedar* was also created as part of the effort to curb the strength of the mutinous elements by improving the military power of the Mughals vis-à-vis the local *zamindars*. Though the Mughals were militarily in an advantageous position, but their success against the rebels was not secure and permanent. The Mughals were unable to establish peace and stability in the province. The power of the *zamindars* was based on their social affiliation with the groups which they had organised against the Mughals. The *zamindars* were also familiar with the topography of the regions due to the local origins and thus the

Mughals found it difficult to match their strength in the province. They not only formed organised resistance to the Mughals but they also tried to use their military prowess to harass the peasants and revenue grantees by resorting to illegal and forceable exactions. There are instances which show that within the *zamindar* category too there were internal conflicts. The opposition and clash among the various rural groups was a danger to the entire edifice of the region and the imperial administration. At times one group of *zamindars* allied with the imperial power against the other group. The center utilised one group of *zamindars* as an effective tool for countering other seditious groups. The areas of Awadh which were plagued with *zamindar* rebellions were the southern part of *sarkar* Khairabad and *sarkar* Lucknow (this was the region of Bias and other Rajputs). This region was located on the route which linked it up with important trading centres across the Ganga. This area was rich in agriculture too. Bias Rajputs got transformed into merchants and small towns of this period reveal the importance of commercial and monetary factors. The establishment of three *faujdaris* in this area indicate its importance in this period.

In the rural areas the *zamindars* tried to muster armed groups of kin and mercenaries (*Sipah-o-zamiat*) and built fortresses (*Ihdas-i-qila*) to challenge Mughal power. Those *zamindar* castes rose in rebellion against the state who were not given a high place in the hierarchy of *zamindars* in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Mughal state in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had tried to create conditions (money, economy, land market) for marginalising the kin and clan ties of local power groups. However, this policy didn't work in certain areas and *zamindars* emerged as the rivals of Mughal state. However, all groups within the rural areas, could not combine together against the Mughals. The emergence of various *talukdaris* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows that provincial administration was unable to cope with the problem of *zamindar* rebellions. There were various factors responsible such as lack of coordination between governor and *diwan* or amongst governors themselves.

### 22.9.2 *Madad-i-mash* Grant Holders

*Madad-i-mash* grants were given to scholars, saints, poor, and persons of high lineage (*aimmadars*). The impact of this kind of revenue assignment was tremendous and the revenue of large territories (at times 2 or 3 *parganas*) was alienated in *suyurghal* (*madad-i-mash*). These holders became wealthy enough to buy *zamindaris* in course of time. This process began in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and got strengthened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some *madad-i-mash* holders got engaged in revenue farming and money lending. The local *sadr* and *mutawalli* were responsible to keep a record of these grants as deputies of the central government but they had to keep the *aimmadars* in good humour to continue in office. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the position of *sadr* and *qazi* had become patrimonial. Hereditary possession of grants was a great benefit both in economic and social terms. The *ulema* being the religious intelligentsia was indispensable because the legal system was their preserve. Though the state was not theocratic but administrative regulations did require the sanction and legitimacy of the *ulema* who were also the moral censors of the society. *Madad-i-mash* grants amounted to 1.8 and 5.4% of the total revenue. They were not the property of the holder but were given by the state on loan. It was granted by the emperor or the noble from his *jagir* and it gave the grantee control over the revenue realised from the grant. The *suyurghal* administration needed reorganisation. However, in Shahjahan and Aurangzeb's time the *madad-i-mash* holders were firmly entrenched in their holdings which were made completely hereditary. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century the *madad-i-mash* holders came into clash with the *zamindars* since they now indulged in amassing wealth through purchase of *zamindaris* and the attempts of the local officials to impose levies on their tax-free assignments was also discouraged by the central authorities.

Although the *madad-i-mash* had become hereditary (by Aurangzeb's order of 1690) but they did not grant ownership rights but was simply given by the state on a loan basis

(*ariyat*). These assignments were privileges which infringed upon the perquisites of the *zamindars* (Hindu or Muslim) in the region. There were several instances when *zamindars* showed their resentment towards the *madad-i-mash* holders and engaged in clashes with them. Both the *zamindars* and *madad-i-mash* holders derived benefit from the peasant's surplus and so their interests were bound to come into conflict. The Mughal government tried to control the rebellious *zamindars* and countered them by aligning with a group of loyal *zamindars*.

### 22.9.3 Loyal Zamindars

The central government tried to strengthen its hold over the provinces by establishing new loyal *zamindaris* and attempted to bring about reforms in *jagir* administration. This policy was adopted by the Mughal rulers especially Aurangzeb to deal with the problem of rebellion by *zamindar* castes who had developed deep rooted interest in the regions and their areas of influence were converted into their bastions due to the power exercised by them. In *pargana* Unnao, where the Bais Rajputs dominated, it was the policy of central government to provide *zamindaris* to Sayids in order to curb the power of the Bais Rajputs and to consolidate the power of the local officials by infusing loyal elements into *zamindaris*. This administrative measure of Aurangzeb was not guided by his religious orthodoxy. It seems that the encouragement given to Sayids and the grant of *zamindaris* to them did not result in administrative efficiency. Thus the state was instrumental in promoting the establishment of new *zamindaris* through *inam* or through purchase. In the areas which were affected by *zamindar* turbulence, certain groups were given encouragement to counter the rebellious elements. However, this practice did not prove advantageous since the outsiders could be of little help when the provincial officials were engaged in factional fighting. The recalcitrant *zamindars* had traditional social links in the region and the peasants allied with the older *zamindars* against the new elements.

### 23.9.4 Changes in Jagir Administration

The challenges posed by the *zamindars* and the emergence of the *madad-i-mash* holders as a new influential group brought about disruption of the classical *jagir* system in operation. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century the *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* and long term *jagirs* emerged to deal with the crisis in *jagir* administration. The *jagirdars* were unable to enforce their authority to collect revenue from the regions due to the defiance of local groups. It is well known that the *jagir* was allotted in the area with which the allottee had no links. The transfer of *jagir* was also a measure to ensure that corruption did not creep into the *jagir* system. The *watan jagirs* and *altamgha jagirs* were different in nature. The *watan jagirs* were granted to *zamindars* to incorporate them into the Mughal administrative system through the mechanism of *mansab*. Their ancestral domains became their *watan jagirs* and they got the opportunity to rise in social and administrative position through this mechanism. Jahangir tried to placate the non-*zamindars* by giving them *altamgha jagirs* for life. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the *jagir-I-mahal-I-watan* was granted not only to *zamindars* but also to non-*zamindars* in areas which were close to their native place. Sometimes these *jagirs* constituted the whole province.

In order to deal with the *zamindar* rebellions the *jagirdars* had to muster their own resources. The centre was not in a position to help the local officials and therefore the weakening of central authority meant consolidation of the power of local groups. In this situation the rebel infested province could secede from the centre. At times even the *jagirdars* could join hands with the rebel *zamindars*. Since the *jagirdar* represented central power in the province, therefore, to strengthen his position *mansabs* were given to men of his *biradari* (clan) which strengthened the *jagirdars* social connections in the region.

The Indian Muslims emerged as an important section of the Mughal nobility at the court. They were encouraged and were used to counter the *khanzads* (those related



to the royal house). *Shaikhzadas* preferred to have the *jagirs* in their native place. The problems in the realisation of revenue from districts which were not their homelands gave further legitimacy to their view point. The policy of transfer was a deterrent in so far as the *jagirdar's* desire for the growth of the region was concerned. The checks and balances imposed on the *jagirdar's* power in the form of local officials appointed by the centre prevented the misuse of power by the *jagirdars*. In a situation of weakening of the power of the centre the *jagirdars* and *zamindars* became supreme in the region and this led to agrarian distress due to excessive exploitation of the peasantry.

Thus, the *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* created to restore central authority in the rebellion torn regions instead added further to imperial weakening since the *jagirdars* as administrators proved ineffective. The practice of granting *jagirs* as life long assignments had been applied to *jagir-i-mahal-i-watan* which had also acquired hereditary traits. This feature was now also applied to ordinary *jagirs* in the northern provinces. The emergence of permanent and hereditary *jagirs* shows that the central authority was no longer powerful and the regions were now emerging as strong units. Thus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the beginning of the process of administrative decentralisation the regional elements were strengthened.

### Chief Characteristics of Mughal Administration in Awadh

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century agricultural economy became monetised. But in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the revenue collection as also various government offices were organised on monetary terms. *Faujdari* and even the *subedari* were leased out and the *mahajans* acted as the guarantors in these cases. The tendency to farm out the *jagirs* brought into play various forces such as traders, moneylenders, and moneychangers. *Ijara* (revenue farming) was used as a device for revenue collection in 17<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the officials of Aurangzeb were resorting to *ijaradari* extensively. However, in spite of Aurangzeb's efforts to curb it the practice continued unabated but it was limited to provincial revenue officials. During the reign of Farrukh Siyar, *ijara* was officially legitimised and was bestowed even to non-revenue officials (*faujdar*s). In the *jagir* system the transfer criteria was abandoned and the long tenure or life long *jagir* came into being along with the permanent *ijara*. Thus, due to lack of a system of monitoring, *ijara* acquired hereditary characteristics.

The weakening of central authority coincided with the *zamindar* rebellions in the province and factional strife at the court. The clash between centre and province was a long drawn process and it spelt doom for the Mughal power. The *zamindars* though officially regarded as representatives of the state in the region gave a hard blow to the Mughal system in the provinces. The *madad-i-mash* holders were the Muslim theologians who had been granted privileges by the state (they represented the group which legitimised state power through religious ideology). This group tried to extend its power by encroaching upon other *zamindaris* which was disliked by other social groups (*zamindars*). Thus due to their rising aspirations they came into conflict with the other powerful groups in the region.

The long term or life long *jagirs* developed as a response to the problems faced by the *jagirdars* in realizing revenue from the region and also the difficulties faced while taking over their new assignments in cases of transfer. The weakening of central control also got reflected in the ineffectiveness of the *faujdar* and other officials. It was felt that unless local links were developed and local help sought revenue collection would not be forthcoming and for ensuring this *jagirs* would have to be held on a long term basis in the native place (*watan*) of the *jagirdar*.

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## 22.10 NAWABI RULE IN AWADH – 1722-54

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The new *subedar* of Awadh Burhan-ul-mulk took up his new assignment in 1722. Several changes were initiated under him and later under Safdarjung especially in *jagir*

administration, *faujdari* administration and *ijara* which had tremendous impact on provincial government's relations with the vast motley of social groups (*madad-i-mash* holders, Afghan and Hindu *zamindars*, *Sheikhzadas* etc.) in the province. Although the *zamindars* posed a threat to the imperial government but they were themselves victims of exploitation by *jagirdars* and *ijaradars* whose power was unchecked.

### 22.10.1 Jagir Administration

The *amil's* were the local officials who were the representatives of the Imperial government in the provinces. They were the agents of the *jagirdars* and played an important role in *jagir* administration. The *jagirdars* assisted by *amils* also acted as a curb on the power of the *subedar*. In Awadh the *amils* were sometimes of local origin and they were able to stay in the region for long duration even though the *jagirdar* got transferred. During this period they were transformed into revenue farmers and made advance payment to the *jagirdar* from the revenue, which they would collect from the region while they kept a part for themselves. The *subedar* of Awadh, Burhan-ul-mulk realized that the local landed magnates and *amils* would not approve of the administrative reforms, which he wished to introduce in the *jagir* system (this implied fresh assessment of revenue). He therefore adopted the policy of placing the *amils* directly under his control and assigning a part of the revenue of *jagir* for the *amil's* services separately. This measure helped in curbing and crushing the power of the *jagirdars*. The *amils* and *amins* who had earlier been appointed by the emperor were now directly appointed by the governor. The local hereditary officials (*chaudharis* and *qanungoes*) were now accountable to the *amil* and not to the *jagirdar*. The *jagirdar's* powers were thus appropriated by the governor.

The *amil's* function was to collect the revenue from the *jagir* and also *peshkash* from the *jagirdar* and disburse it and surplus amount was to be kept by the *amil's* office. These measures were appreciated by small *jagirdars* who adopted *ijaradari* to ensure proper revenue collection but the bigger *jagirdars* considered the new measures undesirable. The policy of Burhan-ul-mulk was aimed at weakening the power of the *jagirdars* and *mansabdars* who were serving outside the province. Although Burhan-ul-mulk tried to do away with the *jagir* system but he was unsuccessful. Many discrepancies had crept into the *jagir* system (unlawful levies, revenue farming etc.). His successor Safdarjung, did succeed to some extent in reducing the number of *jagirs*.

The efforts of Burhan-ul-mulk, to ensure smooth flow of revenue, entailed the imposition of a cess as a payment for carrying out his revenue collection duty (through *jagirdars* and *amils*). Thus he was able to strengthen his position, which made him bolder to attempt to seek independence from the centre and attempt to dismantle the classical *jagir* system which was the foundation of Mughal power.

### 22.10.2 Faujdari Administration

In the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there existed eight *faujdaris* in Awadh. By 1722, the *faujdaris* came to be supervised by the governor. The *faujdar*s were appointed and removed at the will and desire of the governor. The *faujdar* was the assistant of the *subedar* in the *sarkar* and *chakla*. However, in this period the *Faujdari* had been transformed. It combined the matters related to revenue together with the legal aspects. The *faujdar* was now also known as *nazim* or *naib*. The office of *Faujdar* and local (*pargana* level) official (*qanungos*) were combined at times. Sometimes this office was also given on *ijara* (contract). Thus the classical Mughal *faujdar* (responsible for maintaining law and order) got metamorphosed and at the *sarkar* level this office was referred to by different nomenclature viz. *nizamat*, *niyabat*.

### 22.10.3 Role of Zamindars

Burhan-ul-mulk tried to bring the Baiswara *zamindars* under his close scrutiny and after assessing the situation he imposed an increased revenue demand on them since he



found them withholding payments to the central treasury. The fruits of economic prosperity of Awadh during this period were being monopolised by the *zamindars* at the cost of the peasants and the center. He also tried to win over *zamindars* who could prove useful to him by giving them *faujdari* rights, additional territories etc. The non-Rajput elements (*chaudharis and qanungoes*) were also patronised to counter the Rajputs. The concessions given by Burhan-ul-mulk to the powerful *zamindars* helped him in consolidating his power in Awadh. Some small *zamindars* of Awadh also held *mansabs*. However, these intermediary *zamindars* could not become rajas or chiefs.

Safdarjung entered into a new agreement with older big *zamindars*. This was in some cases called *taahhud* which meant that the *zamindar* had to give a specific sum from the territory leased out to him. This contract was sometimes also extended to local officials. The agreement carried with it some duties related to maintenance of law and order and troops. The governor's powers had been greatly enhanced since the office of the *diwan* and the administration of *jagirs* was brought directly under his supervision. The province of Awadh was virtually administered by the governor on lease and he further leased out the administrative duties and perquisites associated with them to *zamindars* and officials. The governor was allowed to function independently in the province provided he made regular payment to the centre. The contractual system adopted at the provincial level suggests that a well developed monetary system must have been operational. It seems that some of the *ijaradars* might have acted as money lenders (*mahajans*) and merchants. It appears that the duration and specially the amount payable in the context of *ijara* was at times subject to revision. These *ijaras* have also been described as *hukumat* and *nizamat*.

#### 22.10.4 Role of *Madad-i-mash* Holders

Burhan-ul-mulk's policy was aimed at improvising the administration of the province. To implement this policy he tried to resume the grants of *madad-i-mash* holders and to bring them under the purview of assessment. His strict measures to increase revenue collection led to rise in the collections. The *madad-i-mash* holders had also acquired *zamindaris*. They opposed the new measures of the governor and mobilised the peasants and *Shaikhzadas* (Indian Muslim nobles in imperial service) against the governor. The governor of Awadh also tried to subdue the *zamindars* either through diplomacy or force. By 1730 this mission was by and large achieved and with the increase in revenue collection, *madad-i-mash* grantees were left undisturbed and the grants were confirmed. The process of enquiry in the *madad-i-mash* grants which had started since 1722 continued in this period and now it was not regarded as a grant on loan but came to be included in the category of *zamindari* and *milkiyat* since these grants had now been subjected to light assessment.

On the basis of being transformed from revenue free grants to grants on which a very small levy was imposed, these grants acquired the characteristics of *zamindari*. The *zamindars* had resented the privileges of the *madad-i-mash* holders. The new measures of imposing levies on *madad-i-mash* was welcomed by the *zamindars*. The *madad-i-mash* grantees could also be appeased since the grants could now be treated at par with *zamindaris*.

#### Other Local Groups

The local groups in Awadh especially the *Shaikhzadas* (Indian Muslims) were incorporated into the provincial administration (including army) during Burhan-ul-mulk's period. The Awadhi communities in imperial service shifted to provincial administration with the weakening of central power and the realisation that there were very few avenues for advancement at the centre. Burhan-ul-mulk also appointed Hindus in his administration. The Hindu chiefs of Awadh were given *mansabs* and were appointed as local and provincial officials (*qanungos, chaudharis, faujdar* and *diwan*).

## Features of Nawabi Rule

It seems that the *subedar* of Awadh continued to depend on the classical Mughal administrative system for governance. However a few changes were introduced specially in the field of *jagir* administration. The central agents posted in *jagirs* were now directly accountable to the governor. Safdarjung was able to drastically reduce the number of *jagirs* assigned to *jagirdars*. The institution of *faujdari* also underwent transformation. The territorial jurisdiction of *faujdar* was now confined to *pargana* level and in *sarkars* and *chaklas* (group of *parganas*) the *nazims* or *naibs* emerged as an alternative source of authority who exercised control over fiscal and military administration. The decline of *faujdari* should be seen in the context of the development of *ijaradari* (which combined fiscal and administrative authority). The policy of giving patronage to big and older *zamindars* paid rich dividends. The *subedars* entered into an agreement with powerful *zamindars* to pay a fixed sum annually and this contract also placed upon them administrative and military responsibility and power. The emergence of *talukdaris* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be traced to this policy. The *madad-i-mash* grantees and *shaikhzadas* who were related to them through kin ties constituted an important local force. The *subedar* of Awadh followed a policy of conciliation towards these groups.

Burhan-ul-mulk had been transferred to Malwa but he came to Awadh in defiance of imperial order. In 1736 Burhan-ul-mulk had bought the *subedari* of Allahabd by paying *peshkash* (tribute). After Burhan-ul-mulk his successor (his nephew Safdar Jang) sought confirmation of the *subedari* of Awadh from the emperor but regarded it as inheritance. Safdar Jang gave two crores of Rupees from the provincial funds as *peshkash* for obtaining the *subedari* in his home country for life. After his death Burhan-ul-mulk's *jagirs* outside Awadh were resumed and were not inherited by Safdar Jang. However, Safdar Jang seized (took over) the imperial right of bestowing titles and mansabs. The nominal consent of the emperor was however sought though the emperor's advice could be disregarded if it was not acceptable to the governor. *Jagirs* were now granted and resumed by the governor and the Emperor's consent was a formality.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Awadh witnessed turmoil, which reflected the aspirations of local groups to have a share in political power. The *subedar* of Awadh took advantage of the weakening of central authority, which created conducive conditions for pursuing the ambition to emerge as an independent leader of the province acting in collusion with the local power brokers.

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## 22.11 SUMMARY

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We have analysed the rise of successor states. Bengal gained autonomy under the diwan appointed by Aurangzeb, Murshid Quli Khan. Bengal had a special position as a Mughal province with a low jama and few jagirs. Large *zamindaris* and practice of *ijaradari* came into existence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a network of collaboration developed between the *Nawabs*, bankers and the *zamindars*. In the Deccan the nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah who was made *subedar* by the Emperor laid the foundation of the independent state of Hyderabad. The administrative system was modeled on the Mughal pattern however the classical *mansab* and *jagir* system underwent a transformation. The composition of nobility changed under the Nizam. Offices like *daftardar* and contractual offices like *talukdar* emerged. *Ijaradari* also existed. In Awadh Burhan-ul-mulk established the new *Nawabi*. Several changes were introduced in the *jagir* and *faujdari* administration. *Ijaradari* was practiced. *Talukdaris* also emerged. The autonomy attained by these states was reflected in the steps taken by the rulers: viz. appointment of *faujdar*s, *Qiladars*, *diwan*, conferment of *mansab/jagir* without consulting the Emperor. Initially though they continued to pay nominal suzerainty to the Emperor, however, later this too was withdrawn.

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## 22.12 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the administrative measures of Murshid Quli Khan which laid the foundation of independent Bengal.
- 2) Analyse the features of administration during Nawabi rule in Awadh.

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## UNIT 23 IDEOLOGIES OF THE RAJ

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### Structure

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 The Orientalist Images: The Genesis of the Ideology of Empire
- 23.3 Evangelicalism and The Civilising Mission
- 23.4 The Utilitarian Scale of 'Happiness'
- 23.5 The Romantic Spell
- 23.6 The Liberal Project: Re-making India as the Replica of Britain
- 23.7 Positivism as a Tool of Knowing the Colonial Society
- 23.8 Humanism and the Colonial World
- 23.9 Summary
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- 23.11 Exercises

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### 23.1 INTRODUCTION

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The process of territorial acquisition in India by a body of British merchants had transformed the East India Company into a ruling power. The resultant colonial encounter was not a simple process as a large number of indigenous rulers lost their power. At the same time, the cultural elements present in the coloniser's society permeated the recipient colonial society in the context of a superordinate-subordinate relation. The colonisers possessed superior technology and military force, which could be used to crush any form of opposition. However, the sordid and seamy side of colonialism necessitated that an ideological justification of the colonial rule also be provided. The co-relation between ideology and policy-making had further complications because of the size and diversity of India. Political exigencies and the fact that the British preferred to utilise their energies in gathering information than immediately pursuing their grand designs of political domination added to the complications. In this Unit, an attempt has been made to investigate the direct and indirect ways in which the imperial ideologies influenced the Indian political scene.

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### 23.2 THE ORIENTALIST IMAGES: THE GENESIS OF THE IDEOLOGY OF EMPIRE

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The 'East' or 'Orient' was described in the medieval Christian iconography as an exotic land of miracles and monsters. The rationalist and secular conceptions of Enlightenment modified these images of the 'East' as the land of monsters and demons. But still these lands and people were perceived as different, from a secular category of development and civilisation. They were seen as 'inferior' and 'culturally backward' as compared to the European societies. This perception became the basis of categorising the colonisers as well as their colonial subjects. According to Thomas R. Metcalf, "As the British endeavoured to define themselves as 'British', and thus 'not Indians', they had to make of the Indian whatever they chose not to make of themselves" (*The New Cambridge History of India: Ideologies of the Raj*). Thus, the British defined themselves as honest, laborious, masculine, rational and the enlightened

ones. As a natural corollary Indians were depicted as deceitful, lazy, feminine, irrational, superstitious and so on. By and large, these early orientalist images persisted for long. Yet, to govern and rule such a different land and its people required sufficient knowledge of the colonial society. As a result, Warren Hastings directed considerable energies and resources towards building such institutions of learning that would help in understanding India's past. He believed that such knowledge would be very useful to the needs of the colonial state. The aim was to create an orientalist elite competent in Indian languages and responsive to Indian traditions. Motivated by such a vision, orientalist-scholars-cum-administrators like William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, William Carey, H.H. Wilson and James Princep made their contribution in the field of philology, archaeology and history. They 'invented' a golden age and dramatically and metaphorically contrasted it with the degeneration and stagnation of contemporary Indian society, which fostered Sati, female-infanticide, caste – prejudices, idolatry and superstitions of all kinds. This is apparent from what William Jones wrote, "... how degenerate and abased so ever the Hindus may now appear, that in some early age they were splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation and eminent in various knowledges". Learning of indigenous languages – both classical (Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit) and 'Vernaculars' became a prerequisite for gaining knowledge in all other fields. This linguistic competence, according to Bernard S. Cohn, was essential "to issue commands, collect taxes, maintain law and order and to create other forms of knowledge about the people they were ruling. This knowledge was to enable the British to classify, categorise and bound the vast social world that was India so that it could be controlled" (*Colonialism and its Formation of Knowledge*). In short, running the colonial-administration efficiently required a command over indigenous languages and some knowledge of the history and culture of the people. Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784) took a major leap in this direction by translating Indian works and by doing research on Indian society and religion. Some of the early dictionaries, works related to grammar and teaching aids were William Jones' Grammar of the Persian Language (1771), William Carey's grammar of Vernaculars, and Nathaniel Halhed's Grammar of Bengali (1788). John B. Gilchrist, a medical practitioner became professor of Hindustani literature and Languages department at Fort William College.

Hastings's principle of governance was that India should be governed by the Indian principles, particularly in relation to law. William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, Halhed and other legal scholars all shared a suspicion about the integrity of Indian scholars and wished to develop a direct understanding of the canons of authoritative texts. This, they believed, would help in the codification of Indian law and enable the British officials in the task of governing India. Knowledge contained in a Law digest (such as that of Jones, 1798) would effectively, they believed, keep a check on the Indian subordinates and Pundits or Maulavis so that they would not lead the British astray. However, Hindu and Muslim Legal advisors remained attached to the British Indian Courts until the 1860s.

The knowledge of Indian languages facilitated intervention in the social sphere. This is evident from the career of Jonathan Duncan, who had persuaded the Raj Kumars of Benaras to stop female infanticide when he was the Resident there in 1789. Later on he rose to the position of Governor of Bombay (1795-1811) on the basis his linguistic proficiency. The foundation of Fort William College (1800) at Calcutta by Lord Wellesley served the practical task of training and



orienting would-be-administrators. This was done by providing them skills in Indian languages and making them familiar with Indian culture and history in a more concrete fashion. This function was subsequently taken up by the Haileybury College.

The category of 'oriental despotism', the idea of unchecked, absolute power of a despotic emperor, ruling through an administrative elite and supported by the labour of slaves, was used by orientalists to comprehend Indian states of the past. Alexander Dow (*History of Hindustan*, 1770) and Robert Orme (*Government and People of Indostan*, 1753) used such notions to understand pre-colonial Indian state-structures. The British found, paradoxically, implicit justification for their own authoritarian rule in the subcontinent through the use of such analytical categories. The tropical climate, religions of India especially Islam were cited by them as the reasons that had their own formative influence in fostering such despotism. For them "Muslim family structure too represented 'private species of despotism; Muslim rule derived its strength from the sword; and the native Hindus were represented as ineffectual, submissive and effeminate in character." The process of giving coherence to a congeries of religious practices is well marked in J.Z. Holwell's (*Tenets of Gentoos*, 1767) and in Jones' and Colebrooke's description of the Indian belief systems. N.B. Halhed tried to decipher the precise legal prescriptions from the Sanskrit sacred texts with the help of the Brahmin pandits and published them as *A Code of Gentoo Laws*, 1776.

The Orientalists further differentiated India from Europe by their insistence upon the primacy of religion as a pre-eminent marker of Indian identity. Art and architecture were also conceived as being derived from and expressing the religious ethos. Hence we find the conflation of all Ancient art with Hindu or Buddhist category and description of all medieval art as Islamic art. In the field of law also, separate realms of Hindu and Muslim laws were established.

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### 23.3 EVANGELICALISM AND THE CIVILISING MISSION

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In the last decades of the eighteenth century, evangelicalism emerged as a strong Protestant Christian movement in England emphasising improvement in the moral values of the communities in Britain. It coincided with the advancing industrialism and the rise of new middle class in England. Evangelicalism became the moral agency that disciplined rampant individualism and provided 'respectability' with its stress on personal experience and individual reading of the gospel. Evangelicalism as a faith relied upon individual resurrection, a process of conversion, a kind of 're-birth', instead of depending on the agency of priests and performance of religious rites. The experience of being saved from sin was to be one of sudden illumination. They also emphasised on work, frugality, and perseverance as concrete means of furthering the kingdom of God on earth. Evangelicalism also laid stress on education as a pre-requisite for conversion and salvation because the knowledge of God was possible only through individual reading of the revealed word or the Bible.

John Shore and Charles Grant, who were part of the East India Company's establishment in India, after their return to England, founded the Clapham sect along with Wilberforce, Zachery, Macaulay, Henry Thorton and John Venn. It

**Colonisation (Part II)** had great influence on the Evangelical opinion. The Clapham sect demanded the abolition of slave trade and opening of India to missionary enterprise. Some Evangelical missionaries such as David Brown, Claudius Buchanan, Henry Martyn and Thomas Thompson were sent to India. A large measure of freedom for missionary activity was provided in the Charter Act of 1813. The Evangelical missionaries demanded legal protection for Christian converts, the abolition of Sati and female – infanticide. They also demanded that British government in India should not support Hindu and Muslim shrines.

Charles Grant's treatise entitled *Observations On the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with respect to Morals; and on the Means of Improving it*, was a severe condemnation of Indian society and culture, which was seen as superstitious, barbaric and despotic. He believed that mere legislation would be powerless to change human character. Grant's remedy for the ills of India was the liberation of Indians from the tyranny of Brahmanical priesthood. This could be achieved by a process of "Evangelicalising or proselytising" through education. He believed that civilising the 'barbarians' would also bring about their material prosperity, which will, in turn, serve the original British design of extension of commerce. The Evangelicals were generally hostile to Indian religions and culture. This is apparent from Wilberforce's speech on June 22, 1813 in the British parliament: "The Hindu divinities were absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination." (Quoted in Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p.31) The Serampore missionaries, as cited by Kopf (*British Orientalism*, p. 53) also wanted to end "the current degeneration" of Indian society but they wanted to do it quietly, respecting Indian traditions through "cultivation of friendship."

The Evangelicals were not alone in devaluing Indian languages, customs, sentiments and religions. The Liberals and Utilitarians also shared the belief of the need for the upliftment of the Indians. A powerful alliance of free trade, other ideological currents and Christianity all stood together for an ultimate transformation of Indian society in the image and likeness of England. To 'civilise' and 'improve' the 'half-devil' and 'half-child' Indian, i.e., to anglicise Indian society, it was felt, would serve the colonial interests better in the country. Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis did not intend to interfere in the religious traditions of the Indians. However, Evangelicals took a lead in the campaign against Sati and they exposed its horrors to force the British in India to support Evangelicalism. The suppression of the 'barbaric' and 'inhuman' practice of Sati could make an affirmation of British superiority, and with it, that of Christian civilisation. The ideological basis of Sati was an extreme form of 'self-renunciation' on the part of women by burning themselves on their husbands' pyre. The Evangelicals and those believing in Victorian ideology also stressed on similar virtues of 'self-renunciation' among the women. Moral purity and self-sacrifice were twin virtues of the British ideology at home. But for them, as described by Metcalf (*Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 98) the appropriate mode of self-sacrifice was as 'angels in the house', not as 'victims upon the pyre.' Moreover, it is interesting to note that Bentinck disavowed Evangelical intent to convert Indians to Christianity and sought authority for the suppression of Sati in the Brahmanical scriptures. The British approached various pandits, and from them secured interpretations of select Sanskrit texts, which were evoked to support the claim, that the irrational practice of Sati was not an integral part of Hindu social system. In fact, the colonial state generally demonstrated the posture of neutrality and non-interference in the religious

matters of its Indian subjects. The Christian missions saw caste as a major obstacle in their task of conversion. They, therefore, urged the state to adopt an interventionist line vis-à-vis caste. However, the events of 1857 and its aftermath compelled the colonial state to re-affirm its non-interventionist stance and support caste-distinctions. The success of the missionaries came in the 1860s and 1870s when there was an upsurge in the number of converts due to group-conversions among the so called 'untouchable' castes. The powerful incentives for conversions was material relief provided by the missions during famines, and above all restoration of dignity and self-respect by Christian patrons who treated the lower-caste persons as equals and instilled a sense of ability to choose one's own destiny among them (Duncan B. Forrester, "The Depressed Classes and Conversion to Christianity", in G.A. Oddie, (ed.), *Religion in South Asia*, p. 65-94).

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### 23.4 THE UTILITARIAN SCALE OF 'HAPPINESS'

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Utilitarianism as developed particularly by Jermy Bentham defined utility as pleasure or happiness, and everything that turn on these mental satisfactions. This statistics of pleasure ignored individual freedom, the fulfilment or violation of recognised rights and other non-utility concerns such as quality of life. They stressed the sum total of utilities and showed no sensitivity to the actual distribution of utilities, the emphasis was on the aggregate utilities or the happiness of everyone taken together as is evident from the phrase 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' The Utilitarians were intimately connected with Indian affairs. James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill were part of East India Company's establishment. Like Evangelicals, they were critical of Indian society at the root of which they saw 'primitive barbarism', 'despotism' and an encompassing religious tyranny. However, whereas Evangelicals laid stress on the role of education and self-revelation in a changing society, the Utilitarian emphasis was on legislation, the might of law and its commands. James Mill made happiness of Indians contingent upon the nature of laws, the form of government, and the mode of taxation. The Utilitarians rejected the liberal conception of separation of powers and wanted to make the legislature as the sovereign body with the judiciary and executive as mere executants of its will. The Utilitarian idea that happiness and not liberty was the end of government, and that happiness was promoted solely by protection of individual in his person and property, suited the colonial establishment. It found expression in the maxim that good government and laws were a substitute for self-government. While they believed that the means to ensure good government was representative democracy, they would not accept it in Indian conditions.

The Utilitarians criticised the Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis for not defining and recording the proprietary rights of cultivators. They favoured a detailed recording of landholdings and rights in the form of 'records of rights' as part of the settlement procedure. This, they believed would give a fixed, written, and legal status to the property rights in soil in place of existing vague, unwritten, customary, and ambiguous rights. The peasant would acquire a clear title to property, which he could freely sell, mortgage, or transfer by inheritance. The security of this private property in land was to be achieved through laws, scientifically designed, and embodied in a written form of codes. However, this could only be attained in a system like *ryotwari* where the state entered into direct administrative relations with the mass of cultivators. The law

of rent, first propounded by Malthus in 1815, and subsequently refined by Ricardo and Say, became the basis of Utilitarian remoulding of Indian revenue system. As Eric Stokes in his book *The English Utilitarians in India* points out that 'Rent constituted the differential advantage enjoyed by all soils of higher fertility than the last taken into cultivation. On the last quality of lands, at the margin of cultivation, the capital employed merely replaced itself and yielded the normal prevailing rate of profit. But lands of higher fertility yielded a surplus or rent beyond this. Rent could, therefore, be exactly calculated by subtracting the cost of cultivation and the ordinary rate of profit on the capital employed from the total or gross produce. An alternative term for rent was the net produce". Ricardo, the propounder of Utilitarian economic doctrine, demonstrated that rent is a monopoly value, which arose because land was limited in quantity and variable in quality and could be appropriated by landlords as private property. The landlords performed no useful service and lived as parasites. In England, rent property was in the hands of the powerful aristocracy and it was not possible to advocate even taxing this rentier class. In India, the East India Company acting as the supreme landlord, however, could claim the entire economic rent. There were, however, other practical problems in implementing this Utilitarian idea in India. It required a minute and efficient enquiry into the yields of the different soils, the cost of production, and the history of agricultural prices. It also pre-supposed a highly efficient system of administration, and information about the local agrarian conditions.

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### 23.5 THE ROMANTIC SPELL

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The Romantics in India included administrators like Thomas Munro, John Malcolm, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Charles Metcalfe. They were opposed to the Cornwallis system of impersonal laws and limited government. They stressed on a personal style of rule and believed in conserving the long-lasting social-institutions of India's past. The Romantics favoured a simple paternalistic government for the Indian peasants. They wished to make the collector, in place of Cornwallis' judge, the key figure in Indian administration, who would act as the compassionate father and mother for the peasants. Such a notion meant rejection of landed intermediaries between the state and peasants. Stressing the need to preserve the age-old institutions, Munro wrote:

"It is time that we should learn that neither the face of the country, its property, nor its society, are things that can be suddenly improved by any contrivance of ours, though they may be greatly injured by what we mean for their good; that we should take every country as we find it." (Quoted in Stokes, p.19).

This, however, contradicted the type of land settlement Munro himself advocated. Ryotwari settlement required more detailed surveys, more state officials, and a more interventionist form of government. Moreover, the Romantics were also committed to the values of the rule of law, property and notions of 'improvement' like other British administrators. For example, Charles Metcalfe tried to preserve around Delhi the distinctive features of the idealised village community, derived from his romantic imagination. In 1830, defending the award of revenue collecting right to the village communities, rather than to landlords or cultivators, he wrote:

“The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they can want within themselves, or almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mogul, Maratha, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn; but the village community remains the same.” (Quoted in Metcalfe, p.25).

Later on Henry Maine used this image of the Indian ‘self-sufficient’ village, existing as a kind of living fossil in a timeless zone, in his evolutionary scheme. The ‘unchanging’ Indian villages with their patriarchal clans and ‘communal land-holdings’ were marked out as the earliest phase of an evolutionary process. This reinforced the earlier notion of a ‘backward’ and ‘stagnant’ Indian society.

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## 23.6 THE LIBERAL PROJECT: RE-MAKING INDIA AS THE REPLICIA OF BRITAIN

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The early Whig conception of separation of powers that would secure the liberties of individual and check arbitrary power found expression in Cornwallis’ appointment of a separate district judge and collector. For most of the liberals, however, private property in land was necessary for an enduring social order. Cornwallis, guided by the principle which sought to make private property secure, transformed the zamindars into owners of their estates. The zamindars were only the revenue-collecting intermediaries in the earlier times. The purpose was to make them ‘progressive’ landlords who would indulge in productive investments. The results were just opposite. The zamindars, their revenues fixed permanently, emerged as a rentier class exacting ever-greater rent from their tenants.

Under the intellectual influence of people like Adam Smith and Jermey Bentham, liberalism remoulded English society. Its main aim was to secure the ‘liberties’ of the individuals and their fundamental natural rights to property and life. As a manifesto of reform, it did not have any coherent ideological position. But broadly it wanted to free individuals from their bondage to the clergy, despotic rulers and feudal aristocracy. This social change was to be achieved gradually by the establishment of free trade, rule of law, reforms in education and administration and establishment of elective principle and parliamentary democracy. They wanted to transform a society, which conferred patronage and status on the basis of birth into a society where individual achievement became the sole criterion of a person’s competence and status. In English society, liberalism found expression through the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, the repeal of Corn Laws, reform of labour legislation, establishment of new local administrative bodies such as municipal corporations and elected county councils, reform of civil laws, and the introduction of modern ‘secular’ education, etc.

The liberal view of Indian society found its fullest expression in James Mill’s *History of British India* (1818). In this book, he envisaged a programme to free India from stagnation and decay and set it on the road to progress. This aim was to be achieved through ‘light taxes and good laws’. The liberal programme meant flowering on Indian soil of such institutions, which were representative of English society and culture. The chief among these were private property, the

rule of law, the liberty of the individual, education in the western scientific knowledge and at the core of it all the representative institutions and modern politics of mobilisation. The principle of private property was made sacrosanct in India. The spirit of 'rule of law' found expression in the codes of civil and criminal procedure proposed by Macauly's Law commission and enacted in the 1860s. Codification of the procedural law introduced predictability and transparency in the sphere of law. The legal system of colonial India, however, accommodated both the assimilative ideals of liberalism (through the codes of procedures) and the insistence upon variation in Indian personal laws (defined in terms of being a part of Hindu or Muslim community).

In the field of education, Macauly's minute on education (1835) tried to transform an Indian into an Englishman, or to create not just a category of Indians educated in the English language, who might help the British in administration, but one "English in taste, in opinions, in moral and in intellect". However, this project of Anglicisation had its limitations. There was shortage of funds for education. The colonial state's fiscal constraints meant that only a few selected natives could reap the benefits of this education and it was believed that from these elitist groups education might "filter down" and 'percolate' to the lower ranks. The basis of imparting the new education remained 'selective', elitist throughout the colonial rule. Secondly, schooling in early Victorian England was religious in nature. The Christian sects generally ran the schools, though endowed with grants-in aids from the government. The mission societies in India followed the same pattern of education as religious conversion was a part of their strategy. The colonial state, however, never introduced the teaching of Christianity in the state-sponsored schools due to fear of intense hostility it would have provoked. The ideal of secularism and neutrality, however, did not prevent the colonial state to play an active, interventionist role in re-making religious and caste-identities through the use of sectarian and communal electorates.

Thus, despite liberal attempts to re-model India in the image of England so as to create 'so many happy England's (This in fact was the aim of colonialism as per Gladstone in 1855), the empire itself was a negation of the liberal ideals. The inconsistencies in the liberal design for India and other colonies resurfaced again and again. James Mill denied the representative government to India on the utilitarian ground that happiness and not liberty was the end of government. John Stuart Mill, son of James Mill, while recognising the intrinsic value of liberty per se, also made it clear that representative government was not appropriate to all people. Moreover, there was a conviction that in colonies and their governance a strong and decisive executive action was necessary in order to secure order. Many rebels were summarily shot dead, blown from the guns and hanged to crush the Kuka uprising in the Punjab (1872). This was a sort of precursor to the infamous Amritsar massacre (1919). India was also provided, on the model of Irish police organisation (1836), a quasi-military instrument of policing in the 1840s for maintaining order and assisting a fragile political authority. Easy mobility, a clear and firm hierarchy, a direct and formal link with the military and a highly centralised command marked this police organisation. Sir Charles Napier provided the lead in creating such a force in Sind province. This was a time when the lonely, untrained village constable was still the instrument of law enforcement over most of rural England.

The Vernacular Press Act of India (1878) was a piece of repressive legislation to muzzle the critical Indian Press. It contained provisions for proceedings



against 'seditious papers' with a minimum of legal fuss, a certainty of being convicted and almost universal censorship. Such legislation could never be visualised in a liberal England.

The Liberal ideology was institutionalised in India during 1860s and 1870s in the municipalities and district boards with elected members. Seats in these local bodies, however, were allotted between precisely defined trading and religious communities. They increased the government's revenue by raising local taxes. The colonial state was also able to integrate powerful local groups in the governance. Although the aim of these reforms was to train Indians in 'self-rule'; it led to proliferation of communal electorates. Despite these weaknesses, the English-educated Indians did take advantage of these political reforms. The Ilbert Bill Controversy (1882-83) around the piece of legislation that sought to empower the Indian Magistrates in the rural areas to try British subjects, also brought out inconsistencies in the imperial governance. The Bill itself was based on the liberal idea of equality before law. The opponents of the law argued that India's social and legal institutions being different from Europe, such legal equality could not be ensured.

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### 23.7 POSITIVISM AS A TOOL OF KNOWING THE COLONIAL SOCIETY

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The British usually steered clear of grand political theories in favour of methods based on empirical observation. John Locke had insisted upon the experimental modes of understanding and this became handy and convenient in investigating the conquered lands and their people. Empiricism is the knowledge acquisition through the use of senses as we observe and experience life. Such observation and measurement of facets of social life, of course, can never be neutral as we mentally process information deploying already existing notions, concepts and ideas. Positivism as a theory of knowledge, as it grew in the nineteenth century Europe, was merely an extension of the established notions of empiricism. It was characterised by the verifiable or empirical measurement and the notion of predictability of the relationship between the measurable discrete phenomena.

The colonial state and its officials used in their operations what Bernard S. Cohn calls 'investigative modalities'. An 'investigative modality' is used to obtain the information that is needed. It includes the procedures to gather this information, its ordering and classification, and then how it is transformed into usable forms such as published reports, statistical tables, histories, gazetteers, legal codes and encyclopaedias. The colonial rulers required help of the Indians in this "conquest" through knowledge. These Indians were known by such titles as **akund, dalal, gomastah, dubashi, pandit, wakil**, etc.

The first type of historical modality were the 'enquires' in the 1770s about land revenue assessment and collection, and later land settlement reports, which also contained information about the customs and local histories related to land-revenue. The second type of historical modality included the British writings on the Indian past and civilisation, of writers such as Alexander Dow, Robert Orme, William Jones, James Todd, etc. The third type of writings were about the activities of the British in India. The results that were produced can be categorised as:

- 1) **The observational-cum-travel modality** produced images of India that casual travellers recorded and found significant.
- 2) **The Survey modality** explored the natural and social landscape of India. It included the mapping of India, measurement of its lands, collection of botanical specimens, etc. Colin Mackenzie, Francis Buchanan Hamilton and William Lambton conducted some of the important surveys in India.
- 3) **The Enumerative modality** sought to see India as a vast collection of numbers expressed in lists of products, prices of products, duties, weights and measures. An important category of the enumerative project were the censuses conducted at regular intervals after 1857 and designed to reveal the population number, its demographic and social indexes, economic data of all kind and so many other things. The censuses also objectified social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences among the people of India.
- 4) **The Museological modality** treated India as a vast museum, a source of collectibles. Colin Mackenzie collected a large number of artefacts, texts and manuscripts during his survey of South India. Alexander Cunningham, an army engineer, urged Lord Canning to establish the Archaeological Survey of India, which recorded the past by excavating and preserving sites and collecting archaeological specimens.
- 5) **The Surveillance modality** was an instrument to control those defined as beyond the civil bounds. A special Thagi and Dacoit department was established in 1835 to investigate and punish gang-robberies and murders. W.H. Sleeman's **The Ramaseena or Vocabulary of Thug literature**, exemplified this modality. Later on an increasing number of people, groups, tribes, communities were stigmatised as the 'criminal tribes' or 'criminal castes' following the model of Sleeman.

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### 23.8 HUMANISM AND THE COLONIAL WORLD

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Humanism placed 'man' at the centre of everything. Such an intellectual trend was a product of Enlightenment in Europe and its victory was assured by the rise of industrial capitalism and scientific discoveries. Popular representative governments, equality of opportunity, the free market and the ability to control the creation of knowledge accompanied the rise of such a "rational man". Humanism as a philosophy developed, therefore, within the context of an emergent capitalism, new class relations, a new human-centred framework for comprehension of reality. Now, man was privileged and seen as a unified, stable, coherent, self-acting human agent. This 'human' subject was supposed to be endowed with the will, the ability, and the freedom to make rational choices, i.e., he was a 'rational autonomous subject' in the words of Immanuel Kant.

Liberal humanism also defined man as the engineer, the maker of history, the creator of empires, the founder of modern nations, and the conqueror of backward people, the Master of Science and technology. Question arises where would this humanism place the people who did not make progress, who lagged behind time, who were technologically backward and who did not develop modern nations and democracies? Such colonial subjects were written out of historical evolution, out of modernity and into a timeless primitivism, i.e., endemic, simple and fixed.

Initially, India was construed as a land of 'unchanging village communities' and feudal principalities. India's decline was traced to Aryan decline. Technological supremacy of West was proclaimed. The 'effeminacy' of India was stressed. Men were depicted as strong, active, intellectual possessing self-control and discipline while females were fragile, passive, sentimental exhibiting tenderness of feelings according to the British ideology of gender distinction. British imperial experience, therefore, brought into prominence the 'masculine' virtues of the master race and devalued 'feminised' colonial subjects.

Moreover, the categories that denoted India's distinctiveness such as those of caste, community and tribe were given undue weightage in shaping the Indian identities. Having no place in the process of historical evolution, the people of India were described as possessing unchanging racial and cultural identities. The most important of these was caste which was defined by a set of characteristics such as endogamy, commensality rules, fixed profession, and common ritual practices. India was depicted as an ethnographic museum. As time went on Indian ethnography, as evolved by the British, asserted its rigorous scientific claims. Its categories, embedded in censuses, gazetteers and revenue records, became ever more closely tied to the administrative concerns of the colonial state. The valorisation of castes which were considered as fixed and immutable found its most striking expression in the creation of the notion of 'criminal tribes' and 'martial races'. The notion that certain castes and tribes practiced crime as a hereditary profession stigmatised those outside sedentary society, hence they were believed to challenge British efforts to order and control their Indian dominions. Its final outcome was the Criminal Tribes Act (1871). Similarly, in the years after the 'mutiny' (1857), a perceived sense of distinctive martial fitness came to distinguish certain people of the northern India as imbued with martial skills from others. The army in India was organised into units based on caste or ethnicity by the 1880s.

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## 23.9 SUMMARY

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We have seen how the multiple strands of imperial ideology converged to justify and legitimate the British rule in India. Edward W Said has given this collective ideological formation the name of 'Orientalism'. According to him, the various western techniques of representation that make the 'orient' visible and subordinate it to the west had some common features despite subtle variations. The way the 'orient' was created, it encompassed a complex phenomena of power, of domination, and of varying degrees of hegemony. The 'orient' was created as a kind of collective abstraction, which was unequal with the west, and endured without existential human-identities. Therefore a reassessment of the 'others' was essential to define their own western identities and also this served as an accessory to sustain the empire. However, we should not neglect the historical context of the changing political and administrative policies and ideologies that shaped them: The justification of the colonial rule was not sought in monolithic, unitary terms but found expression in multiple ideological discourses. Moreover, the colonised people did not accept the western domination without overt or covert resistance. The multiple voices of the colonised people, which sometimes subverted the discursive mode, amended it and re-applied the amended stereotypes of this discourse to the British rule in India.

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## 23.10 GLOSSARY

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- Edemic** : Paradise
- Iconography** : Representing subject matter through symbols, images, visual arts.
- Philology** : Comparative study of languages.
- Rentier** : A person who has fixed income from land.
- Valorisation** : To fix

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## 23.11 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the Orientalist and Evangelical understanding of the Indian socio-political system.
- 2) Liberal project in India was full of contradictions and inconsistencies. Explain.

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## **UNIT 24 ACTIVITIES**

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### **Structure**

- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Establishing a Constitutional Framework
  - 24.2.1 Relation Between the British Parliament and Company
  - 24.2.2 Evolution of Legislature Under the Crown
- 24.3 The Civil Service or the 'Steel Frame'
- 24.4 Organising the Judiciary
- 24.5 Railways and Administrative Unification
- 24.6 Documentation Project of the Colonial State
  - 24.6.1 Colin Mackenzie's Surveys and Historical Collections
  - 24.6.2 The 'Martial Races' and Military Recruitment Policy
  - 24.6.3 Identifying the 'Criminal Castes and Tribes'
  - 24.6.4 Census and Social Ordering
- 24.7 Summary
- 24.8 Glossary
- 24.9 Exercises

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### **24.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The establishment of a territorial empire by the East India Company, was a need to design suitable instruments of governance. An important aspect of the colonial state was the control over the territorial, human and natural resources. An effective machinery of administration and control was developed to govern India. Between 1765 and 1772, a system of government that came to be called the 'dual government' functioned in Bengal. The company shared the task of governing with the indigenous, pre-existing institutions. From the very beginning of the company's rule, the British Parliament was keen to assert its sovereignty and to benefit from the acquisition of an empire in India. The relations between the Company and the Parliament as they evolved over a period of time laid the foundation of the constitutional system.

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### **24.2 ESTABLISHING A CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

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Although the British denied self-governing institutions to the Indian people, pressures from home and the colony gradually paved the way for the development of certain constitutional practices. The immediate establishment of this normative institutional framework was constrained by the overall colonial interest of maintaining their hold over India, yet it laid the foundation on which future advances could be made. We will deal with these developments in the next sub-sections.

#### **24.1.1 Relation Between the British Parliament and the Company**

In 1767 itself, the British Parliament had passed an Act obliging the company to pay £4 million per annum to the British home government. However, the

Regulating Act of 1773 was the first important parliamentary attempt to regulate the Company's activities that determined the shape of its administration in India and its relations with the Crown and the Parliament. The Act provided for autonomy to the Company in practical matters of administration and governance and ruled out direct intervention by the home government. The Court of Directors of the Company were to lay before the British cabinet at home all correspondence dealing with the civil and military administration and the revenue matters of India. In India, the Governor-General and his council, functioning from Bengal Presidency were empowered to control the activities of the subordinate Madras and Bombay Presidencies. The Act left the room open for friction in the relations between the Company and the British state as well as between the Bengal based Governor-General-in-council and the other subordinate Presidencies; and within the Governor-General's Council itself.

The defects of the Regulating Act and the exigencies of parliamentary politics in Britain led to the passing of the **Pitt's India Act (1784)**. A Board of Control of six commissioners intended to control the Company's Indian affairs was established in London under the provisions of the Act. The Board of Control consisted of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, a Secretary of State and four unpaid members nominated by the Crown. The Act was an attempt to link the Company's administration with the Imperial state in Britain. The general supervision and control over the functioning of the Court of Directors was acquired by the Board of Control. It could send direct orders to India through a secret committee of Directors. The Act placed the administration of India in the hands of a governor-general and a council of three covenanted servants. Governor-General's view was to prevail in case even if one councillor supported him. The Act clearly subordinated the Bombay and Madras Presidencies to Bengal in matters of war, revenue and diplomacy. The Act curtailed the right of the general court of proprietors of the Company to annul or suspend any resolution of the directors approved by the Board of Control. The Directors also retained their right to appoint and nominate administrative officials in India. This enactment of 1784 provided the general institutional framework and agency of administration for the Company's state in India although certain modifications were introduced subsequently. The Regulating Act of 1786 further empowered the Governor-General to override the majority in his council in important matters of security, diplomacy and military interests of the empire. About seven years later the Charter Act of 1793 extended the provision of payment to all the members of the Board of Control.

The Charter Act of 1813, while establishing the British sovereignty over the Company's territorial possessions, gave the control of administration and revenues of India to the Company for a further term of twenty years. However, the power of superintendence and direction exercised by the Board of Control increased further. The Act gave the exercise of the right of distributing patronage to the Company in cases of appointments to higher offices such as the Governor-General and the governors of the provinces, subject to the approval of the Crown. While the Company still retained the monopoly of China trade, general trade was opened to all the subjects. The Charter Act of 1833, while abolishing the Company's monopoly of trade in India, retained the Company's administrative set-up along with the right of its territorial possession and the right of exercise of patronage in appointments for another twenty years. The superintendence, direction and control of the whole civil and military administration was vested in the Governor-General-in-Council which was expanded with the addition of a law member for the intended



codification of the Indian laws. The Act accepted in principle, the possibility of associating the Indians in the administrative set-up. However, there was still no provision for entry of the Indians in the covenanted civil service. These Acts of the Imperial British state were mostly related to the social and economic changes especially the ascendancy of a class of manufacturers in England and demonstrated the practical problems confronted by the state in running the administration in an alien colony.

The Charter Act of 1853 hastened the process of transfer of power from the Company to the Crown. The Act fixed no definite time frame for the withdrawal of the Company's power and privileges. It reduced the numbers of the Company's directors from 24 to 18, of which six were to be nominated by the Crown. The law member was placed on an equal footing with the other three members of the Governor-General's Council. The Council was enlarged for legislative purposes as twelve members were added for this purpose. The right of exercising patronage in appointment of civil servants in India was now to be regulated by the Board of Control, and the recruitment to the civil service was made open to the general public of England through competition.

### **24.2.2 Evolution of Legislature under the Crown**

The events of 1857-58 in India were hotly debated in England. The resultant Act of 1858 paved the way for an end of dual sovereignty over India's possessions and transfer of the Empire to the Crown. The process was already underway as evident in the Act of 1853. Now the Crown assumed the direct responsibility of the administration through a Secretary of State to be aided by a council of fifteen members. According to the Pitts India Act of 1784, the Secretary of state was a member of Board of Control and exercised control over the Court of Directors. In 1833, the President of Board of Control became Minister for Indian affairs. In 1858, the President of Board of Control was replaced by Secretary of State for India. He was advised by a Council of India. The eligibility for the member of the Secretary of State's Council was 10 years of service or residence in India. The powers of the Court of Directors and the Board of Control were vested in the Secretary of state. He was a member of the British cabinet with overall executive power including the power to veto and overrule the council. The appointment of the Governor-General and the Governors was the prerogative of the Crown, while the Secretary of State appointed the Council members in India. Although, the autonomous functioning of the Indian government was stressed, the Secretary of State's establishment, a completely alien institution with no representation or voice from India, formulated the over-all policy framework for governing the colony. Government of India (1869) Amendment Act further strengthened the position of the Crown. Now the Crown made all the appointments to the Secretary of State's Council. The Act also strengthened the position of the Secretary of State vis-à-vis Council members.

The Indian Council Act (1892) made certain changes in the composition and functions of the legislative bodies (Local and Central Legislative Councils). Some additional members numbering 10-16 were added to the Viceroy's Central Executive Council of whom not less than half were to be non-official members. The element of election was not introduced but the Viceroy was empowered to invite different groups (specially non-official members of Local Councils) to elect, select or nominate their representatives and to make rules for their nomination in the Central Legislative Council. The body (Central

Legislative Council) finally constituted under the new constitutional dispensation was to consist of nine ex-officio (the Governor General, six members of the Executive Council, the Commander-in-Chief, and the Lt. Governor of the province in which the Council met), six official additional members and ten non-official members of the Legislative Councils of Bengal, Bombay, Madras and the North Western Provinces. When Legislative Councils were created in the Punjab and Burma, one member each was sent from there. The Calcutta Chamber of Commerce also sent one representative. Official majority and control was maintained in the central as well as Provincial Legislative Councils. The Council's functions were circumscribed. They could not alter the provisions of the budget, although they could discuss it and make suggestions for future. The Act, however, heralded the gradual expansion of the size and functions of the Councils for the purpose of making laws.

The Government of India (1909) Act popularly known as the Morley-Minto Reforms increased the size of the Central as well as the Provincial Legislative Councils. The number of additional members in the Central Council was increased to sixty while 30-50 additional members were to be added in the Provincial Councils. The official majority was maintained at the Centre and though non-official majority was conceded in the provinces, the basis of electoral representation were the diverse class and communal interests. It precluded any possibility of a joint front by non-official majority. The Act also gave separate representation to the Muslim minority through a system of separate electorates, specifically designed to foster communal division along religious lines. The Muslim, landlord and the capitalist interests were given more weightage in this system of representation. The tax-paying propertied citizens elected representatives for municipal committees or local boards and they, in turn, elected members of provincial legislatures through an indirect election. The Act also did not envisage any significant changes in the powers and functions of the Councils.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms or Government of India Act (1919) modified the Governor-General's Executive Council slightly; however, the chief executive authority remained accountable to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State and not to the Indian Legislature. The Legislature's powers were not increased but it was made more representative. In the Executive Council three Indians were associated for heading departments like law, education, labour and health. The Act provided for a bi-cameral legislature, the two houses being the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Council of State was to consist of 60 members of whom at least 33 were to be elected. The Central Legislative Assembly was to consist of 145 members of whom 104 were to be elected members. However, only 52 members were to be elected by the general constituencies. The rest were to be elected by the communal electorates of Muslim (30) and Sikhs (2) or by specific interests such as European (9), landholders (7), the Indian business community (4). Seats among the provinces were distributed not according to the size of their population but according to their political significance. The powers of the Legislature were limited. The Governor-General retained the veto-power. He could use his power of certification to enact any Bill that had been refused by the Legislature. Some sort of division of powers between the Centre and the Provinces was introduced. The central subjects included foreign relations and diplomacy, public debt, tariff and customs, patent, currency and communications etc. The subjects in the provincial list were local self-government, health, sanitation, education, public

works, agriculture, forests, law and order, etc. The residual powers were vested in the Governor-General-In-Council. Moreover, responsibility for certain subjects was transferred to the elected representatives while control over others was reserved in the British hands. The act introduced dyarchy in the executive provincial council. Under the system of 'dyarchy', transferred subjects were to be administered by the Governor along with the elected provincial ministers while the members of his Executive Council were to administer the reserved subjects (such as police, justice, irrigation, land-revenue, industries etc.) for which governor was responsible to the Governor General. The Governor in the provinces was given wide powers to over-ride the decisions of the ministers. The unicameral Provincial Legislatures (known as Legislative Councils) created under the Act added further to the number of the elected members. However, the right to vote was primarily based on property qualifications and separate communal electorates were retained.

The Act of 1935 envisaged the establishment of an all-India federal structure and a new system of governance in the provinces on the basis of provincial autonomy. Under this Act dyarchy was abolished and a federation was created consisting of governor's provinces, chief commissioner's provinces and the federating Indian states. The federation was to be based on a union of provinces of British India and the princely states. However, in the bi-cameral federal legislature (consisting of federal assembly and council of state), the princely states were given more weightage. Their representatives were not to be elected by people, but nominated by the princes, thus retaining the feudal character. However, in British India, franchise was extended further and about 10% of the total population was enfranchised by this Act. The Governor-General retained important portfolios including defence and foreign affairs. In the provinces autonomy and popularly elected ministries were introduced. Governors were given special powers; they could veto certain measures and legislate on their own. They also retained control over the most important instruments of colonial power i.e., the civil services and the police. The federal part of the Act was never introduced but the provincial autonomy was soon put into operation. The states could not be compelled to enter the federation. It was on the basis of this limited franchise and narrow powers given within the overall colonial administrative framework that Congress formed provincial ministries in seven states independently in July, 1937 and coalition governments in two other states.

Lastly, it was the Government of India Act 1947, which divided India into two nations, India and Pakistan.

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### **24.3 THE CIVIL SERVICE OR THE 'STEEL FRAME'**

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The establishment of modern executive or a bureaucracy of civil servants under the British rule was a gradual process. The East India Company employed in its regular service apprentices, writers and factors nominated by the Directors. They had no regular scale of pay and they were partly compensated by private trade. The East India Company also performed certain administrative and legislative functions like levying of taxes, collection of revenue, minting of currency and settling of immigrants. The President and his Council discharged these functions. Administrative responsibility of the Company increased as it assumed territorial control over large tracts of India. The Regulating Act of 1773 banned private

trade for all the civil servants who were employed in the collection of revenue or the administration of justice. Warren Hastings felt the need to reorganise the district level administration. Administrative functions were taken away from the private agencies and terms and conditions of services were laid down for the covenanted servants of the Company.

Lord Cornwallis further reorganised the civil-bureaucracy by specifying administrative responsibilities. He separated the work of revenue collection from administration of justice. He eliminated the indigenous category (the Indians) from the administration of justice and revenue-collection. The Muslim judges were replaced by the European covenanted servants as Circuit Judges and the work of settlement, registry and accounts was transferred to the Board of Revenue managed by the covenanted English civil servants. The Charter Act of 1793 provided that all vacancies occurring in any of the civil offices in India, below that of the member of council, should be filled up from among the civil servants of the Company belonging to the Presidency in which they occurred. The condition of three years residence in India was laid down for the post with a salary of more than £ 500 per annum. Some sort of promotional policy based on seniority was also introduced. However, the civil servants continued to be paid on the basis of commission on the amount of revenue collections which was about 1% in Cornwallis' time.

Wellesley believed in a strong and professionally trained bureaucracy. He did not adopt the policy of separation of judiciary and executive and combined the power of justice, revenue-collection and policing. He established the College of Fort William (1800) to train civil servants and to acquaint them with the language and history of India. It was a short-lived experiment that was given up in 1802 by the orders of the Court of Directors. The Haileybury College was founded in May, 1806 and it was given statutory status by the Charter Act of 1813. This institution provided training to the civil servants to be employed in the Company's service in India. The Charter Act of 1853 introduced the principle of limited competition as it authorised the Board of Control to certify to the Court of Directors the total number of candidates to be nominated for admission to the college at Haileybury (fourfold the number of vacancies). The Board of Control also supervised the preliminary examination for admission to the college and the final examination to determine merit. The Charter Act decreed that all recruits to the civil service were to be selected through a competitive examination. A committee headed by Macaulay, appointed by the Board of Control prescribed the age and qualifications of the civil servants as well as the curriculum to be taught to the prospective civil servants. It favoured recruitment of graduates from Oxford and Cambridge with liberal education background as probationers. The age of probation was raised from a minimum of 18 years to a maximum of 23 years. The probationers were to be taught about Indian history, geography, natural resources of India and the physical and moral qualities of the different races of India, the progress of British power in India, the general principles of jurisprudence, finance, banking and taxation etc, and one of the vernacular languages. This open competition was held annually in London. In principle, it was open to all British subjects including Indians. However, Indians faced enormous difficulties in joining the ranks of the coveted civil service. Still, a few English educated Indians did manage to enter it. Lord Salisbury's "reforms" (1878) lowered the maximum age limit for entry to 19 years, a step which educated Indians suspected was meant to debar them or at least put further restriction on their entry.

The inclusion of the Indians in the civil service was confined to some exceptional cases as the British colonial state maintained racial exclusiveness for cadres constituting its 'steel frame'. Between the years 1855-1891, 124 Indian competitors appeared for the civil service examination, of which only 24 were declared successful. One among them was later on rejected on health grounds and two failed to pass the horse-riding test. However, an Act of British Parliament in 1870 called for employment of Indians of proven ability and merit in the civil services. A statutory civil service was created in which a proportion not exceeding 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the Indian civil service was to be nominated by the local government. It, however, did not enjoy the status and privileges of the covenanted civil service. The statutory civil service was abolished subsequently on the recommendation of Charles Aitchison Commission (1886). A new service now styled as the Provincial Civil Service was established. Certain superior class of executive posts that were earlier reserved for the covenanted civil service were thrown open to the cadres of Provincial Civil Service. The recruitment to this service was made partly by promotion from the subordinated civil service and partly by direct recruitment and open competition. However, in this service, a superior executive post like that of Deputy Collector was clubbed together with lower posts such as Tehsildar, Mamlatdar and Sub-Deputy Collector. Similarly in Judiciary, Subordinate Judges were placed alongside Munsifs and Tehsildars exercising certain judicial functions and powers. The creation of Provincial Civil Service failed to rationalise the reduced gap between covenanted and non-covenanted services in terms of salary and functions. However, it did create additional opportunities of weaning away educated Indians from nationalism. Although the men of ICS and provincial civil services discharged similar duties like revenue-collection, management of treasury, general executive business connected with police and local bodies and some magisterial work, their power and social status differed vastly. The ICS men enjoyed better salaries and avenues of promotion than cadres of All-India Imperial Services in special branches or departments., such as education, finance, customs, military, etc.

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#### 24.4 ORGANISING THE JUDICIARY

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The British established a new hierarchy of civil and criminal courts to administer justice. We have discussed some aspects of law and legal system in Block 4. The colonial judiciary was based on a jumble of traditional indigenous system, supplemented by regulations, principles of British law, which was considered as case law characterised by flexibility and which could be interpreted in various ways. It was formally based on rule of law and the concept of equality before law. However, in practice, racial prejudices and commercial principles guided its operations. The racial distinctions regarding punishment in cases of criminal charges against the British subjects were adhered to. Justice became costly and beyond the reach of illiterate peasants as a new class of professional lawyers, who understood the legal provisions and complexity of laws, had to be engaged and paid. The notion of 'sanctity of contract' also favoured the indigenous propertied classes like landlords and moneylenders.

Warren Hastings established civil and criminal courts at the district level known as the *Diwani* and the *Nizamats Adalats* respectively. These were presided over by European Judges who were assisted by local indigenous

Hindu and Muslim officials. He also established Provincial Civil Courts of Appeal and Courts of Circuit to supervise district courts and hear appeal of cases decided by them. At the apex were the Sadr Diwani and Sadr Nizamat Adalats as the chief courts of appeal. These functions were discharged through the executive power of Governor-In-Council. Lord Cornwallis separated the posts of the Civil Judge and the Collector. The Regulating Act of 1773 established a Supreme Court at Fort William. This step led to some conflict between the judicial institutions and the executive powers of Governor General-In-Council. The Act of 1781 exempted the top British executive from the scrutiny of the Supreme Court for anything committed, ordered or done by them in their public capacity. The Act also conceded judicial powers to be enjoyed by the Governor General-In-Council. In 1831, William Bentinck abolished the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit and assigned their work to District Judges and Collectors. He also appointed Indians as Deputy Magistrates, subordinate Judges and Principal Sadr Amins. The Indian High Courts Act (1861) abolished the chief civil and criminal courts established by the Company's government. The Act sought to establish High Courts at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, each with both original and appellate jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases. The High Court was to consist of a Chief Justice and 15 Judges. Out of 15 Judges, not less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> were to be practicing barristers and another 1/3<sup>rd</sup> were to be from the Covenanted Civil Service. Subsequently, more High Courts were established. A generally uniform system was introduced in each province by The Civil Courts Act between 1865- 1875. The Criminal Procedure Code of 1872 also introduced similar uniformity in the constitution of criminal courts. The British wished to establish a three-tier hierarchical judicial organization with rights of two appeals. However, despite such standardisation, racial distinctions were retained in the colonial legal system.

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## **24.5 RAILWAYS AND ADMINISTRATIVE UNIFICATION**

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The story of introduction of Railways in India clearly reveals the interventionist project of the Colonial state especially with regard to economic control (policies). A debate had emerged in the British public circles in 1840s that highlighted the direct economic benefits to be derived from the colony such as exploitation of resources of India, development of commerce and indirect effects of their rule (policies) such as increasing social mobility of factors of production and administrative concerns such as deployment of armed forces. A large number of private joint stock companies were formed in London in this age of railways-mania with the purpose of opening of India through railways. The Court of Directors also visualised the impact of railways. At the instance of British Parliament (a committee headed by F. W. Simms was sent to India. Simms Report (1846) favoured the development of railways in India through private enterprise and capital subject to the terms and conditions of the state. From the start, the terms and conditions for railways development and the direction in which lines were to be laid became hotly debated issues. Governor- General Lord Dalhousie's general plan expressed practical concerns, especially commercial and military advantages associated with this project of mass transportation. In his famous Railway minute, Dalhousie wrote:



“.....The establishment of a system of railways in India, judiciously selected and formed, would surely and rapidly give rise within the empire, to the same encouragement of enterprise, the same multiplicity of produce, the same discovery of latent resources, the same increase of national wealth, and to some similar progress in social improvements, that had marked the introduction of improved and extended communication in the various Kingdoms of the Western World.”

Although, the colonial administrators often stressed the potential benefits of railways in stimulating commerce, through unification of internal markets and development of commercial cropping, development of other industries and social mobility, the economic logic of railway development was firmly enmeshed with the colonial motive of controlling India's resources. A few important motives for developing railways were:

- a) It could be an important medium for British capital investment in far flung areas.
- b) As an extraction-channel of raw-produce from vast tracts of India
- c) To develop a market for British capital goods (such as railways engines, steel and iron products) in far off areas.
- d) To provide the linkages to open the markets of India for the manufactured consumer items of British industries.
- e) As a mechanism of administrative control through rapid movements of troops and faster communication network.

The last motive was foremost in the minds of colonial rulers since the desired and successful implementation of economic policies was contingent upon proper administrative networks. Lord Hardinge put it plainly in these words:

“Railways would have an immense effect in facilitating the means of governing the country, by rapid transmission of troops, as well as of instructions from the seat of government.”

In 1849, the colonial state in India entered an agreement with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company and the East India Railway Company to construct railway from Bombay to Thane and from Howrah to Raniganj coal-fields. These experimental agreements were then extended to other companies to develop railways in the other parts of the country. They were given a state guarantee of minimum return of 5% on their paid-up capital. The idea of guarantee was to ensure investment in a venture that would be normally perceived as too risky. The guaranteed profits on private capital imposed a huge fiscal burden on the state. Apart from this guaranteed return on their capital, the colonial state arranged land on long-lease for railways and gave a number of other incentives to the private capital in this field. The railway construction in India is often characterised as “private enterprise at public risk” because the risks of private investments that came from Britain were borne by Indians through government taxes. The difference between 5% guaranteed interest and lower rate of profit or even the loss of a private railway company was paid out of public revenues. Railway construction, however, also involved indigenous agency of intermediaries as the British capital delegated the task of actual construction to contractors and sub-contractors. They were supposed to assemble tools, machinery and labour to build a particular line according to certain specification

at a certain cost. It required extra-economic and extra-legal means to command and mobilise labour and tie it to the capital of sub-contractors. The colonial state facilitated this control by passing Workmen (Disputes) Act (X) of 1860. The Act had provisions of fining or imprisoning workers who, having engaged to work for a specific period or to complete a particular task refused to do so.

State intervention in construction of railways began after 1869 as the fiscal burden of bearing the cost of guaranteed profits of private companies increased due to depreciation in the value of rupee and rise in interest rates on government borrowings abroad. The state's direct role in construction by engaging engineers also marked the process of shift from 'broad-gauge' system to 'metre-gauge' to cut down the expenditure of government on railway construction. During 1880s different terms and conditions were spelt out for different private companies. The rate of guaranteed interests was lowered to 4% or less and the colonial state also started buying out some of the private companies. By 1920s, the private railway companies were bought out and now they were owned and managed by the government. The importance of railway enterprise in the colonial economy can be seen from the fact that in 1860s, the total railway route was 838 miles while it was 41852 miles in 1940. It employed about 16,000 people in 1860 while it employed more than one million people in 1940.

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## 24.6 DOCUMENTATION PROJECT OF THE COLONIAL STATE

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Colonial conquest was made possible by the acquisition of colonial knowledge. This knowledge encompassed various facets such as information about languages of India, surveys, census, documentation and classification of manuscripts, texts, archaeological specimens, oral histories, customs and local histories, legal codes, gazetteers, etc. The cultural construction resulting from the collection and classification of this kind of knowledge helped the British in preserving their rule in India.

### 24.6.1 Colin Mackenzie's Surveys and Historical Collections

The colonial project of conquering and governing India required the knowledge about and control over its human and natural resources. Colin Mackenzie spent most of his long career in peninsular India as a cartographer and surveyor, but he also collected every historical record and artefact he could find. He amassed a huge collection, relying exclusively on Indian assistants and informants concerning the social and political history of peninsular India. In the late nineteenth century, Mackenzie's collection was a source of reference for the origin stories of local castes that were documented in the large number of manuals and gazetteers produced by district-level administration. Mackenzie became the first Surveyor-General of Madras in 1810 and he was the Surveyor-General of India from 1815-1821. Even during his early career in the Army Engineers Service, he was frequently deputed to survey the Deccan areas that had been ceded to the Company by the rulers of Mysore and Hyderabad. He mapped and described these territories and collected many authentic local accounts. During his surveying work in the Deccan, Mackenzie was also deputed for military service, which mainly involved use of his surveying and engineering skills to position artillery and act as a technical advisor for assaults. He was in the Great Mysore survey between the years 1799-1809, the most detailed part of

which were his "Memoirs of the Northern Pargunahs of Mysore". In addition to the usual statistical tables or *caneeshamari*, Mackenzie collected numerous historical memoirs of the royal families of each region. Mackenzie and his assistants collected every historical, ethnographic and religious text, tradition and document they could find. They also collected copies of inscriptions, coins, and images and drew sketches. The sketches and drawing reflected a quest for local knowledge, and included sketches of agricultural implements, buildings, landscape and ethnographic drawings, i.e., pictures of 'typical' representatives of different groups, castes and tribes. The career of Mackenzie reveals that colonial conquest was effected (brought about) through the mechanism of surveying which served as a useful tool in acquiring territories and political control over India. The nature of information gathering varied from surveying with extensive statistical tables and classification to acquiring command over the Indian languages and remoulding the legal system etc. and slowly and steadily the company state with commercial motives was transformed into the colonial state enjoying complete political control.

#### 24.6.2 The 'Martial Races' and Military Recruitment Policy

Concerns about military recruitment in the years after the rebellion of 1857 led to a consolidation of various colonial theories about the so called martial races of India. The colonial administrators believed that certain castes and ethnic groups were particularly suitable for military endeavours. As a result of this belief, military recruitment policy became specifically linked to ethnographic classification. The 'martial races' were seen as devoted to military discipline and loyal to the Crown. In the wake of 1857 rebellion, recruitment of Punjabis, especially Sikhs, became important for the colonial army. Subsequently Sikhs and Nepalis, particularly Gorkhas, constituted the core of the 'martial races'. Lord Roberts, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army from 1885 to 1893 and a leading exponent of the idea of martial races, believed that "the people of Southern India lacked military ability and competence". As a result of this official ethnography, in 1882 eight out of the forty Madras infantry battalions were disbanded. By the turn of the century, their strength was further reduced to 25 battalions. From the late 1890s, martial race theory was codified in a series of official manuals. These handbooks, usually written by British officers with long field experience, guided army recruitment policy until the start of the Second World War. These so called martial races were identified as a group which could provide useful service as soldiers with a deep sense of loyalty and a natural respect for authority and discipline. This, again was a continuation of the policy of divide and rule.

#### 24.6.3 Identifying the 'Criminal Castes and Tribes'

From its inception, the colonial state used surveillance and mechanisms of social ordering and code which defined certain groups as beyond the bound of civility. W. H. Sleeman's "*The Ramaseeana*" or *The Vocabulary of Thug Literature* exemplified this process of depicting certain groups as barbaric. In 1835 a special *Thagi* and *Dacoity* department was set up to investigate and punish gang robberies and murders. Later on an increasing number of people, groups, communities and tribes were stigmatised as 'the criminal tribes'. The legal code of the colonial rule was used to chastise a wide variety of marginal groups who did not conform to the pattern of settled agriculture and wage labour, especially nomadic, pastoral communities and the forest-dwelling tribes. A variety of ideological strands

contributed to the construction of ethnography of criminal tribes and castes. These elements were: (i) the fear of nomadic and wandering groups among the Brahmin subordinates of British, (ii) the cultivators' apprehension of hunting-gathering people and (iii) the high castes' dread of people outside the institutional framework of caste. The British tradition of associating forests with crimes and outlaws also lent support to the 'criminal ethnography' constructed by the British. The belief in the professional and hereditary character of crime was common among the colonial administrators of nineteenth century. The Criminal Tribes Act (1871) provided for registration of all or any members of such tribes who were notified as 'criminal tribes'. The registered members had to report themselves to the local police authority at fixed intervals and notify their place of residence or any intended change of residence. Any contraventions of these legal provisions invited severe punitive measures. After 1857, many castes that had opposed British authority were also declared "criminals".

The identification of certain castes by the British as 'criminal castes' was part of a larger discourse in which caste determined the occupational profile as well as social and moral stature of all its members. The 'criminal castes' were branded simultaneously as typical and deviant. The theories about criminal castes also partake of a set of late-nineteenth century notions of biological and racial disposition of criminality, which in case of India were applied to an entire group. Frederick S. Mullaly, a senior police officer in the Madras police, wrote *Notes on Criminal Classes of Madras Presidency* (1892) on the basis of earlier ethnographic texts prepared by colonial administrators in nineteenth century and various district gazetteers compiled from 1860s onwards. These notes were prepared to guide police officials in dealing with the 'criminal castes'. Anthropometry or measurement of various physical indices such as average height and weight, shape and size of skull, the relation of head size to body size, the relative sizes of different body parts assumed importance in the 1890s under the influence of H.H. Risley. The basic assumption of colonial sociology was that most of the crimes were committed by habitual groups and communities that moved from place to place and were able to conceal their identities. Anthropometry seemed to be the perfect means to pick up the principal suspects. It was, therefore, quickly adopted first in Bengal and then in Madras. In the last decade of nineteenth century, fingerprinting replaced anthropometry as a means of criminal identification as it proved to be error-free, cheap and an efficient method of classifying criminals. Fingerprinting quickly established itself as a universal system of criminal identification. In testing technologies of policing, as in many other areas, colonies served as an important experimental laboratory for the British state. The colonial police and bureaucracy could easily identify and control, by making use of scientific fingerprinting, even the poorest villagers and nomads.

#### **24.6.4 Census and Social Ordering**

The census represented another scientific method adopted by the colonial state to classify and numerically represent the population. However, it provided a distorted picture of the social hierarchy. The parameter used to classify the social groups was based on the principle of varna. Thus, the variations in the social structure in the different regions were not taken into account. Colonial description of Indian society was meant to serve British imperial interests. The diversity reflected through the census depicted Indian polity as conflict ridden which required progressive administration. The extraordinary and novel apparatus of decennial census exemplifies ways by which the documentation

project of the colonial state attained unprecedented scope in interpreting the diverse social order of India. The idea of an all-India census was first seriously contemplated in the mid-1850s. Even earlier, there were regional household counts. An attempt was made in 1846 to test population estimates that had been derived from the land-settlement records. The experimental censuses of Madras Presidency took place before 1851. The first all-India census was conducted in 1871-72. It did not cover all regions and was not systematically carried out. The primary method of classification used in this census as well as in the census of 1881 was that of *varna*. Thus, the statistical project was enmeshed with the Orientalist ideology for the delineation of social hierarchy. In this mode of classification, the first rank was assigned to the Brahmins while the majority of the Hindus were indiscriminately put together in the category of *sudra* or servile classes. Such classification ignored regional as well as sub-caste variations among the Brahmins. Moreover, for organising the data the *varna* or ritual markers were used to differentiate and define the 'higher castes', and occupational markers to classify the lower caste groups. Even the use of occupational criterion for differentiating castes was based on shaky and unsound foundations as formal caste titles only rarely indicated true occupations and caste titles, names and other markers of caste-identity were used in an arbitrary and conflicting manner.

W. C. Plowden, the Census Commissioner of 1881, further classified the census data on castes to create artificial larger blocks of castes such as the major agricultural castes, major groups of artisans and village servants and so on. This artificial creation of the differentiation within castes was amenable to administrative concerns like recruitment to the colonial army, branding of 'criminal castes', maintenance of law and order, agrarian policy and legal adjudication. The 1891 census abandoned the *varna* criterion for enumeration in favour of occupational criteria on the proposals of J.C. Nesfield and Sir Denzil Ibbetson. However, from the late-nineteenth century onwards H. H. Risley criticised this scheme and tried to classify Indian people and castes into distinct racial groups on the basis of physical measurement of various bodily traits. As the Census Commissioner for 1901, Risley conceived of a grand scheme for the grouping and categorising of every racial type in India. He also tried to adopt a procedure for organising castes on the basis of 'social precedence' and rank them accordingly. As a result of this, a large number of caste associations emerged to contest their assigned position in the official hierarchy, each demanding higher position and ranking. The census of 1911, therefore, abandoned the scheme of ranking but continued to gather information on castes. Further, census were carried at an interval of every ten years, i.e., in 1921, 1931 and 1941.

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## 24.7 SUMMARY

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The quintessence of the colonial rule in India was control of its vast natural and human resources. Military, legal, constitutional and bureaucratic institutions of the colonial state, as per British interests, selectively shaped various spheres of Indian economy, polity and society. Although the chief aim of the colonial state was to safeguard its economic and strategic interests, a variety of activities and mechanisms ensured successful accomplishment of this task. The colonial intervention in the social sphere further led to the classification and categorisation of Indian society into various groupings which helped the British

in controlling India. They created "loyal citizens" in India not only based on their allegiance but on behaviour and attitudes also. In fact, the taluqdars of Awadh can be cited as best examples in this regard. In order to govern a distant land and alien people, the colonial administration tried to acquire knowledge about its people through information-gathering in various forms. Innovations like railways not only assisted the process of economic penetration but also provided better opportunities of governance and administrative control.

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## 24.8 GLOSSARY

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- Anthropometry** : Classifying humans according to physical measurement.
- Caneeshamari** : Statistical tables used to gather information.
- Covenanted civil servants** : Civil servants working under the terms of a covenant or formal agreement that is legally binding.
- Criminal classes or tribes** : branding of certain nomadic and tribal communities as hereditary criminals
- Diwani Adalats** : Civil courts
- Dyarchy** : A system of dual government in the provinces introduced through the Government of India Act (1919) in which some subjects called transferred were administered by the governor in consultation with ministers while others called reserved were administered by the governor directly.
- Guaranteed Interest** : Rate of interest guaranteed to the private railway companies by the British Government in India.
- Martial Race** : A belief of the colonial rulers in India that certain communities were more suited to perform military jobs.
- Separate electorates** : A system of representation based on religious considerations.

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## 24.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) How did the establishment of railways help in the conquest and administration of India?
- 2) Discuss the importance of the documentation project of the Colonial state in effecting the cultural conquest of India.



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## UNIT 25 RESOURCES

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### Structure

- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Land Revenue and the Colonial State
  - 25.2.1 Permanent Settlement
  - 25.2.2 Ryotwari Settlement
  - 25.2.3 Mahalwari Settlement
  - 25.2.4 The Common Resources: Social Groups and the Colonial State
- 25.3 Commercialisation of Agriculture in Relation to Revenue Demand
- 25.4 Changing Composition of the Revenue Sources of the Colonial State
- 25.5 Natural and Human Resources
  - 25.5.1 Forest Resources and the Colonial Forest Policy
  - 25.5.2 Water Resources and Irrigation
  - 25.5.3 Mineral Resources
  - 25.5.4 Labour Under Colonialism
- 25.6 Trade, Finance and the Colonial Interests
- 25.7 Summary
- 25.8 Glossary
- 25.9 Exercises

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### 25.1 INTRODUCTION

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As soon as the East India Company acquired the *Diwani* or revenue collection rights in Bengal and Jagirs in the Northern Sirkars, it started financing its trade through land-revenue. This, in fact, completely reversed the balance of trade in England's favour. No more English gold or silver was required to buy raw materials from India. So, in a way, the source of the conqueror's profit lay in the maximum collection of land-revenue. The appropriation of land-revenue or agrarian surplus thus remained the basic pillar of colonialism. However, gradually the British Colonialism differed from pre-colonial regimes who depended largely on the extraction and collection of land-revenue for fulfilling their fiscal obligations. In certain areas under the British system the basis of assessment was what and how much land ought to produce and what crop it actually produced. They introduced surveys and settlements and in some cases resumed revenue-free lands granted by the pre-colonial regimes. At the same time they introduced a more efficient bureaucracy to collect revenue. Some of the changes in the agrarian economy like increasing commercialisation were partly in response to the high assessment of revenue by the colonial state.

Apart from becoming the chief landlord in India, the colonial state also systematically expanded its control over the other natural resources (especially forest, water, mineral) and human resources. It also made use of trade and finance as tools for maintaining colonial authority.

This Unit gives you an idea of how India's resources were exploited by the colonial regime.

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### 25.2 LAND REVENUE AND THE COLONIAL STATE

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In the pre-colonial regimes, the land revenue was used to maintain the administrative machinery of the state and meet the consumption needs of those

directly or indirectly connected with the state. The late Mughal state and the successor regimes that followed it often leased out land revenue collection rights by auction to the highest bidder, Warren Hastings used the method of revenue farming or *ijaradari* in Bengal to collect the revenues. The system contained many abuses associated with speculative profit making and revenue collections fluctuated widely causing uncertainties (financial). The colonial state needed a steady flow of income from revenues to finance and plan its trading operations as well as to raise troops to conquer new territories. A number of questions surfaced in the process of devising new methods of revenue collection. These related to the question of conferring ownership or proprietorship, entrusting of responsibilities of collection of the state's share in agricultural produce, etc. These questions were resolved differently in different times and areas – thus creating variants of land-revenue settlements.

A common feature of the British land revenue settlement was that they introduced in India the notion of private property in land. Such kind of land-proprietorship meant that its holders were granted ownership rights. Although, in the pre-colonial times, a massive and pyramidal structure of leasing and sub-leasing of revenues functioned and cultivators also enjoyed certain rights in land according to local customs, yet, there were no well-defined proprietary rights. The British invested such rights in certain groups in accordance with the local conditions. Thus they favoured certain groups of landed magnates who were integrated into the colonial agrarian structure. Naturally, such groups were to become the powerful allies of the British.

Another characteristic of British land revenue policy, especially during the early decades, was the attempt to maximise the land-revenue demand. Revenue demands on land were fixed in cash rather than on a proportion of produce, or kind and the assessments were generally exorbitant. The burden probably weighed more heavily, as the prices of agricultural commodities dropped. The assessments were particularly severe in the settlements introduced by Pringle (1824-28) and by Wingate (1835-36) in the Bombay Presidency. As a result of exorbitant land-revenue demands, peasants borrowed money from rural creditors and grain dealers in order to avoid defaults. Sale and auction of land tended to increase as cultivators usually borrowed money on the security of their newly acquired proprietary rights in land. They were forced to transfer their lands when they failed to meet their obligations to moneylenders. This created agrarian tensions. Moreover, the vast majority of the cultivators were left with little resources to act as the buyers of manufactured goods now pouring in from British industries. So in order to maintain social stability and their markets in India, the colonial state was forced to ease revenue demands after 1850s. In the revised settlements the revenue rates were brought down. But did this benefit the actual cultivators remained an open question.

### **25.2.1 Permanent Settlement**

In Bengal, proprietary rights in land were granted to Zamindars. These included a group of people who had enjoyed revenue collection rights under the Nawabs of Bengal as well as some who had acquired such rights through revenue farming or *ijaradari* under the Company rule. They constituted a powerful social group and the British administrators confused them with the British type landlords. Under the Permanent Settlement of Bengal (1793) that was subsequently also extended to coastal Madras and certain parts of North-Western Provinces, Zamindars were given proprietary rights provided they paid a fixed

land-revenue to the East India Company. The Zamindars, thus, became the sole proprietors of the soil and the peasants were left to their mercy. The right of ownership was made hereditary and transferable. The privilege of disposing off land by sale or mortgage was also derived from this basic proprietary right given to the Zamindars. The composition of this Zamindar class had already changed since 1760s. This was a result of entry of speculators and merchants due to the practice of revenue farming. Initially, Zamindars were to give 10/11<sup>th</sup> of the assessed rental to the colonial state and keep 1/11<sup>th</sup> of the rental for themselves. However, the sums to be paid by them as land-revenue were fixed in perpetuity. If the rental of a Zamindar's estate increased due to the expansion of cultivable area or rise in agricultural productivity or simply due to his capacity to extract more from the tenants, he was entitled to keep the entire amount of the increase. This would constitute a kind of unearned increment of his income. As a result of this settlement, most of the tenants including the pre-existing *Khud-khast* tenants enjoying occupancy rights in their lands were reduced to the status of mere tenants-at-will of the Zamindars who could easily evict them and enhance their rents. Many customary rights of the peasants such as access to the pasture and forest lands, use of village ponds for fishing and revenue free homestead plots for growing vegetables etc. were abrogated. However, the settlement provided the much needed financial security and stability to the colonial state and there was no need to create any elaborate machinery of revenue collection. It brought into being a category called Zamindars who would be compelled by their economic-interests to support colonialism.

The land-revenue assessment was, however, initially set so high that extensive default and sale of Zamindaris followed. The Zamindars were also deprived of their traditional social role incorporating functions such as the maintenance of law and order and bridges etc. Although there was a certain degree of restructuring of the composition and functions of Zamindars, there was a great deal of continuity of the older indigenous power-structure. Support of the big Zamindars was the principal prop of Bengal polity (pre-colonial) and they were assigned certain judicial and administrative duties associated with their revenue-collecting rights. However, unlike the Marathas in the Deccan, the Poligars in the South and the Sikhs and the Jats in the North, they did not have any significant military capabilities despite large rental incomes and patronage which they could distribute. This made the task of domination over the colony by the colonial state much easier. The colonial state, while divesting them of their traditional role rearmed them with certain extra-economic coercive powers like right to arrest and lock up tenants and auction their goods and cattle for arrears of rent through Regulations VII of 1799. It also allowed them to enjoy illegal *Abwabs* (cesses) of many types.

### 25.2.2 Ryotwari Settlement

The type of revenue settlement where the cultivator individually acquired ownership rights in land was known as *ryotwari*. The colonial administrators like Thomas Munro and Alexander Read opposed the existence of intermediaries between cultivators and the state. They favoured a direct settlement of land-revenue with the cultivator or *raiyat* (The Arabic word *raiyat*, often used for peasants in pre-British sources, actually meant 'subjects'). The Utilitarian doctrine which was the dominant ideology prevailing in the Company's administrative circles at this juncture was based on the principle of appropriating maximum amount of 'net produce' in the form of revenue. The 'net produce'

**Colonisation (Part II)** could be calculated if the peasant's cost of production was known. The land-revenue administrators could then simply subtract this cost of production from the gross produce to arrive at the figure of the net produce. But dealing with each and every cultivator meant the need for an elaborate machinery of revenue administration down to village level. The colonial state, however, stood to gain financially as there would be no intermediary group appropriating a part of the agricultural surplus and it could periodically revise land-revenue demand after 20-30 years.

Here, it is important to point out that village-level state officials had existed in pre-British forms of administration in the Western and Southern India. For example, in Maratha polity, the village-level Brahmin Kulkarni kept the accounts and records while non-Brahmin Patils enjoyed legal and policing powers. These officials were paid by the state for their services. Initially, the colonial state thought of eliminating them or reducing their power but soon realised that it could disturb the structure of the village community. Hence, in many Ryotwari areas, these officials were either retained or allowed to evolve into proprietor cultivators. The main source of their sustenance was *inam* land. *Inams* were grants of land for a specific purpose and were tax-free assignments. An implicit policy to retain the pre-existing landed magnates was obviously followed to win their support.

### **25.2.3 Mahalwari Settlement**

In the Western part of North Western Province, parts of Central India and Punjab revenue settlements were made either village wise or estate-wise (*Mahal*) with landowners or heads of families who collectively claimed to be landlords of the village or the estate. In these areas joint-landlords of village lands were collectively responsible for revenue appropriation. In many of these cases, revenue was paid collectively by the peasant Kinship units. The land resource management in these areas was not hierarchical and kinship groups controlled the land-resources. Under the East India Company, Holt Mackenzie's Minute (1819) became the basis of land-settlement with village landlord-communities. Detailed records of rights were prepared after a systematic survey and inquiry in various districts. The land revenue collection was to be done with the help of influential landowners. These people were designated as *Lambardars* or persons having a 'number' in the collector's register which contained list of persons responsible for paying land revenue to the state. All the proprietors of a Mahal were individually and collectively responsible for the payment of land-revenue assessed by the state on the Mahal. In the Mahalwari system also, land-revenue assessments were periodically revised.

### **25.2.4 The Common Resources: Social Groups and The Colonial State**

Many social groups of hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, shifting cultivators and fisher folk lived on resources available for common use, such as the forests, waste lands or water for supplementing their sources of livelihood. These resources provided them with fuel, building material for their houses and implements, grazing grounds for their cattle and means of survival during famines and scarcities. In the Pre-British period, the right to the use of waste and common lands tended to be decided by the village communities. In tribal areas, the rights were customary in nature, although periodically they were re-

negotiated with the local ruling families. During the British period, especially in the nineteenth century, the common resources were depleted and access to them became more and more difficult. The colonial state favoured settled agriculture and ignored the collective customary rights of pastoralists and tribal groups. The emphasis on sanctity of private property encouraged the dominant cultivators to try to enclose and subdivide common lands among themselves. Canal irrigation projects also converted pasture-lands into cultivable lands. The colonial rulers reserved access to forests and almost tried to monopolise the use of commercially valuable forest produce especially timber. With the bureaucratisation of forest management, a whole variety of conflicts emerged between the colonial rulers and the forest dwellers over such issues as abuses of power by petty officials, loss of rights of use of forest produce and collective responsibility for damage, etc. The worst affected were the tribes in this regard and commercialisation of agriculture added to their woes.

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### **25.3 COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE IN RELATION TO REVENUE DEMAND**

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During the early phase of colonial rule in India, the rulers pursued the policy of maximisation of land-revenue. They acted as the supreme landlord and fixed abnormally high revenue demand in cash. The taxes were collected more efficiently and the process also changed the terms of relationship between the tenants and landlords and the cultivators vis-à-vis moneylenders. The colonial judiciary defended the sanctity of contractual relationship. The commercial transactions in the agrarian economy multiplied as the markets for agricultural inputs including land expanded. The high assessment of revenue stimulated production of cash crops like sugarcane, cotton, indigo, etc. The improved transport networks – the railways and the ‘cotton roads’ facilitated growth of internal markets for agricultural products. Other institutional arrangements like creation of ports, export-import companies and exchange banks financing such trade linked Indian agricultural markets to world-wide markets. The redefined proprietary rights in land strengthened the position of rural creditors, usurers and grain dealers. New markets and profitable opportunities become available to usurers and moneylenders due to increased possibilities of spatial mobility. The creation of new proprietary rights in land and expansion of canal irrigation increased the value of land. The peasants pushed by the market-prices borrowed money from moneylenders to grow new commercial crops. The professional usurers established control over the peasant’s produce, cattle and land. Peasants were often forced to mortgage their lands due to debt-trap and this resulted in a substantial number of land-transfers. Some British officials were particularly concerned about and opposed land-alienation legislation on the ground that it would affect credit facilities and value of land.

The colonial state adjusted its land-revenue demand to a moderate level especially after 1860. This induced the peasants to produce for the market due to the incentive of increasing prices of agricultural commodities. The beneficial fruits of commercialisation, however, did not percolate down to all categories of peasants. The rich farmers and landowners forced small farmers and tenants to grow cash crops even if the latter did not benefit from such production. Moreover, although many non-cultivating moneylenders played a significant role in marketing of commercial crops and owned lands in villages, the rich peasants and landowners controlled rural credit markets. One purpose of the colonial state

in introducing land alienation legislation was to gain the support of this group whose position had been strengthened in many regions as a result of commercialisation.

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## 25.4 CHANGING COMPOSITION OF THE REVENUE SOURCES OF THE COLONIAL STATE

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In the nineteenth century, the most important source of revenue for the colonial state was the land-revenue. In 1858-59, land-revenue accounted for as high as 50% of the total government revenue. Next in importance were two commodity taxes. One was on the export of opium and the other was on the sale of salt. Government had a monopoly over the production of these commodities. Together, export duties on opium and sale tax on salt constituted for 24% of the revenues in 1858-59. Income tax, customs and excise accounted for a relatively smaller proportion of revenue (about 12% in 1858-59). Two features of colonial taxation were its regressive nature and its income-inelastic nature. A tax on salt weighed heavily equally upon the rich and poor as both consumed the same quantity. Moreover, taxing a commodity whose demand did not increase or decrease with income meant that even when economy expanded, tax-revenue from salt would not expand automatically. On the other hand, the limited reach of the income-tax left many prosperous people (Indian and European rich) out of the tax net.

This pattern of taxation changed especially after the First World War. The importance of land-tax decreased steadily to about 20% of the revenue in the 1920s. The opium tax became negligible and salt tax also lost its significance. On the other hand, income tax, customs and excise, the modern form of taxes expanded their combined share to over 50%. This change was due to a number of factors. The prolonged campaign of the association of landlords against high assessment was one factor behind the fall in the importance of land revenue. The land-revenue collections did not increase at the same rate at which agricultural output grew. Moreover, in permanently settled areas, the land revenue demand was fixed in perpetuity. The colonial state was experimenting with customs and income tax from the mid-nineteenth century to overcome financial stringency. Earlier, Lancashire had resisted the increase in the custom duties. But Inter-war period offered opportunities to give, although reluctantly, some protection to a select few Indian industries. The average custom duties were raised. Similarly, groups like the landlords, the government employees and the milk owners resisted imposition of income tax. Their support was vital for sustaining colonial rule. With the passage of time, however, these groups expanded, diversified and their resistance to payment of taxes could not be sustained. Income tax, therefore, also increased in importance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During this period, tax-revenue as a proportion of national income remained stagnant at about 5-7%. The change in the structure of taxes did not increase the revenue resources of the colonial government. The government continued to have limited spending power and had to rely steadily on borrowings to meet its expenditure. To this fundamental constraint of limited revenue was added heavy expenditure on defence, civil administration and debt-servicing of government's borrowings. The Indian army was large and costly consuming on the average 34% of the government revenue resources between 1920-30. This unproductive machinery protected the imperial interests almost anywhere in the world.



Similarly the cost of European administrative personnel was excessive and debt-servicing was an expense incurred due to the financial constraints of the colonial state.

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## 25.5 NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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In the previous sections, we have seen how the colonial state acquired control over the sources of revenue especially land-revenue. It devised various land-settlements and tried to maximise revenue collection by introducing heavy land revenue assessments. The colonial state's involvement, however, was not confined to the control of sources of land revenue, it also had extensive and inescapable command over other natural and human resources in India. In the following Sub-sections, we describe the management of these resources by a process of selective intervention in this sphere by the colonial rulers.

### 25.5.1 Forest Resources and the Colonial Forest Policy

Land revenue provided a secure financial source for maintaining the powerful mercenary armies of the East India Company and organising its commercial ventures. The colonial state subdued the indigenous rulers and secured its territorial boundaries within India. The control and distribution of the forest and waste land and encouragement to settled agriculture further led the British to intervene in the social sphere and settle large productive areas. The colonial state discontinued the practice of pre-colonial regimes of not assessing such lands. Initially, by parcelling out such lands to rural landed magnates, the colonial state could contain the 'unruly' and 'rebellious' elements on the fringes of arable land. The indigenous states had begun the process of deforestation for reasons of military security in the eighteenth century. However, the British based on their experience of forest-clearings in Scotland and Ireland took the degree of intervention in the ecology to a new level. The British disliked the slash-and-burn agriculture conducted by tribals. In some parts of central India, the colonial authorities sought to wean or coerce them away, from this type of shifting cultivation. The colonial administrators thought that adoption of sedentary agriculture would also solve the problem of policing and enforcing social order. The territorial conquest of India created conditions for an unprecedented intervention in the ecology and social fabric of the country which was accentuated due to commercial factors also.

By the 1860s, the commercial demand for timber grew as ship-building, iron-smelting and expansion of cultivable land required large quantities of wood. Timber was also needed for the Royal Navy. At this time, Oak forests in Britain were vanishing and Indian teak proved to be the most durable timber. After 1850s, the demand for railway sleeper and requirement of wood as fuel in areas where coal was not available led to large scale commercial logging. Private contractors – both European and Indian - participated in this commercial venture. Many areas of the Doab and sub-Himalayan forests of Kumaon and Garhwal were denuded for these purposes. Only three Indian timbers – teak, sal and deodar - were more suitable as sleepers. Sal and teak were easily available in Peninsular India near Railway lines. Their over-utilisation in the initial years of railway – expansion necessitated use of deodar forests in the North – West Himalayas. Subsequently H. Cleghern's work, *The Forests and Gardens of South India* (1860) depicts the impact of the building of railways on the ecology

especially in Malghat and North Arcot Hills. Earlier, the Indian regimes had sought to tax and monopolise valuable forest produce but the demand of the European entrepreneurs and the colonial state was much more extensive.

Under the pre-colonial regimes state control of forest was restricted to the right of the use of certain valuable plant and animal species. For instance, Tipu Sultan asserted his rights over sandalwood, a valuable tree and the Amirs of Sind developed their hunting reserves. But in most cases, peasant and tribal communities had free and open access to the forests. The pre-British rulers cleared wood lands in strategic military regions to augment their revenues. Colonialism not only further strengthened these earlier trends but also tried to protect and preserve the forests and 'tame' the forest-dwellers. Whether it was done in a systematic and 'rational' manner as claimed by the rulers has been a debatable issue. Alexander Gibson and Huger Cleghorn, the Scottish surgeons in the service of the East India Company, from 1837 onwards, linked deforestation to drought. Protection of forests was seen by them as essential for maintaining water-supplies and safeguarding of agricultural prosperity. They linked denudation and disappearance of forest cover to commercial logging by traders and particularly to the *Kumri* or shifting cultivation practiced in the Western Ghats. Marginalisation of indigenous forest users and attempts by the colonial state to bind them to settled agriculture or to wage labour meant encroachment of the traditional rights of the cultivators. This disregard shown towards the indigenous forest users and their incorporation into a regime of control was further reflected in the establishment of an Imperial Forest Department and the passing of the Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878.

The Imperial Forest Department was established in 1864. Dietrich Brandis, a German botanist was appointed the first Inspector – General of forests. The department sought to evolve legal mechanisms to restrict access to forests previously enjoyed by the rural and tribal communities. The initial practice of recognising the customary rights regarding the use of forest and other common property on the pattern of the already existing user-rights was curtailed as the colonial state had consolidated its political hold. The Forest Act of 1865 was passed to facilitate the control over the forests which were earmarked for providing railway supplies. The customary rights of villagers were not well-defined in the Act. A more comprehensive piece of legislation to assert its control was needed and a conference of forest officers organised in 1874 examined the 'defects' of 1865 Act and suggested a new legislation. It took 13 years to pass the new Act as the colonial bureaucracy was divided over the issue. A dominant faction headed by Baden-Powell argued for a total control of all forest areas and recognised only those user-rights that were explicitly granted by the state. The other group, especially the Madras forest officials, rejected the plea of state intervention and wanted the peasants and tribals to be given the usual free access, governed and regulated by community sanctions. The third group, headed by Inspector-General of forests, Dietrich Brandis, took an intermediate position. It was in favour of state management of ecologically and strategically valuable forests only, allowing the other forests to be managed by local communities. A forest Act, broadly favouring strict state control and rejecting customary rights of use of forest by the rural communities was passed in 1878.

The Forest Act of 1878 classified forests into three groups of reserved, protected and village forests. 'Reserved' forests were compact and valuable forests under the strict control of forest department for commercial timber production where

customary rights of the rural communities with regard to use of forest produce were completely abrogated. The 'Protected' forests were also under state control which recorded the rights but did not settle them. The state control was firmly maintained by outlining detailed provisions for the protection of a particular tree species as and when they were considered commercially valuable, and by closing the forest whenever required to grazing and wood collection. The third group of village forests across the country were never developed and defined.

The legal and institutional framework of 1878 Act served the imperial interests. It completely marginalised the villagers and tribals except for narrow and meagre claims on the produce of the forests. The sale and barter of forest produce, on which many tribal communities subsisted, was banned. The Act contained stringent measures which could be adopted by the forest administration in cases of transgression of the Act. The control of forest department was further strengthened as the area under reserved forests increased from 14,000 sq. miles in 1878 to 81,400 sq. miles in 1900. Many forest areas which earlier were under 'protected' category, were subsumed under 'reserved' category. The aim of colonial forest management, apart from depriving access to private users, was to increase timber-productivity. For this purpose, prevention of fires and prohibition of grazing and regulating the use of private forests became essential steps. In Central Province about 20% of the total forest area was under private forests of the *malguzars* and Zamindars. In the name of 'protection' and tenants' (users) rights, the forest officers extended their control over such private forests. The forest department also delineated large tracts that were simply cultivable waste and not covered with forests. The Act delineated the pattern of land-use and became a key player in the process of colonisation of land. However, at the end of nineteenth century, a new generation of forest officers questioned the earlier policy of strict exclusion of men and cattle from forest because now it had been established that cattle-grazing and fires improved reproduction of timber trees and quality of fodder in certain cases. So they were in favour of a lenient and flexible policy towards rural users of forests.

The colonial forest policy had a number of serious implications. It led to an artificial separation of cultivable land and forest land, affecting millions of cultivators. The prohibition of grazing and shifting cultivation in forests destroyed the way of life of many pastoralist and tribal groups. The indigenous knowledge of traditional conservation and management of forests was devalued. The colonial commercial priorities were the guiding principles of the new regime. Hence, there was an intense opposition and defiance of forest regulations whenever opportunities permitted such outbursts.

### 25.5.2 Water Resources and Irrigation

The history of the use of water resources through state-sponsored irrigation projects in India goes back to the ancient times and many rulers of the pre-colonial regimes had taken up public irrigation works. For example, a network of canals had been developed in the Western part of river Jamuna by Firoz Shah Tuglaq. A second example of this type of activity was the 'grand anicut' on the Kaveri attributed to the Chola rulers. The pre-colonial regimes thus experimented in water conservation and redistribution to create productive assets for peasants. These projects were also taken as means of famine relief by many Indian rulers. In the early phase of the colonial rule, canal construction and restoration of pre-existing canals and anicuts was assigned to the engineering department of the army. Lord Dalhousie established the Public Works

Department in 1854 and the control of water-resources was entrusted to this department. The colonial irrigation enterprise was very different from the experiments of pre-colonial rulers both in scale and ingenuity, of the engineering efforts. Apart from reducing chances of famine, irrigation was supposed to raise the agricultural productivity especially in the areas under intensive cultivation for commercial crops. In this sense, the colonial state sought a profitable return on its investment in the irrigation projects. The colonial administration made a clear-cut distinction between 'protective works' undertaken for famine relief and productive works undertaken to increase agricultural production. The former category was economical, as government would be spared the burden of spending money for purposes of famine relief. The latter category could be commercially profitable as it generated money through enhanced productivity and thus, increase the cultivator's income. As a result, the government could realise more taxes either through higher assessment of land-revenue or by charging a water-rate on irrigated soils.

In the nineteenth century, the colonial state embarked on the construction of a number of canals, cut out of perennial rivers of north India and a number of anicuts on South Indian rivers like Kaveri, Godavari and Krishna, to redistribute monsoon water. The north Indian canals were concentrated in the Ganga-Jamuna Doab and the tributaries of Indus river. In some areas, especially in the Punjab between 1890 and 1930, the extension of canal-irrigation helped in the planned 'colonisation' and reclamation of the vast areas of waste and pasture lands by the migrant cultivators. At the same time the railways had already begun to compete for limited public funds with other state sponsored activities like irrigation enterprises, etc. in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the colonial state shifted its policy by paying more attention to the promotion of small – scale and private sources of water supply. This shift was a result of both financial hardship faced by the colonial state and the disadvantages perceived by the officials in the implementation of the large scale irrigation projects. Attempts were also made in this period to harness the hydroelectric potential of river water.

There is a divergence of views on the effects of canal irrigation under colonial rule. Elizabeth Whitcombe argues that canals had a harmful effect on the natural drainage system. This led to water logging and increased the salination of vast tracts of fertile lands. The canals also induced a bias towards cultivation of cash crops and intensive cropping pattern. Such trends destroyed the element of self-sufficiency in the food producing as well as the pastoral-economy based on cattle-rearing. Another harmful effect was increasing incidences of diseases like malaria. She also criticises the inclination of the colonial state towards the commercial principle of calculating the rate of return. Ian Stone, on the other hand, argues that canals enabled rise in yield per acre, reduced the impact of fluctuating harvest trends, raised the living standards and encouraged industries like sugar-refining.

### **25.5.3 Mineral Resources**

Though coal had been mined for a long time in India, initially most of the coal was imported into India from Britain. However, with the expansion of railway network, domestic requirements increased. Between 1890-1920, domestic coal production increased from 2.2 million to 22.6 million tons. Although the colonial state did not directly control the reserves of coal resources in India, the general economic incentives provided to the British agency houses established a strong

interlocking of the ownership in the jute mills and the coal mines. In 1914, ten large European managing agencies based in Calcutta owned most of the joint stock companies engaged in coal-mining. The share of the Indian owned companies started increasing after World War I and reached one-third of the total coal-production in 1947. In the Zamindari areas of eastern India, the owners of the mine lands were generally Zamindars. This indigenous group of rent-receivers shared the profits of the coal business with colliers. The Indian interests in coal mining complained that the railways gave preferential treatment to the European colliers. However, when it came to defending their interests in the 1920s, both the European and Indian associations of colliers joined hands to resist the labour demands.

In contrast to the coal-mines, the colonial state directly monopolised mining rights over the sources of crude oil. Modern oil wells began to develop in Burma in the late nineteenth century. The mining contract was given to a British firm, the Burmah oil. By this time kerosene had become a household fuel and its regular supply became an issue of public concern. The state, therefore, prevented, non-British firms such as Standard Oil Company and Shell from getting such contracts. Such control was also maintained because the Royal navy was also in need of oil.

#### 25.5.4 Labour Under Colonialism

The colonial state, claiming to follow a non-interventionist policy, did not ordinarily control the flows of internal labour migration in India. They were governed by the 'push' and 'pull' of market forces. However, the colonial state did regulate the labour flows where the interests of British plantation owners in India or abroad were specifically involved. As the tea plantations expanded in Assam, the colonial state provided liberal terms of land-lease and other infrastructural facilities to the owners of plantations. Moreover, as the local labour was either not easily available or unwilling to work in plantations, labourers were recruited through licensed labour contractors, sometimes called *arkattis*. Most of the indentured labours came from Chotanagpur, Orissa and tribal districts of Bengal. The colonial state also helped the plantation owners by passing legislation that restrained the workers from leaving the tea-gardens, whereas the laws governing the working conditions were introduced at a very slow pace.

The net emigration in terms of total population of India was negligible yet it facilitated the growth of British enterprises, especially plantations, in a number of countries. Organised emigration began in the 1830s and became quite significant in the nineteenth century. The colonial state set up emigrant depots at major port cities like Calcutta and Madras and then employed recruiting agents to recruit labourers from interior districts. Northern Bihar, Eastern U.P. and the central and southern coastal districts of Tamil Nadu were the areas which provided unskilled indentured labour in India. These indentured labourers were sent to the British colonies in South-east Asia, Burma, the Pacific, Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa and West Indies to work on sugar and other plantations. The colonial state and its administrators argued that such utilisation of human-resources was beneficial to India because labourers sent remittances to their families and it drew off surplus population giving relief to over-crowded tracts. However, this regulation and control of labour reflected the nexus of British planters and the colonial state to develop a captive labour force that could be used in areas having labour-shortage.

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## 25.6 TRADE, FINANCE AND THE COLONIAL INTERESTS

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The expansion of international trade was facilitated under the colonial rule due to a variety of factors. The benefits of this trade accrued disproportionately to the European merchants and export-import companies. The European exchange banks specialising in foreign trade finance restricted the entry of indigenous merchants into this lucrative business. The colonial state's preferential purchase-policy such as purchase of imported British goods for its Railway and military stores also favoured the British interests. However, powerful trading communities like the Marwaris enjoyed control over the internal trade of India and even entered new areas as the agents of the British firms. However, on the whole, India was denied its legitimate claims in an expanding international trade. The colonial state claimed to favour a policy of free trade in the late nineteenth century, but in actual terms, the British trading interests enjoyed oligopolistic control over the markets in the colonies. It means that a few big enterprises and shipping interests controlled the over-all direction and composition of the foreign trade. We can cite some examples of this kind of colonial pattern of trade. India imported mostly Australian Copper via England. Direct import of copper would have lowered the prices of Copper in India but Indian consumers were denied the potential gain from the low prices because it would have harmed the interest of the oligopolistic British trading firms. Similarly, while England imported cheap Javanese, Austrian and German sugar in the 1880s, India imported large quantities of sugar from Mauritius. This benefited the British plantations in Mauritius. The colonial state did not intervene to check the speculative export of wheat and rice from India even during severe famines in which millions of people perished in India.

The leaders of the Indian national movement and the Indian business interest criticised the monetary policy of the colonial state for keeping the rupee-sterling exchange rate fixed arbitrarily at what the colonial officials thought was the correct level. In their views, the colonial government systematically overvalued the rupee. This harmed Indian exports and also indirectly subsidised government payments in sterling. During the Great Depression of 1929 and in its aftermath, many independent countries retreated from the fixed exchange rates, but in India, the monetary policy continued to be rigid. It never compromised on India's external obligations on government account. Such rigidity of the colonial government aggravated the problems in the depression years.

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## 25.7 SUMMARY

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The chief aim of the colonial state was to maximise the appropriation of agrarian surplus through land-revenue. Being an agrarian economy, land revenue continued to be the main source to be exploited. The changes in the cropping pattern and the attempts to expand irrigation were undertaken partly to meet the revenue demands of the colonial state. Gradually, however, there was a change in the composition of revenue – sources of the colonial state and the significance of land-revenue in government tax structure declined in proportion. The colonial state also simultaneously controlled many natural resources such as forest and water-resources and introduced the principle of commercial exploitation of these resources. Even human resources of the colonies were utilised to expand the scope of private British enterprises especially plantations outside India. Such penetration by market-led forces adversely affected the earlier, pre-colonial



pattern of utilisation of common resources by the indigenous communities. The colonial pattern of resource – use induced a distorted mode of economic development that even stunted the future prospects of independent development.

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## 25.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Agrarian Surplus</b>	: Cultivator's excess production over and above his minimum required subsistence needs.
<b>Arakattis</b>	: Licensed labour contractors recruiting labour for plantations
<b>Debt-servicing</b>	: Payments made towards servicing of borrowed money such as interest charges.
<b>Diwani</b>	: The right to collect revenues
<b>Extra-economic Coercive powers</b>	: Legal, political, social and administrative powers that could be used by a class to further its economic interests.
<b>Ijaradari</b>	: The practice of revenue farming in which contract of collecting revenue was given to the highest bidder.
<b>Inams</b>	: Land-grants and rights given for a specific service.
<b>Indentured Labour</b>	: The practice of using contractual and unfree labour in plantations, mines etc.
<b>Khud-Kast</b>	: Lands under self-cultivation
<b>Kumri</b>	: The practice of shifting cultivation in the Western India, also known as <i>Zhum</i> , <i>Podu</i> etc. in other areas.
<b>Lambardars</b>	: Influential landowners in Mahalwari – settled areas of North India who were allotted a number in collector's registers and made accountable for collection of revenues from their village or Mahal.
<b>Mahal</b>	: Mahal means an estate.
<b>Malguzars</b>	: landowners in Central Provinces and certain other areas of Northern India.
<b>Rate of Return</b>	: Profit earned on an investment
<b>Ryotwari</b>	: The system of land-settlement in which cultivators were given proprietary rights in land and state tried to collect land-revenues directly from this body of peasant proprietors.

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## 25.9 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the nature of land-settlements introduced by the Colonial State.
- 2) What role did the Colonial forest policy play in disturbing the traditional Indian socio-economic pattern?

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## UNIT 26 EXTENT OF COLONIAL INTERVENTION: EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

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### Structure

- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Missionaries
- 26.3 Charter Act of 1813
- 26.4 Anglo-Oriental Controversy
- 26.5 Macaulay Minute
- 26.6 Downward Filtration Theory
- 26.7 Educational Despatch of 1854
- 26.8 Hunter Commission (1882)
- 26.9 Indian University Commission (1902)
- 26.10 The Sadler Commission
- 26.11 Education under Dyarchy
- 26.12 Hartog Commission
- 26.13 Education under Provincial Autonomy (1937-47)
- 26.14 Impact of Colonial Intervention on Society
- 26.15 Summary
- 26.16 Glossary
- 26.17 Exercises

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### 26.1 INTRODUCTION

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British came to India with a commercial purpose. However, in the process of colonising, they adopted an educational policy which aimed at cultural conquest and contributed towards political subjugation of the country. Two types of educational systems existed in India, to put it in simple terms, before the arrival of the British. One for the Hindus and the other for the Muslims.

- i) The education among the Hindus was restricted and the Brahmins alone had the privilege to study and interpret the religious texts or any other forms of knowledge. They studied in special seminaries established for the purpose, such as Tols, Vidyalyayas and Chatuspatis where the medium of instruction was Sanskrit. There were vernacular schools for the common people. Apart from the religious instructions they taught mainly reading, writing and rudiments of arithmetic. These schools generally enrolled the sons of the traders. Women, "lower castes" and agriculturists hardly received any education.
- ii) Among the Muslims anyone could study at the *Madarasa* where education was imparted in Arabic, the language in which the Koran was written. There were schools which taught vernaculars, Persian and other subjects in addition to the Koran.

At the same time many other subjects were also taught under both the religious systems of education.

Once the East India Company was transformed from a trading company to the ruling power in Bengal, it started consolidating its position as a political power in other parts of India. However, till 1812 it pursued a policy of indifference and non-interference towards education. This was because the Company itself was busy consolidating its power in post 1765 period. When Warren Hastings became Governor of Bengal in 1772 his first concern was to encourage oriental learning and research in order to earn the goodwill of both, the Hindus and the Muslims. In 1781, he founded the Calcutta Madarasa with the object "to qualify the sons of Mohammadan gentlemen for responsible and lucrative offices in the state"(Sharp, H : 1920, p.7). Muslim law and related subjects were taught there. The impact of the *Madarasa* was such that the court of Directors immediately took it under their control on a permanent basis. Another step in the same direction was the foundation of the Benaras Sanskrit College in 1791 by Jonathan Duncan, British Resident at Benaras. This college was established with the permission of Lord Cornwallis for the study of Hindu Law and Philosophy. Both these institutions were designed to provide qualified Indians to help in the administration of law in the courts of the Company.

Hastings encouraged three scholars, Sir Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones and H.T. Colebrooke to study Sanskrit. In 1784, Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal to study and enquire into the history and antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Asia. In 1794 he translated the Law Book of Manu. In 1797-98 Colebrooke produced *A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession* in four volumes. Wilkins translated *Bhagvada Gita* into English. In 1800 Lord Wellesley set up the Fort William College at Calcutta to train the British civilians as administrators and included in the curriculum, courses on oriental learning. Pandits were appointed to teach them along with experts in oriental learning. This Unit takes into account the various steps initiated by the British in the fields of education and other social areas.

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## 26.2 MISSIONARIES

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Prior to 1765, the East India Company had been favourable to missionary activities. But later on it opposed all attempts at proselytisation as it wanted to consolidate its position as a political power. The differences between the East India Company and the missionaries continued to persist till 1813 when the Charter of the Company was renewed.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century numerous missionary groups strongly urged the company to introduce Christianity and English Education in India. In this context the lead was taken by Charles Grant, William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton and Edmond Parry. But their attempts were discouraged by the Company. In 1783 by an Act of Parliament the missionaries were banned from entering India without license. The resolution was reinforced in 1793. The missionaries' attempts in particular of Wilberforce, a philanthropist, to have a clause inserted in the Company's Charter of 1793 for permission to missionaries to serve as "school-masters, missionaries, or otherwise" met with opposition from the group having a different view in the Court of Directors of the Company. It was argued "that the Hindus had as good a system of faith and morals as most people and that it would be madness to attempt their conversion or to give them any more learning or any other description of learning than what they already possessed." (Sharp, H., 1920 p.17) Consequently, Wilberforce's

Colonisation (Part II) proposal was not accepted by the British Parliament, specially when Mr. Randle Jackson, a member of parliament remarked, "We have lost our colonies in America by imparting education there; we need not do so in India too." (Mukherjee, S.N, 1966, p.28).

Charles Grant prepared the first formal blue-print on language and education for India in 1792. It was a treatise called "Observations on the state of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals: and the Means of improving it." In the treatise Grant argued in favour of the English language, education and Christianity. He quoted the example of the Mughals who had earlier imposed their language upon their subjects. He wanted English to be introduced in India as the medium of instruction in a western system of education. Moreover, he suggested English to be adopted as the official language of the Government for easy communication between the rulers and the ruled. Grant's *Observations* were published in 1797 in the form of a book and provided a basis to the opinion against the Company's policy in favour of Orientalist education. Grant covered all the aspects of imperialist education, religio-cultural, commercial and political. No British thinker on Indian education from Macaulay to Curzon and later could improve upon his blue-print. (Sharp, H, 1920, pp.81-85).

What Grant failed to do through the Government, the Christian missionaries in India especially the Baptist missionaries like Carey, Marshman and Ward, accomplished through private efforts. They, in fact, were mainly responsible for the spread of English education as well as Christianity among the Indian people. They believed that their campaign to convert the Indians to Christianity was a civilising mission. They attacked polytheism and the caste inequalities among the Hindus, for Christianity stood for one God and social equality. In the name of imparting modern education, the educational institutions started by them also gave religious instructions in Christianity.

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### 26.3 CHARTER ACT OF 1813

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The missionaries achieved success when 850 petitions were laid on the table of the House of Commons at the time of the renewal of the Charter of the Company in 1813. They were now permitted to carry on their proselytising and educational activities in the manner they liked. Thus, 1813 saw a reversal of policy of 1783 and 1793 in this regard. Clause 43 of the East India Company's Act of 1813 provided that "persons desirous of going to and remaining in India for purpose of introducing useful knowledge and religious and moral improvement" (Sharp, H., 1920, p.18) could seek permission for the same from the Court of Directors who in the event of refusal would refer it to the Board of Control for final disposal.

The Charter Act of 1813 marked a point of departure regarding the educational policy of East India Company towards its Indian subjects. Under it, the Company, for the first time, accepted state responsibility in the sphere of education. The Parliament by this act empowered the Governor General of India "to direct that out of any surplus (of revenues) ... a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." (Sharp, H., 1920, p.22). The

Directors of the Company instructed that the money was to be spent in the publication of books written in the classical languages as well as in books on law, Ethics, Medicine, etc.

In spite of the parliamentary sanction, there had been a lull in the educational activity and the money remained unspent. Nothing was done up to 1823 when a General Committee of Public Instruction was appointed. The Committee reorganised the Calcutta Madrasa and the Benaras Sanskrit College. In 1823 Lord Amherst founded the Sanskrit College at Calcutta. Two more oriental colleges at Agra and Delhi were also established. The Committee undertook the task of publishing Sanskrit and Arabic texts and translation of English books containing 'useful knowledge' into Oriental classical languages.

The introduction of English education in India was primarily motivated by the political, administrative and economic needs of Britain in India. It was not a mere accident that by the middle of the nineteenth century, especially under Lord Dalhousie, important beginnings of the inauguration of modern education in India were made. It was by that time that Britain brought under its rule a substantial portion of the Indian territory. It was also then that the industrial products of Britain began to flow into India and the trade between Britain and India acquired huge proportions.

The British government organised a huge, extensive, state machinery to administer the conquered territory. A large number of educated individuals was required to staff this immense machinery of political control and it was not possible to secure this supply of educated people from Britain. It, therefore, became necessary to establish schools and colleges in India to educate and train people in English education to staff the administrative apparatus. Key posts in this state machinery were entrusted to the British and the subordinate posts went to educated Indians. Further, clerks, managers and agents, who knew English, were also needed.

This political, administrative and economic necessity urged the British to establish schools and colleges in India, for imparting modern education. These educational institutions were to provide clerks for the government offices, lawyers versed in the structure and processes of the new legal system, doctors trained in the modern medical science, technicians and teachers, etc.

Some of the British statesmen endorsed the introduction of modern education in India with other motives. They were convinced that the British culture was the best and the most liberal in the world and that if India, South Africa and later on the entire world, were *anglicised* culturally it would pave the way for social and political unification of the world. Macaulay belonged to this group. As early as 1838 Travelyan wrote in his brochure that English would provide a positive bond between rulers and ruled and lead to permanence and stability of the British raj. (Travelyan, C.E., 1838, pp.189-90). Mountstuart Elphinstone held that English education 'would make the Indian people gladly accept the British rule.' It was hoped that 'the enlightenment due to education would reconcile the people to British rule and even engender a sense of attachment to it. Education in English according to Elphinstone was a political necessity'. [O'Malley, (ed.).1968. p. 658].

Thus, the political and economic necessity of British in India, together with an almost fanatical belief in the role of Britain as the *Messiah* to civilise and unify the world by a world-scale dissemination of British culture, prompted the introduction of modern education in India. (Desai, A.R., 1976, p.141).

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**26.4 ANGLO-ORIENTAL CONTROVERSY**

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The Charter Act of 1813 had defined the educational policy in broad and ambiguous terms without making any reference to the medium of instruction or the type of educational institutions to be established. Hence, for years a controversy raged in the country on the question of direction that this policy should take. There were two schools of thought among the British in this regard.

The first school of thought known as the Anglicists believed in the wisdom of Grant's advice and advocated the spread of Western knowledge through the medium of English. This school included the missionaries and the younger civilians and became important when Macaulay came to India and assumed its leadership. It was also supported by Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

The second school known as the Orientalists, while agreeing to the programme of the dissemination of western sciences and knowledge among the Indians, staunchly advocated the encouragement of Sanskrit and Arabic literature. The adherents of this school were further split into two groups over the question of the medium of instruction. One group (consisted of the older officials of the Company in Bengal) suggested that western science and knowledge should be spread in India through the medium of classical languages such as Sanskrit and Arabic. This group was especially strong in Bengal and was influenced by the views of Warren Hastings and Minto. The other group (led by Munro and Elphinstone and influential in Bombay) believed that western education could reach the mass of the people only if it was imparted in vernaculars or modern Indian languages.

These various schools of thought led to different educational experiments between 1823-1853 in the Presidencies and Provinces of Bengal, Bombay, Madras, North-Western Provinces and Punjab. In Bengal, Oriental learning received encouragement through measures like publication of Sanskrit and Arabic books on a wide scale and translation of English books into classical languages.

In Bombay the Government simultaneously encouraged the study of Sanskrit, English and modern Indian languages. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, vide his Minute dated the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1823 stated that the objective was "to improve the mode of teaching at the native schools and to increase the number of schools" (Basu, A.N. 1952, p. 197).

In Madras, Munro, the Governor vide his Minute dated 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1822 stated that it was not his intention "to recommend any interference whatever in the native schools" (Basu, A.N., 1952, p.177). But later on in 1826 he proposed for the establishment of two principal schools in each Collectorate, "one for Hindus and the other for Mahomedans." (Sharp, H, 1920. p.74). But these proposals could not be implemented and the idea of English education became more acceptable.

In North-Western Provinces, a system of mass education by promotion of the indigenous school was built up. In Punjab, the school at Amritsar had Hindi, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and Gurumukhee departments.

Though, to begin with, the classical languages or modern Indian languages received encouragement in the provinces of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, later



on the demand for introducing western education through the medium of English gained momentum. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay in his Minute dated August 5, 1832 argued for encouraging the study of English not only as an effective instrument of the progress of Christianity but also as a tool for the incorporation of India within the British Empire. (Basu, A.N., (ed). 1952, pp. 269-90, 297). In this context he stated: "I conceive that the study of English ought to be encouraged by all means, and that few things will be so effectual in enlightening the natives and bring them nearer to us." (Basu, A.N., 1952, p. 299).

The demand for western knowledge through the medium of English got support from Indians as well, prominent among whom were persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal. He supported the cause of the Anglicists by declaring that "the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness." (Sharp. H., 1920, p.101). He submitted a memorial to the Governor General in 1823 wherein he urged the government to "promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences". (Sharp, H., 1920, p. 101).

During this time a wind of change was felt in England where the Court of Directors, under the influence of James Mill advocated western education. The Despatch of the Court of Directors, dated 18 February 1824 (Sharp, H., 1920, pp.91-93) was in favour of western education and by 1829 it was declared that the policy of the British Government was to make English gradually and eventually the language for conducting public activities all over the country.

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## 26.5 MACAULAY MINUTE

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William Bentinck came to India, in 1829. He had already been convinced that the British language was the key to empowerment. In England he found support in James Mill and in Calcutta, in Ram Mohan Roy. In 1834 Bentinck's position was strengthened by the arrival of Thomas Babington Macaulay who became the first Law Member of the Governor-General's Council. What the British needed now was a "psychological transformation" of a subject people for effecting the cultural conquest and thereby ensuring political consolidation of the empire. Macaulay believed that the Indians were a race "so accustomed to be trampled on by the strong that they always consider humanity as a sign of human weakness" (Bryant, Arthur, 1932, p.35). Macaulay did not forget the commercial interests of the empire either. "To trade with civilised men", he said, "is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages". For him, if at all there was a choice between a British India but uncivilised, and a free India but anglicised, he would choose the latter. (Gupta & Kapoor, (ed.) 1991, p. 34).

Around this time, the thinking was that India was going to remain a permanent servile part of the British Empire. Macaulay himself wrote a memorial that "India cannot have a free government, but she may have the next best thing, a firm and impartial despotism." (Bryant, A., 1932, p.36). The India of Macaulay's dream was "to be a dependency of England, to be at war with our enemies, to be at peace with our allies, to be protected by the British navy from maritime aggression, to have a portion of the English army mixed with the Sepoys." (Gupta & Kapoor, (ed.) 1991, p. 34).

Macaulay was very much clear in his mind about the efficacy and power of English education for preserving British rule. As Chairman of the General

Committee of Public Instruction, he advocated the substitution of western culture for the Indian and set as the aim of education the creation of a class of Indians who would be "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Sharp, H., 1920. p. 116). He recommended English as a proper medium of higher education; questioned the usefulness of oriental languages and literature and considered expenditure on them as wasteful. He painted Sanskrit in the darkest colour and English in the brightest. He said that no Orientalist "could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". (Sharp, H., 1920, p.109). Sanskrit, he said raised "a breed of scholars who found their scholarship an encumbrance and a blemish", because after they had received their education, "they must either starve or live on the public all the rest of their lives." (Quoted in Calcutta Univ. Com. Report VI p.17). His Minute on education sought to withdraw the encouragement that had been provided under Hastings to the Vernaculars and Sanskrit.

Bentinck approved Macaulay's Minute and rejected the proposals of Adam who had been appointed by Bentinck himself to make a survey of indigenous education of some districts of Bengal and Bihar. Adam in his third report had favoured the revival of the indigenous educational system. Though he wanted European knowledge to be the chief subject of instruction, he proposed that the medium of instruction should be the vernaculars and not English.

The Anglo-Oriental controversy was settled in favour of Anglicists on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1835, when Bentinck accepted the proposal of Macaulay and issued directions to the effect that:

- 1) "The great object of the Government is the promotion of European literature and Science among the natives;
- 2) All funds shall be spent on English education alone i.e., on imparting to the natives a knowledge of English literature and Science through the medium of English;
- 3) All branches of native learning shall be slowly superceded by more useful studies, and no additional expenditure shall be incurred on them.
- 4) No expenditure shall be incurred on the publication of oriental works." (Sharp, H., 1920, pp. 109-17).

English, thus, became the medium of instruction in 1835. The Minute sought now, to teach what was termed as strictly 'useful', through English language, literature and culture. In 1837 English replaced Persian as the official language of the Government. It was Lord Auckland, the then Governor General of India, who through his Minute dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 1839, put an end to the Orientalist – Anglicist controversy by earmarking additional funds for the development of both the Oriental and the English education. Auckland favoured the promotion first of oriental instruction, and only thereafter of the English education whose principal aim would be "to communicate through the means of the English language, a complete education in European literature, Philosophy and science to the greater number of students who may be found ready to accept it at our hands." (Sharp, H., 1920. p.157). In 1844 followed the declaration of the Governor General Lord Hardinge, that only those candidates who had been

educated in modern western knowledge would be inducted in Government jobs. Thereby knowledge of English became a pre-requisite for seeking good jobs.

The Government of India acted quickly, particularly in Bengal and on the basis of Macaulay's Minute of 1835, made English the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges. The Calcutta Medical College was established in 1835. The Hoogly College, which had done much to promote English education among the Muhammadans, was founded in 1836. The Committee of Public Instruction which was in charge of 14 schools and college before 1835, became burdened with 48 Institutions in 1837. In 1842, the General Committee of Public Instruction was replaced by a more powerful body, the Council of Education.

The introduction of English education left its impact on Bombay and Madras as well. In Bombay Elphinstone Institution was established in 1835. A Board of Education was instituted in 1840 in Bombay. The Grant Medical College in Bombay was founded in 1845. The next year, the Elphinstone Institute began to impart learning in the higher branches of science. In the Madras presidency, an English school was established in 1837. Within a few years a number of Christian missionary organisations established several schools. Meanwhile, the first Engineering College in India was founded in Roorkee in 1847.

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## 26.6 DOWNWARD FILTRATION THEORY

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The education policy of the Company's government neglected mass education and indigenous village schools which imparted elementary education, howsoever limited and rudimentary to the people. This policy was later sharply criticised for neglecting the education of the masses. In fact, the emphasis on the opening of institutes of modern and higher education was not wrong. If for nothing else, a large number of schools and colleges were needed to educate and train teachers for elementary schools. But along with the spread of higher education the education of the masses should have been the priority. This the Government was not willing to do as it was not ready to spend more than an insignificant sum on education. To justify the meagre expenditure on education, the officials took recourse to the so called 'downward filtration theory' i.e. a theory which held that knowledge would percolate from the educated classes to the masses through the independent efforts of the former. Since the allocated funds could educate only a handful of Indians, it was decided to spend them in educating a few persons from the upper and middle classes who were expected to carry forward the task of educating the masses and spreading modern ideas among them. Education and modern ideas were thus supposed to filter or radiate downwards from the upper classes. Thus according to the 'filtration theory', "education was to permeate down to the masses from above. Drop by drop from the Himalayas of Indian life useful information was to trickle downwards, forming in time a broad and stately stream to irrigate the thirsty plains." (Mayhew, A, 1988, reprint, p.92).

This theory was also supported by the missionaries who were of the opinion that if Hindus of the higher castes were converted to Christianity through education, other lower caste people would follow suit automatically. The Court of Directors, in 1830, in their official communication to the Madras Government said, "the improvements of education are those which concern the education of the higher classes of persons possessing leisure and natural influence over the minds of their countrymen." (Basu. A., (ed.) 1952, pp.195 & 304) Macaulay also

supported the view and advocated the establishment of a class who may be interpreters between the government and the governed. Auckland finally approved the theory in his Minute in 1839 and recommended that Government attempts should be restricted to the extension of higher education to the upper strata of society who have leisure for study and whose culture would filter down to the masses.

This theory had to be abandoned later because it did not work out for two reasons. The persons who had acquired English education were able to get government jobs easily hence they did not make any effort for educating their countrymen. Moreover, the new education had "created a separate caste of English scholars, who no longer had sympathy, or had very little sympathy, with their countrymen." (B. D. Basu, n.d., p. 86).

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## 26.7 EDUCATIONAL DESPATCH OF 1854

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The Macaulayan course regarding language and education underwent a review in Wood's Education Dispatch of 1854, described by some as 'The Magna Carta of Indian Education'. (Richey, J.A., 1922, p.364). It reviewed the past educational policies and outlined a policy for the future. The occasion for this was provided by the renewal of the Company's charter in 1853. Educational dispatch of 1854 which was named after Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control resolved all controversies of the period around the subject of education into well defined attitudes.

The objective that the dispatch had in view, was to supply East India Company with reliable and capable public servants. To achieve this end the Despatch decided 'to confer upon the natives of India vast blessings which flow from the spread of Western knowledge, so that their intellectual as well as moral standard be raised.' The Western education was also expected 'to secure for England a large and more certain supply of many articles, necessary for her manufacture and extensively consumed by her population, as well as almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour.' ((Richey, J.A., 1922, pp.364-65).

The Despatch observed, "The system of science and philosophy which forms the learning of the East abounds with grave errors, and Eastern literature is at least very deficient as regards all modern discovery and improvement," and concluded the discussion with the following declaration : "We must emphatically declare that the education which we desire to see extended in India is that which has for its object the diffusion of the improved art, sciences, philosophy and literature of Europe; in short of European knowledge." (Richey, J.A., 1922, p.366).

Regarding the controversy about the medium of instruction, the Despatch reached the conclusion that (1) English should be used as the medium of instruction in the higher branches, i.e. at the collegiate stage, (2) secondary education was to be imparted both through English and through modern Indian languages, and (3) modern Indian languages were to be encouraged with a view to making them the medium in course of time for imparting higher education. Aim of the Despatch was not to substitute English for the vernacular languages of the country and it was stipulated that English should be taught wherever there was a demand for it. The Despatch itself had stated: "We look, therefore, to the English language and to the vernacular languages of India together as the medium for the diffusion of European knowledge, and it is our desire to see them

cultivated together in all schools in India of a sufficiently high class to maintain a school-master possessing the requisite qualifications". (Richey, J.A., 1922, p.368).

Thus, the Despatch failed to resolve the basic tension that existed between the supporters of English and Indian languages. Although the traditional role of classical languages was recognised, the choice of English as medium of instruction in the highest branches of learning, and the spread of modern knowledge and education, could hardly give the vernaculars the importance and position which could help them grow and develop. The practical situation whereby English education helped secure a government job also came in the way of the vernaculars being chosen as the medium of instruction for higher learning.

The Despatch also rejected the Downward Filtration Theory, as it was considered a retrograde policy. It was stated in the Despatch that the government should assume direct responsibilities for the education of the masses and women.

The Despatch laid down the principles of graded educational system at the base of which were indigenous schools and primary schools and at the top were the universities. The system of education was well planned, Indigenous Primary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Universities, all over the country.

The Despatch also recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage and foster private enterprise in the field of education. It was thought that as government could never have the funds to provide for all the educational needs of the country, the bulk of its educational institutions would have to be organised by private bodies – whether missionary or Indian. However, the grant-in-aid was conditional on the institutions employing qualified teachers and maintaining proper standards of teaching.

For a systematic supervision of education system, it was recommended that the Department of Public Instruction should be created in the provinces. The Director of Public Instruction was held responsible for the working of this department and was to submit to the Government an annual report on the progress of education in his province.

The Despatch made valuable suggestions as regards university education. It recommended that universities in the three presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay should be set up on the model of the London University. The structure of the University system provided for a Senate, a Chancellor, a Vice Chancellor and Fellows – all to be nominated by the Government. The universities were to hold examinations and confer degrees. A university might set up professorships in various branches of learning. It was during the stormy days of the revolt of 1857-59, that Universities were founded in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

The Despatch emphasised the importance of vocational instruction and the need for establishing technical schools and colleges. It also recommended Teachers' Training Institutions on the model prevalent in England.

The ideal and methods advocated in the Despatch dominated the education field for about five decades. The same period also witnessed a rapid Westernisation of educational system in India. The indigenous system gradually gave place to the western system of education. Most of the educational institutions during this

Colonisation (Part II) period were run by European headmasters and principals under the Education Department. The missionary enterprise played its own part and managed a number of institutions. Gradually private Indian effort appeared in the field of education.

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## 26.8 HUNTER COMMISSION (1882)

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In 1882 the Government appointed a Commission under the Chairmanship of W.W. Hunter to review the progress of education in the country since the Despatch of 1854. It was appointed to enquire particularly into the manner in which the principles of the Despatch of 1854 had been implemented and to suggest such methods as it might think desirable, with a view to more completely carrying out the policy therein laid down. Another reason for the appointment of the commission was the propaganda carried on by the missionaries in England that the education system of India was not in accordance with the policy laid down in Wood's Despatch. The resolution appointing the Commission instructed the Chairman that 'the principal object of the enquiry of the commission should be to examine the present state of elementary education through out the Indian Empire and the means by which this can be extended and improved.' There were eight Indian members in the commission. It visited all the provinces and passed no fewer than 200 resolutions. The Commission mostly confined its remarks to secondary and primary education. Its main recommendations were:

- i) The State's special care for the extension and improvement of primary education was emphasised. It was declared that "the primary instruction should be regarded as the instruction of the masses through the vernacular, in such subjects as will best fit them for their position in life". While private enterprise was to be welcomed at all stages of education, primary education was to be provided without reference to local co-operation. The commission recommended the transfer of the control of primary education to the newly set up District and Municipal Boards. The local boards were empowered to levy cess for educational purpose.
- ii) Secondary education so far had been purely academic with no provision for vocational education. To remove this defect the commission recommended that in the upper classes of High Schools, there should be two divisions – one, a literary education leading up to the Entrance Examination of the University, the other of a more practical character intended to fit youths for commercial and non-literary pursuits.
- iii) It was recommended that the Government should gradually withdraw from the direct management of secondary and collegiate education. "The government may establish secondary schools in exceptional cases, in place where they may be required in the interests of people, and where the people themselves may not be advanced or wealthy enough to establish such schools for themselves even with a grant-in-aid. The duty of the government was to establish one high school in every district and after that the expansion of secondary education in that district should be left to private enterprise." An all-out effort was to be made to encourage private enterprise in the field of education. To achieve this objective, it recommended the extension and liberalisation of the grants-in-aid system, recognition of aided



schools as equal to Government institutions in matters of status and privileges etc.

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- iv) The Hunter Commission drew attention to the inadequate facilities for female education outside the Presidency towns and made recommendations for its spread.
- v) The Commission's recommendations regarding the medium of instruction favoured English. It did not make any recommendations to promote the study of modern Indian languages or to lessen the dominance of English. The object of the secondary course in 1882 was to spread a 'knowledge of English' and 'not European knowledge of a less high order' through English as well as through the mother-tongue as laid down in the Despatch of 1854. The effect of this was that Indian languages came to be neglected. The dominance of English in the secondary course grew unabated so much so that its study began even before the pupil had obtained a good knowledge of his mother-tongue and often students felt burdened by the difficulties caused by the medium of instruction and examination. (Report, Indian Univ. Com. 1902, p.24).

Twenty years following the report of the Commission there was an unprecedented growth and expansion of secondary and collegiate education which is clear from the following table:

**Table 1**

	1881-82	1901-02
1) Number of Student in Colleges	5,403	23,009
2) Number of Pupils in Secondary Schools	214,077	590,129
3) Number of Secondary Schools	3,916	5,124
4) Number of Arts and Professional Colleges	72	191
5) Number of Colleges getting Government aids	11	53
6) Number of Students in the above colleges	716	5,803

*Source: Nurullah and Naik, 1962 and Basu, A., 1974.*

From 1880's, several measures were undertaken to promote western education in the country by the missionaries, the Education Department of the Government and progressive Indians. Among these three agencies, Indian private enterprise had the largest share in the spread of education. In 1901-02, a number of denominational institutions sprang up in all parts of the country. Interest was kindled in Indian and Oriental studies apart from the pursuit of Western knowledge. Another development of the period was the setting up of the teaching-cum-examining universities. For example, the Punjab University was founded in October 1882, and the Allahabad University was set up in September 1887.

The indigenous school system rapidly declined by the end of the nineteenth century. This was mainly due to the operation of two causes namely (1) absence of financial support from the state and (2) because only those who received education in new schools were eligible for employment. Even private employers preferred them.

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**26.9 INDIAN UNIVERSITY COMMISSION (1902)**

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Being a die-hard imperialist Lord Curzon wanted to defend the Empire and extend its influence over the world in which, the role of the Indian dominion was crucial. Curzon had faith in the aristocratic lineage by which men and nations to which they belonged rose in eminence and greatness. The English educated men in India were supposed to be members of the aristocracy shaped by the Universities. The common people were the sinews or a source of strength for the system but they did not try to alter it. They were to be looked after by the elite — buffers, interpreters and communicators. (Gupta & Kapoor, 1991, p.45). In this political frame of reference Curzon developed his own view regarding the role education could play in sustaining British Empire. The aim of the education of the Indian People for Curzon was loyalty to the Government and the Empire, whether it was elementary education or University education. Curzon believed as many others did around that time — “The Babus would not represent the people of India; they would only represent themselves.” (Quoted in Tara Chand, Freedom Movement, Vol. II, p.511) His eyes rested on the Indian people, the poor peasants, the humble patient silent millions who read no newspapers because they could not read at all, and who had no politics but lived by “sweat of their brow”. Hence they had to be looked after so that they could toil on with patience and defend the Empire.

Western education was a political necessity for Curzon, because through the conforming influence of western education on Indian mind, he would create a force to counter (check) the influence of the nationalists. He adopted the three dimensional political formula for governing India: improvement of the universities, education of the masses, and countering the Indian National Congress (Gupta & Kapoor (ed.), 1991, p.47).

Lord Curzon was not satisfied with the condition of Indian Universities which were set up in accordance with the London model by the Wood’s Despatch. Though the London University had been remodelled in 1898, Indian Universities continued to follow the old model. They were all examining bodies. The universities in India were all affiliating universities. The expansion in higher education had been so great and so much burden was placed on each university that it was unable to discharge its duties efficiently.

In 1901 Lord Curzon summoned the first All India Conference of Directors of Public Instruction and representatives of universities at Simla. The deliberations of the Conference were a great help to him in planning his educational reforms. Then he appointed a Commission on Education known as the Indian Universities Commission with Sir Thomas Raleigh as its President on 27 January 1902 ‘to enquire into the condition and prospects of universities in India and to recommend proposals for improving their constitution and working’. (Report Indian University Commission, 1902, p.1). The recommendation of the Indian Universities Commission were incorporated in the Government of India Resolution 1904. The publication of the Government of India Resolution was followed by the passing of the Indian Universities Act. 1904.

The important changes brought about by the Act were as follows :

- 1) The size of the Senate was to be reduced. The number of fellows was to be between 60 to 100 and that they were to hold office for only 5 years.

- 2) The three older Universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras were to have 20 members on the Syndicate and the rest 15 only.
- 3) The importance of Syndicate was enhanced. It was recognised as the executive body of the university. University teachers were granted representation on the Syndicate.
- 4) The territorial limit of each university were defined by the Governor-General-in-Council.
- 5) Government was vested with additional powers. It was required to approve the regulations framed by the Senate. If the Senate failed to frame regulations within a specified period the government was empowered to do so.
- 6) The functions of universities were enlarged. They could now appoint their professors and lecturers, undertake research, hold and manage educational endowments, maintain their own libraries, laboratories and museums. (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp. 219-20).

The Nationalist opinion (Basu, A., 1974, pp. 18-22 and Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp.220-21) both inside and outside the Legislative Council opposed the Indian Universities Act of 1904. The reforms in the higher education were looked upon with suspicion because the Indian opinion was not invited to present its view on the nature of reforms. What the country needed most was not provided for in these reforms. The strict regulations (Indian University Commission 1902, p.14) regarding affiliation of colleges were considered as a means to torpedo Indian private enterprise in the field of higher education. The Sadler Commission of 1917 commented that the Act of 1904 made the "Indian Universities among the most completely governmental Universities in the world." Curzon's reforming zeal aimed at the reduction of educational facilities in the name of efficiency. Moreover, he wanted to do it as a part of measures to control political unrest which had taken place after the partition of Bengal.

Lord Curzon's ideas (Basu, A., 1974, pp.62-63 and Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp 228-31) about Primary education were liberal. He wanted expansion of primary education together with its improvement. Regarding Primary education, particularly education of the children in the vernaculars, he noted among other things, how wrong it was to teach young children a foreign language when they were not given an opportunity to extend and deepen the knowledge of their own mother tongue. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy, 1904, emphasised the importance of mastering the vernacular before the study of English was begun. Thus English was not recommended for study at the Primary level. Furthermore, premature introduction of English as the medium of instruction before achieving comprehension ability in it was criticised. Curzon sanctioned large non-recurring grants to primary education resulting in an increase in the numbers of primary schools and pupils.

Regulations for granting recognition to secondary schools were made stricter (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp. 224-227) than those that existed before. A further set back from the stand point of the expansion of education was caused by the revised grant-in-aid codes framed between 1904 and 1908. This adversely affected the growth of secondary schools.

In 1906 the progressive State of Baroda introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories. Nationalist opinion could see no reason why the government of India could not introduce compulsory primary education in British India. In 1910 control of education was transferred from the Home Department of the Government of India to the newly created Department of Education. During 1910-13 G.K. Gokhale made heroic efforts in the Legislative Council urging the Government to accept the responsibility for compulsory primary education. (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp. 250-52) But the bill for introducing compulsory elementary education was defeated by a large majority. Finally all hope of educating the masses were thwarted. In its resolution of 21 February 1913, the Government of India refused to recognise the principle of compulsory education. (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp. 252-53).

As far as university education was concerned, the Resolution of 1913 declared that a university should be established for each province and teaching activities of the universities should be encouraged. While the old universities continued to grow, attempts were made to establish new universities. (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, p. 235).

The growth of regional and communal tendencies led to the establishment of Universities at different centers. In 1916, the Benaras Hindu University was founded mainly due to the initiative of Madan Mohan Malaviya. In 1917 the universities of Mysore and Patna were founded and in the following year the Osmania University at Hyderabad was established.

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## **26.10 THE SADLER COMMISSION**

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Meanwhile, in 1917, the Government of India appointed the Calcutta University Commission for enquiring into the working and needs of that university. Dr. Michael Sadler, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds was appointed its Chairman. The Commission included two Indian members, namely Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee and Dr. Zia-ud-din Ahmad. The Commission took into consideration the working of other Universities and submitted a comprehensive report in 1919. The Commission noted with concern the rapid increase in the numbers of University students, the growth of higher education at the cost and neglect of professional and vocational courses and the unsatisfactory condition in Universities and colleges. Among other things the Sadler Commission recommended minimum government interference in academic affairs; sound principles of appointments to teaching posts in universities through Selection Committees, with external experts; great attention to student welfare; institution of Honours courses at degree level as distinct from pass courses. The Commission also recommended that Secondary and Intermediate education should be controlled by a Board of Secondary Education and not by the university.

The report of the Commission was published in August 1919, and in the following January the Government of India issued a Resolution drawing special attention to the following points — (1) High Schools fail to give that level of training which the development activities of the country and new avenues of employment demand, (2) the Intermediate Section of University education should be recognised as part of School education and should be separated from the University organisation, (3) the defects of the present system of affiliated

colleges may be mitigated by the establishment of a strong central teaching system, the modification of the administrative machinery which would give better representation to local interests and supervision of different categories of institutions by several appropriately constituted bodies.

From 1920, a number of universities came into being in different parts of India. Universities were established in 1920 at Aligarh, Lucknow, Dacca and Rangoon, in 1922 at Santiniketan and Delhi, in 1923 at Nagpur, in 1926 at Andhra, in 1927 at Agra and Annamalai.

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## 26.11 EDUCATION UNDER DYARCHY

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The educational policy of the government led to considerable embitterment of public feeling and the Indian nationalist opinion began to demand the power to control the educational policy of the country. It was to satisfy this demand that Department of Education was transferred to the control of Indian Ministries in 1921 under Dyarchy (Nurullah and Naik, 1962, pp. 276-318). Recruitment to the Indian Educational Service was discontinued. Power was given to each province to organise its own educational services. The Provincial governments had much greater freedom to adopt and implement programmes of educational expansion. As a result of this, there was an appreciable growth in the spread of education after 1921. Several new schemes were undertaken and more grants were sanctioned in the sphere of education. There was a rapid increase in the enrolment of scholars at each level, primary, secondary and collegiate.

The rapid growth of mass education was one of the most significant events during this period. A number of Compulsory Education Acts were passed in most of the provinces. Such Acts, where they existed, were more or less implemented during this period.

Limitations of financial resources, however, soon restricted this growth. Special grants sanctioned by the Government of India during 1901-1921 were suddenly discontinued. Moreover, the situation was worsened due to the world economic depression. Consequently, most of the new schemes had to be given up and there was a drastic retrenchment in the existing expenditure on education.

### The Phase Upto 1921

The period between 1901 and 1921 was a period of political unrest, of the Partition Movement in Bengal, the Morley-Minto Reforms, World War I, the Home Rule and Non-Cooperation Movement. It was a period of the great national awakening of the Indian people, of their rising political consciousness and increasing critical attitude to the measures of the British government especially in the spheres of politics, economic policy and education.

Though there had been a phenomenal spread of western education between 1880 and 1901 but both Indian and European educationists were greatly dissatisfied with the new educational system. British officials led by Lord Curzon, criticised the new education system from the stand point of quality. They remarked that the quality of education had appreciably deteriorated since 1880, that educational institutions under private control were inefficient, that the educated Indians had an innate incapacity to assimilate foreign culture, that the ideal of spreading western knowledge and science had outlived its utility, and that the educational

Colonisation (Part II) system should be remodelled with a view to turning out men and women of character. (Nurullah & Naik, 1962, p.xx)

The Indian critics, on the other hand, still believed in the wisdom of the policy recommended by the Indian Education Commission (1882). They stressed the vital importance of quantitative expansion of education in the interests of the Indian people. According to them, what was required was not the limiting of the education out of anxiety for quality but 'a very rapid expansion of higher education on a voluntary basis and the introduction of compulsory elementary education for the masses.' (Nurullah & Naik, 1962 p.x). They also stood for full freedom for private enterprise in the field of establishing educational institutions.

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## 26.12 HARTOG COMMISSION

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The rate of progress in primary education began to decline after 1927, partly due to lack of funds and partly because of the recommendation of the Hartog Committee. In 1928 the Simon Commission appointed a sub-committee under Sir Philip Hartog to review the state of education in India. While praising the methods of teaching and research, the Hartog Committee complained about the falling standard of some of the Universities. It recommended a three years' Honours Course with emphasis on tutorial system. The Committee opined "so far as mere quantitative increase in the numbers under instruction is concerned, there has been a phenomenal advance since the inception of the Reforms of 1919." In short, education spread but deteriorated, more money was spent on it but less was taught through it, so that while some political advantage was gained, academic advancement and gain to the nation did not come up to the expectations which had built up after the formation of education ministries. The Committee recommended to the Government to concentrate on consolidation rather than diffusion of primary education.

In addition to the Indian control over the Department of Education, there were other factors which explain the expansion of education. The tremendous social and political awakening among the people during this period was one among these factors.

The period between 1921 and 1937 witnessed a number of educational experiments by distinguished Indian educationists and outstanding leaders of Indian nationalism. Vishwa-Bharati started by Poet Rabindranth Tagore, the S.N.D.T. Women's University established by Karve, the Kashi Vidyapith, the Jamia Millia, the Gujarat Vidyapith and the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith, were principal among these.

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## 26.13 EDUCATION UNDER PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY (1937-47)

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The Government of India Act, 1935, introduced provincial autonomy and popular ministries started functioning from 1937. The Congress assumed office in seven Provinces out of eleven. Larger funds were made available for education. Schemes were evolved for the expansion of primary education as well as making it compulsory. Steps were taken to remove adult illiteracy. A great fillip was given to physical and vocational education.



## Basic Education

Extent of Colonial  
Intervention:  
Education and Society

The Congress Party worked to evolve a national scheme of education for the country. In 1937 Mahatma Gandhi published a series of articles in his paper, *The Harijan* and proposed a scheme of education called Basic Education, better known as the Wardha Scheme. The main principle of Basic Education was 'learning through activity'. The Zakir Husain Committee worked out the details of the scheme and prepared a detailed syllabi for a number of crafts to be taught and made suggestions concerning training of teachers, supervision, examination and administration. The scheme centred round 'manual productive work' which was also expected to cover the remuneration to be given to the teachers. It envisaged a seven year course in which the medium of instruction was to be the mother tongue of the students. The scheme provoked a severe criticism from a section of intelligentsia as well as the non-Hindu communities.

But unfortunately this great experiment came to a sudden end when the Second World War broke out in 1939. The Congress ministries resigned in November 1939. Political developments of subsequent years particularly Quit India Movement of 1942 engulfed the country. Hence the caretaker governments which worked during 1940-45 did not introduce any new educational scheme. However, in 1944 the Central Advisory Board of Education drew up a national scheme of education, generally known as the 'Sargeant Plan'. It prepared a plan of Post War Educational Development in India which was estimated to cost Rs. 300 crores. The plan intended to take the stage of educational progress in India to the level which had already been attained in countries like England and the U.S.A. in a span of 40 years.

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## 26.14 IMPACT OF COLONIAL INTERVENTION ON SOCIETY

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In the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was large scale deforestation of the Indian sub-continent. Indigenous states had resorted to denudation of the forests for the purpose of military security. The British also adopted the policy of deforestation for commercial purposes and settled cultivation and also on account of their policy of conquests. Movement of farmers from better lands where land tax was higher to hills with poorer soil also caused forests to be cut. Another reason for forests to be cut was that the plains were disease infested. Teak-wood was procured from the western forests for the Bombay Marines between 1800-1830. In Awadh the cutting of trees led to increase in temperature which affected the water supply and the village irrigation system. Further, destruction of forests took place when coffee plantations emerged in the South and tea plantations in the Assam and Bengal hills. The results of felling of trees was the encroachment over tribal lands and intrusion of money into tribal life. Thus tribal people were absorbed into the system of agrarian wage labour in the plains. In this way with the establishment of the Colonial state the labour for money factor increased in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was linked with the production of surplus for export-markets.

Due to the subjugation of Bhil tribes of Khandesh and Mundas of Andhra they were forced to take up settled cultivation under Colonial rule. Thus the British were able to replace the traditional tribal economy (slash and burn, hunting and gathering style) with the concept of private property and reserved forest areas in the hills. The merchant capital found its way into the tribal areas and was safeguarded by landlordism and debt recovery mechanisms. Proprietary rights in

these areas were sanctified through colonial courts. Colonial administrators wished to augment their revenues through these mechanisms. Debt bondage and agrarian servitude were important features of the economy as tribals got absorbed into the category of the migrant labourers in areas of settled agriculture. The nomadic and pastoral economy suffered a setback in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The nexus between the company and the money lender-trader now helped in the penetration of the British rule into the interior areas of India. People from various areas intruded into the tribal zone of Central India. The plains of central Deccan and northern Punjab had a large nomadic and pastoral population. Most of these groups were forced to take up a settled life style. Communities who practiced horse breeding were pushed into cultivation and thus grazing areas decreased and the breed of native horses declined. Cattle breeders and herdsmen had broken up into small groups. Freelance Pack Bullock merchants were replaced by merchants who owned bullock carts operated by hired labourers. More land was brought under plough and large areas of grazing ground were given to speculators. Settled herds were established on better land and nomadic cattle was relegated to poorer soil.

The pre-colonial India where forest tracts and nomadism predominated was replaced by a land of sedentary agriculture. The society of peasants and petty-money lenders formed the lynchpin of the colonial state. It provided a better clientele for Lancashire cotton than the nomads and tribals. The introduction of cotton, indigo, sugar cultivation, jute production and tea and coffee plantations led to increased demand for agricultural labour. The distinctions among the peasantry of settled agriculture areas which were based on their traditional status and functions were now made on the basis of proprietorship of land and wealth. The traditional village community was divided into eminent lineage aristocracy (zamindars) and other peasants (Khud Kasht) who had earlier enjoyed considerable power in the rural areas. However in the colonial period the power of the eminent groups in the village community was eroded. The colonial power ended what it called slavery in 1850 (or services provided by untouchable groups). The practice of making slaves during war was also put down.

The low caste persons who had earlier been deprived of holding land were becoming poor peasants. In eastern India the abolition of customary law (interdicts) against the holding of land by the low castes (after 1812) adversely affected the availability of labour. However at times pressure of land revenue and agriculture depression forced the peasants to become landless labourers. Between 1790 and 1820 in South India the military tenures were abolished and replaced by cash revenue and cash rent. The specialist weavers also took to agriculture. Rural landless wage labour's bargaining power declined due to colonial state's discouragement to internal migration. There was no improvement in the rural standards of living. The village service community declined and this resulted in the emergence of cash earning landless field labourers. There was increase in the percentage of cultivating peasants and landless agriculture workers.

The functions and status of village elites (loosely termed as zamindars) were eroded. The headman's rights were sold and monetised. Revenue management and control of waste lands was taken away from them. The caste and religious and occupational functions of the rural service elite and their perquisites suffered a setback due to colonial policies, viz., legal system etc. The position of the village community was adversely affected.

However, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the British power was expanding. Village community was the pivot of the economic and social activities. With the coming of the British several changes were introduced. In the South Mirasi rights were transformed into the marketable freehold category. In the North also these rights got metamorphosed into saleable category. Due to the British land revenue policy at times these rights were auctioned and were purchased by new landlords. The population growth affected the Hindu law of inheritance. Thus the joint landholding rights got further parcelled and families were compelled to cultivate small plots themselves.

The British peace created a situation where there was very little scope for traditional type of military service. Groups such as Bais Rajputs of Awadh and the Muslim Rohillas had provided military services and possessed power and status at the local level under the indigenous regimes.

The British introduced a new category of rights in land (permanent settlement of 1793) according to which if the holder was unable to pay the state's demand his possession could be sold in the market. The tenants were brought within the purview of law which favoured the proprietor of land. The result of the legal tussles was shaped by a variety of factors such as prestige, power and influence of the various groups. Land had become a saleable commodity and moneylenders and other groups bought the proprietary rights. The landlords and princes were the pillars of colonial rule.

The colonial legal system had introduced the system of private proprietorship of land and was favourably inclined towards the merchants. The wealthy merchants were able to intrude into the agrarian and landed structure and bought proprietary rights over land and a convergence of interests took place between rentier landlordship and usury capital which hindered the growth of capitalism. Though the merchants did succeed in acquiring land rights in rural India but their business ventures did not get a boost. Indian capital and entrepreneurs had to function in an adverse situation where their European rivals commanded great power and influence.

The caste system, the village community and Hindu religion were the main components of traditional Indian society. British interfered by codifying Hindu law and categorised people into fixed castes through surveys and census.

In the pre-British period, the hierarchical and Brahmanical view of Indian society existed in theory but was not rigidly practiced. However, around 1850, this interpretation was securely established by being incorporated into the administrative machinery of the state. The British officials, thus, tried to understand Indian social system for securing their rule in India and in this process they came up with their own interpretation of Indian society which suited their requirements and was legitimised by being formally incorporated into the legal system.

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## 26.15 SUMMARY

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Since modern education was introduced in India to meet the colonial requirements; its progress had been restricted and its character, from the standpoint of the progress of the Indian people, unsatisfactory. From its inception, the government decided to concentrate on educating urbanised upper

and middle class which led to the neglect of mass education. Hence, the education system by building up an educated elite and neglecting popular education helped to preserve and strengthen the barrier between upper classes and the masses. Moreover, limited funds or inadequate staff made it difficult for the rulers to embark on any programme of mass education. The education system became top heavy and lop-sided. After more than a century of the British rule, 94 per cent of the Indian population remained illiterate in 1911, and 92 per cent in 1931. The percentage of enrolment at the primary stage was 31 per cent in India on the eve of World War II as against 100 per cent in most of the advanced countries. Literacy at the time of independence was about 15 per cent. This was one of the greatest drawbacks India inherited from colonial times.

Education in colonial era had also been defective qualitatively. It had a predominantly literary bias. In schools there was little provision for vocational training, and in colleges the number of students enrolled in humanities was far greater than that in sciences or technical courses. The exclusion of technical subjects in the curriculum and the small number of institutions offering such courses was closely tied to the employment policy of the government. The employment opportunities for qualified and highly trained Indians were very few, as the Government appointed Europeans to higher posts in all the departments.

As regards content, there was greater emphasis on the study of language and humanities. Familiarity with English as a spoken and written language was indispensable to success in professional life. Lessons were imparted in a mechanical way and reproduced in examinations by students. In fact, examinations were the focus of school and university education. Still the Indians went to the new schools and colleges, since passing an examination and obtaining a degree was essential for gaining entry into the government service.

The Indian nationalists criticised the government for incurring inadequate expenditure on education. Government expenditure on education was low both in terms of national income and in terms of the total government budget (Basu, A., 1982, p.66). While one-third of the total State revenue was, on the average, spent on the military, education was assigned a scanty sum. Of this small sum, a disproportionate amount was spent on higher education.

The first impact of English education was felt by the three Presidencies. Literacy varied enormously between provinces, as stated in the Census Report of 1931 (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p.326).

#### Literacy per mile aged 5 and over

Cochin	—	368
Travancore	—	289
Bengal	—	111
Bombay	—	108
Madras	—	108
U.P.	—	55
Bihar and Orissa	—	53

But English education was not equally diffused in all parts of a presidency or among all communities and castes. Everywhere it was more widespread among men than women, in cities than in villages and among higher castes. The first group to respond to it were the traditionally literate castes, such as the Brahmins

in Madras and Maharashtra, the Kayasthas and Sayeeds in U.P. Usually the higher castes stood at the top of the education ladder and the scheduled castes and tribes at the bottom which is clear from the following data of the Census Report of 1931 (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part. I, P. 330).

**Literacy by Caste, Literates per mile**

Higher Castes	—	Baidya	782 (males)
		Nayar	603
		Kayastha	607
		Brahmin	437
Lower Castes	—	Doms	16
		Dhed	16
		Bhil	11
Scheduled Caste	—	Chamar	10

The efforts of the colonial rulers, in the direction of promoting education among the backward sections, were largely politically motivated. When the rulers found that “advanced” castes or communities were becoming critical of British rule, they tried to divide society into “advanced” “intermediate” which included Muslims and “backward” groups. They began to pay special attention to the promotion of education among the second and third group.

Muslims from the very beginning remained averse to modern education. From the 1870's and with the publication of Hunter's Indian Mussalmans, government directed its attention to the encouragement of English education among the Muslims. By the end of the nineteenth century the Muslims began to take to modern education. But the growth of modern education among the Muslims did not have a uniform pattern all over the country. Where Muslims were urbanised and pursued non-agricultural occupations they were educationally more advanced than the Muslims of East Bengal and West Punjab who were poor peasants. Of all the religious communities, education was most widespread among Parsis followed by Jews and Jains which is clear from the following data of the Census Report of 1931 (Census of India, 1931, vol. I, Part I, P. 329).

Parsis	—	791
Jews	—	416
Jains	—	353
Christians	—	279
Sikhs	—	91
Hindus	—	84
Muslims	—	66

The colonial state disrupted the traditional tribal, nomadic and pastoral lifestyle and pushed these communities into the sphere of settled agriculture. The rural communities suffered a set-back with the introduction of new land revenue settlements. The superior service communities (poligars, mamlatdars) of the pre colonial period also faced tremendous hardship. The dependents princes and landlords were now the prop of the colonial state. The merchants specially money lenders and bankers too benefited from the colonial rule though they did

intrude into the agrarian structure but Indian capital and entrepreneurs did not make much headway. In recent researches the notion of the inflexibility of Indian society has been demolished and it has been established that the colonial regime was responsible for reinforcing the classification and interpretation of the Indian social order in accordance with Brahmanical traditions.

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## 26.16 GLOSSARY

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- Mirasi** : a coparcenary proprietary tenure in South India.
- Village community** : Village organisation comprising of peasants, village level officials and village servants.

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## 26.17 EXERCISES

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- 1) Discuss the importance of Macaulay's minute in the progress of English Education in India.
- 2) What impact did the colonial rule have on the traditional Indian society?



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## **UNIT 27 END OF THE COLONIAL STATE – ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC POLITY**

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### **Structure**

- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 The Colonial Legacy
  - 27.2.1 Partition as a Form of De-colonisation
  - 27.2.2 The Residue of Colonial Pattern of Power
- 27.3 The 'Passive Revolution' and the Role of Mass Upsurge in Imperial-Weakening
- 27.4 The Nationalist Legacy
- 27.5 Institutional Pillars of Democratic State
- 27.6 The Nature of Post-Colonial Indian State and the New Ruling Bloc
- 27.7 Summary
- 27.8 Glossary
- 27.9 Exercises

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### **27.1 INTRODUCTION**

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You have already studied about the emergence and nature of the colonial state in India. You have also read about the ideologies and activities of the colonial power which helped in legitimising its rule in India. The 'foreign' brand of 'modernity' under the colonial rule which encompassed the notion of legal rights, private property, capitalist enterprise, printing and state-regulated education shaped the political institutions and social and economic practices. These included various spheres ranging from the hierarchical institution of caste to the colonial political institutions, print media and medicine. The nationalist struggle used an amalgam of 'modern' ideologies and political institutions and 'glorified' indigenous cultural traditions for confronting the colonial hegemony and for self-assertion. Therefore, the post-colonial state which replaced the colonial rule combined the legacies drawn from both the colonial experience and the nationalist aspirations which tried to counter its ill effects. The nature of independent democratic Indian state and the alignment of various social groups within it was shaped by these dual legacies.

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### **27.2 THE COLONIAL LEGACY**

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The nature of post-colonial state in India partially reflected the legacy bequeathed by its colonial past. In Britain, the indigenous capitalist class created a strong nation-state within the liberal framework and representative institutions. It provided a framework of legal and administrative institutions that were needed for rapid capitalist industrialisation. However, the colonial state established in India by the British did not replicate those institutions in India. The British in India always stressed the essential difference between India and Britain and the fact that India was not ready for the liberal, secular project of the European kind. They developed a powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus and administrative mechanism to subordinate the native social and ruling groups. The post-colonial

Indian polity and society inherited some elements of the colonial system. Apart from other remnants of colonial set-up, the partition that was associated with the transfer of power or the birth of two nations, itself was the end product of colonialism and was a particular form of decolonisation. This kind of retreat of empire from the Indian sub-continent has been a subject of fierce historical debate. Various views have been expressed to explain the traumatic years of partition and various hypotheses propose to explain why the colonial rulers divided the Indian sub-continent along religious lines, while transferring power to the natives.

### 27.2.1 Partition as a Form of De-colonisation

The partition of India in 1947 has been seen as the logical culmination of Muslim communalism and the creation of Pakistan is seen as the ultimate communal demand. The Muslim League articulated the interests of all Muslims as homogeneous and mobilised them for narrow political objectives. It is further argued that colonialism opened up avenues of politics of popular participation and mobilisation. The nationalist leaders to set in motion the process of 'nation-in-the-making' utilised these opportunities in the sphere of public life. The ultimate goal of such a nation-state project was consolidation of exclusive military-political control over territories unified by the British colonialism, creation of political legitimacy through ideologies of material welfare and a degree of cultural homogeneity to achieve a 'composite culture'. In order to outwit the nationalist challenge to the hegemony of its rule, the Imperial authorities used the theory of "divide and rule". Some scholars have suggested that Indian social tradition and institutions, as we know them today, were largely a colonial "construction". British administrators and scholars gave a homogeneous and supra-legal cohesiveness to the so-called 'religious' and community-based pre-colonial Indian social identities. The creation of social-identities is seen as a fulfilment and consequence of successful social manoeuvring by the colonial power. Even if communalism was not a creation of the British Raj, it played a key role in this political scheme. The British government was able to find political allies and prevent the unified anti-imperialist front from emerging. The spread of communal tensions and riots also provided a justification for continuation of British rule in India and for denial of self-government. The partition of Bengal (1905) for administrative convenience and formation of Muslim League (1906) under official patronage are seen as the developments that ultimately contributed to partition. The scheme of separate electorates in the legislatures provided by the Minto-Morley-reforms (1909) was a system of representation on the basis of separate interests of distinct communities and their acceptance by congress temporarily to arrive at a settlement with Muslim League in Lucknow pact (1916) paved the way for extreme mass communalism of 1940s.

The Muslim League was reorganised after 1938 and moulded into a more dynamic and popular force. Volunteers and *Ulemas* were used to woo the Unionist support base in Punjab. In 1940 an ambiguous Pakistan resolution demanded sovereign, autonomous and separate state in Muslim-majority areas. The main purpose of British constitutional reforms in twentieth century was to confine Indian politics to provincial level, so as to keep the British in supreme control at the centre. A theory of primeval communities and separate electorates was against the democratic territorial representation and truly responsible government. This concession, however, was utilised by the articulate segments

of Muslim *ashraf* classes. In 1920s and 1930s, there was little need for the feudal landowning politicians to follow in the footsteps of an all India Muslim political organisation. Fazl-ul-Haq, the leader of Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and Sikander Hyat Khan, the Unionist leader of Punjab followed their own political trajectories and forged supra-communal alliances at the provincial levels. This means that separate electorates did not create the type of religiously defined 'nation' which the Muslim League was trying to cobble together. The colonial state professed to offer a federal solution, and until this was achieved, British overlordship had to continue. The intransigence of princes and communal interests were used as an excuse by the colonial state to declare the scheme of federation as unworkable. The Muslim League after the electoral debacle in 1936-37 elections where it could secure only 4.4% of the total Muslim votes cast, changed its stance. It started arguing in 1940s that there were at least two distinct nations in India and therefore, a transfer of power would have to involve dissolution of the centralised polity that was the creation of British colonialism, and creation of polities along religious lines. But the question arises how did the Muslim League garner support for its programme to the extent that it secured overwhelming number of Muslim votes in the 1946 elections?

A distinct and precise political programme could not have mobilised such massive support since the interests of Muslims in different parts of India were not homogeneous. This precluded a socio-economic programme of transformation which was bound to be resisted by feudal landowners who dominated local politics under the limited franchise scheme. The Muslim League needed the assistance of local Muslim landed gentry. But without the Congress's consent, the British could not satisfy Muslim League's demand. The communal riots and tension after the Great Calcutta Killings, (16 August – 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1946) which occurred during the observance of the 'Direct Action' Day by Muslim League, paved the way for the acceptance of 'partition' by the Congress. The Hindu Mahasabha also demanded immediate partition of Punjab and Bengal. The decolonisation through partition served the British interests as it alone could ensure the loyalty to the colonial system. The new bureaucracy was part of the nexus between the business and state in the form of managing agency system. The peaceful transfer of power through dialogue between colonial and nationalist forces prevented radicalisation of anti-colonial politics marked by suppression and silencing of radical voices of Tebhaga and Telengana peasants. A new realignment of propertied classes and the convergence of military-bureaucratic interests frustrated the redistributive aim of land reforms. The central question before the new ruling bloc that replaced the colonial power was to contain the mass upsurge and radical elements, and they favoured a conservative, gradual social transformation, even though this transfer was expected to take place at the cost of partition. The dawn of Independence, came with the dismemberment of the union of India and it was accompanied with the massacre of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. The birth of two nations provided a political terrain where each nation could project the other as the enemy and make use of the rhetoric of "besieged fortress" to support the "traditional" values and cultural homogeneity. In other words, our nationhood, independence and democracy acquired the potentialities of fascism during partition.

### 27.2.2 The Residue of Colonial Pattern of Power

The state in which the nationalist forces represented by the I.N.C. played a key role inherited many features of the administrative and institutional structures of

the colonial past. The constitution of India, itself was a product of British constitutional arrangement for India. The newly elected legislative assemblies of provinces elected members on the basis of one representative for roughly one million of the population. The Sikh and Muslim legislatures were to elect their own separate quota on the basis of their population. Muslim League members refused to join its deliberations. After India became independent, the constitution-drafting body became fully sovereign. Although, the constituent Assembly adopted many of the democratic and normative forms that the nationalist leaders had been espousing during colonial rule, the basic constitutional framework comprised of a strong unitary centre, with limited devolution of power to provinces. The centralising polity of colonial period, despite some changes, was thus retained.

The impact of the Imperial polity found expression in the continuation of the elite cadre of Indian Civil Service. Although the question of bureaucracy's responsibility or regular reporting and control by elective, non-bureaucratic political institutions required certain basic changes in its functioning and orientation, many features of colonial period were retained. These included not only the elements such as open entry based on academic achievement, elaborate training programmes, permanency of tenure and a graduated scale of pay with pension and other benefits and a system of promotion and frequent transfers, but also continuation of imperial legacy in its functional orientation, i.e., giving primacy to law and order. In certain aspects, the ethos and values of the colonial bureaucracy continued especially in the sense of attaching priority to law and order maintenance and possessing a sense of responsibility for its administrative actions. In other aspects gradual changes in their functions as public servants, along with new responsibility like conducting elections and taking developmental initiatives as the heads of public enterprises, eroded its earlier exclusive and cohesive character.

The structure and role of military and para-military forces also reflected the colonial legacy. The professional character of army insulated from the civil society was preserved. The lower officers were mostly drawn from the ranks of landed peasants which was a continuation of colonial policy. The colonial belief in martial races was reflected in the recruitment policy and regiments though initially divided on caste, ethnic and community basis later included mixed caste and ethnic groups.

There was institutionalisation of a great measure of autonomy for bureaucracy and armed forces during the colonial rule, as they were used as the instruments of colonial power to suppress and subordinate the indigenous groups. The process of partial transfer of power during 1920s and 1930s established by procedures by which the bureaucracy could bypass the elected political leaders. These procedures were further elaborated by creating a space where bureaucracy could deal with 'public matters' outside elected institutions. This created a situation where elected representatives could act as "brokers for official favours" and further paved the way for mediation between public and 'officialdom' through elected leaders. The military-bureaucratic machinery retained its relative autonomy and its mediatory role between elective institutions and public. The state in the post-colonial situation also appropriated a very large part of economic surplus and deployed it through bureaucracy in promoting development. The power and status of new bureaucratic- managerial elite also grew manifold with the growth of non-market mechanisms in the allocation of

resources through arbitrary distribution of patronage in the forms of licenses, permits and governmental sanctions.

India also inherited many other institutional features of colonial regime such as educational set-up, legal and judicial arrangements. The colonial past also shaped the socio-economic features such as underdeveloped economy and managing agency system in business-organisations. The new state also continued the pattern of infrastructure development within which it was to carry out the gradual process of transition from above, renouncing its earlier slogans of social justice, which were used to mobilise people against the colonial rulers.

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### **27.3 THE “PASSIVE REVOLUTION” AND THE ROLE OF MASS UPSURGE IN IMPERIAL WEAKENING**

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The retreat of Britain from India as the Imperial power and transfer of power to the indigenous nationalist leadership, according to one viewpoint, was the result of weakening of Britain as the great Imperial Empire. The global hegemony of Britain was challenged by newly industrialising nations during the world wars. The most important beneficiary of the rivalry was U.S.A., which emerged as the global banker and supplier of finance. USA's role in India's import-export business was around 6% of the total Indian foreign trade at the beginning of century but rose to about 1/4<sup>th</sup> by 1945-46. Secondly, the Indian capitalist class grew rapidly during 1914-47. This was achieved primarily through import-substitution, by making inroads into economic areas earlier dominated by British capital. They also entered into new areas of industrial production made available by selective protection policy of the colonial government. By 1945-46, indigenous capitalists were controlling about 72-73% of the domestic market and accounted for over 80% of the deposits in the organised banking sector. Some scholars argue on the basis of these economic trends that the process of economic decolonisation had already begun in the beginning of the twentieth century. There was also a substantial increase in the number of Indian officials especially in the lower and intermediate levels of bureaucratic institutions of the colonial state during the 1920s and 1930s. This had serious repercussion on the potential of the colonial state to suppress indigenous resistance to its rule.

The other viewpoint sees the withdrawal of British from India as a result of successive waves of mass-mobilisation by the nationalist leadership. When the Second World War broke out in Europe in September 1939 the British political leaders wanted to hold on to their Indian empire despite vital developments (emergence of nationalism, middle class, etc.) that transformed the relationship between the metropolis and the colony. The Congress leadership wanted that the British define their war aims and felt offended by Viceroy Linlithgow's decision to declare India as a supporter of British war efforts against Germany without bothering to consult either the Congress leadership or the Congress provincial governments. Initially, they organised the symbolic individual Satyagraha but eventually led a powerful mass-upsurge in August 1942 in the name of 'Quit India' campaign. There were large-scale attacks by mobs on the symbols of British authority especially revenue offices, police stations, railway lines, post offices and so on. British authority collapsed in many parts of Bihar, Bengal, eastern UP, Orissa and parts of Bombay province. Though largely unarmed resistance failed in the face of British ruthless suppression, it gave an emotive

issue to the Congress leadership around which it rejuvenated its electoral fortunes towards the end of the war.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose mobilised some 40,000- 45,000 Indian soldiers of the British Indian army who had surrendered at Singapore into an army of national liberation, the Azad Hind Fauj. The civilian recruits were labourers in plantation in Malaya, and small shopkeepers of Indian origin, i.e., in Burma and Thailand. This army organisation eroded the basis and foundation of British Imperial power, i.e., the British Indian army. It also established harmony and unity among various religious and linguistic communities, and involved wide spread participation of women. Though the march of Azad Hind Fauj was halted in the north east in 1944, it underwent a dramatic political resurrection in the winter of 1945-46 as the British decided to hold the public trials of INA (Indian National Army) prisoners. There was widespread student upsurge in Calcutta, Bombay etc, culminating in the famous RIN (Royal Indian Navy) revolt by the naval ratings of HMIS Talwar in February 1946. There was a display of solidarity by the people throughout the country with these anti-imperialist rebels.

The radical left also organised a number of mass-struggles around this time. In September 1946, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha asked the sharecroppers to give only one-third of crop as rent to the **jotedars**. This movement of **bargadars** or sharecroppers came to be known as Tebhaga and it was quite strong in North Bengal especially Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and in 24 Paraganas. Another worker-peasant and agricultural labourers joint struggle was launched by the Communists in Punnappa- Vayalar in Travancore state. The Communist organised another famous intense armed agrarian struggle in the Telengana region of Hyderabad State. (July, 1946 – October, 1951). All these struggles raised definite questions regarding the nature of the society and material advantages to be allocated to various sections of society after independence. The Congress favoured a bureaucratic rather than mobilisational form for carrying out the 'passive revolution' or a gradual, conservative social transformation at this juncture, thus preserving the power of agrarian magnates in the countryside.

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## 27.4 THE NATIONALIST LEGACY

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As we have already noted that the state that emerged in India after 1947 incorporated and accommodated ideological strands advocated by the colonisers as well as the nationalist viewpoint. The latter's contribution to the hybrid post-colonial state included the adoption of the leading ideas of nationalist leaders such as sovereignty of Indian state and a unitary state to achieve balanced economic growth and planned industrialisation. They favoured parliamentary institutions and economic self-sufficiency for India so that it may play a vital role in non-aligned movement. They also emphasised the need to achieve socio-economic reforms. Many of the institutional structures bore the imprints of these ideals and values. These values and ideals could not be ignored as they were the basis of mass-mobilisation in the anti-imperialist struggles and they accorded legitimacy to the new ruling coalition of class forces after 1947. For instance, the nationalist movement popularised democratic ideals and institutions from the very beginning and opposed laws that restricted civil liberties during the colonial period. They were demanding representation of Indian people through adult



franchise. They defended the freedom of press and speech against repressive colonial laws. Already during the 1937-39 provincial ministry period, various Congress ministries tried to work out a balance between the rights of mass organisations hold demonstrations and agitations as representing political liberties and bureaucratic concern to maintain law and order. The Congress organisation was also based on democratic pattern, with the right of dissent and expression given due place in its functioning. The nationalist leadership popularised the basic norms of popular sovereignty; representative government and civil liberties and it attempted to integrate this political ethos of the Enlightenment in the post-colonial polity. It does not mean that the model of secular democratic polity functioning within the orbit of 'modern' economic and political institutions completely superseded other forms of identity that related to the other, pre-modern forms of institutions or culture centred upon religion or hierarchical caste societies. The nationalist leaders used and 'invented' indigenous cultural ideals for self-assertion. They used modern institutional structures, such as bureaucratic type organisation based on rules and regulations, instruments of publicity and technology to produce a new cohesion for the caste-categories. In the process, they redefined the caste-associations. Sometimes, therefore, Indian political parties, peasant organisations, trade union and professional association (all part of civil society) functioned as communities of caste or faith, superficially modern, but with caste or religious affiliation at the core.

The secularisation of culture and identity was resisted by sections unwilling to assimilate into a national identity. The national identity that evolved to resist colonial rule was created by a selective use of popular myths, symbols, emblems and a variety of cultural idioms and traditions. Its aim was to foster a close link between colonial and post-colonial society. The failure to integrate the Muslim masses, even though respecting pluralities in principle, resulted in the partition of country (or the homeland). Another massive contradiction that still exists is between the rhetoric of Indian public discourse and the reality of political practice. For example, the post-colonial democratic polity retained many indigenous practices of princely rule such as *darbars* of politicians, patronage of the clients and dynastic succession of leadership etc.

Another important nationalist legacy was reflected in its economic underpinnings. The moderates evolved a strong critique of colonial economy and the subordination of Indian economic interests to the needs of British economy. On the basis of this criticism, the nationalist leaders evolved a set of ideas to overcome India's backwardness and establish a self-reliant economy. Rapid industrialisation, judicious use of foreign capital without being overwhelmed by it, restructuring of agrarian relations and planned economic development were some of the key ideas pertaining to the economic thinking of the nationalists. On this front also, the state after independence failed to institute radical socio-economic reforms as it was pressurised by the powerful urban and rural rich. Despite the declared agenda of welfare, and development the state continued to favour the upper-caste and upper-classes. Limited resources were made available to the socially marginal groups and their participation in the new polity was limited. The slow pace of modernisation is linked to disjunction between the theory of planning, equality and social justice and the actual practice of state, which was dominated by the powerful social classes which had access to the state apparatus and control over material resources.

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## 27.5 INSTITUTIONAL PILLARS OF DEMOCRATIC STATE

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The leading ideas advocated by nationalists after Independence such as popular sovereignty, secularism, democracy and parliamentarianism provided the basic normative and institutional framework of the state that emerged after 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 in India. These ideas provided legitimacy to the post-colonial polity especially because this polity was to be operative in a fragmented and culturally heterogeneous society. Many Gandhian notions such as a non-party government, decentralisation of power and authority and village self-governing institutions enjoyed wide support at the time of Independence. However, many institutions and practices borrowed from the West European model of Westminster form of parliamentary democracy were adopted and moulded to suit indigenous needs. The nation to which the British transferred power in 1947 was an end product of specific political ideas of 1930s and 1940s. Although the trauma of partition left its indelible mark on the nature of the post-colonial state, secular democracy became the foundation of this new state. The Congress organisation was based on elective principle. The adoption of parliamentary accountable government was not a pure imitation of British Parliament; it was rather a formalising of nationalist-organisational practices. Similarly, precursors of many constitutional ideas such as adult franchise without any qualification (of property or literacy), fundamental rights and a charter of socio-economic programme in the form of the Directive Principles of state policy can be traced to the pre-independence political idioms and slogans of Congress.

Though the Indian constitution of 1950 borrowed heavily from the Government of India Act (1935) and retained a quasi-federal structure inclining towards centralisation of powers, it removed the constraints inherent in the colonial framework. The allocation of power between the centre and states, between the executive and judiciary was designed to protect citizens from arbitrary exercise of power by those wielding it. This was further ensured by introducing the American model of a Supreme Court with right of judicial review. However, certain unrepresentative (bureaucratic machinery) and undemocratic provisions including Emergency provisions were retained. The socio-economic reform became difficult with the abandonment of mass-mobilisation by Congress after Independence due to non-justifiability of the Directive Principles in court of law and due to interference of judiciary and police-organisation.

The normative features of the Indian political system which played an important role in the fulfilment of the nation's "tryst with destiny" were codified by the Constituent Assembly. The Indian National Congress wanted the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, preferably elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The actual Constituent Assembly, which framed the Indian constitution, was the creation of the Cabinet Mission (March 1946) Plan. The newly elected legislative assemblies of the provinces on the basis of Government of India Act (1935) elected the members of the Constituent Assembly on the basis of one representative for roughly one million people. The Sikh and Muslim legislators elected their own separate delegates on the basis of their respective population. The British plan was to limit the scope of the Constituent Assembly and keep it divided and not to give it sovereign status. The Congress tried to give it a more representative status and 30 delegates were elected from various social groups who were not even the members of Congress party. The Muslim League delegates did not co-operate in its functioning and eventually withdrew from it

after the partition. Jawaharlal Nehru put forward the objectives of Assembly in eloquent terms. He declared: "The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity".

This developmental ideology of welfare was an important feature of the post-colonial state and formed an integral part and one of the main provisions of the Indian constitution in the post-colonial political scenario marked by the process of self-determination. The Fundamental Rights incorporated in Article 12 to 35 of the constitution, accord a guarantee against encroachments by the state on the civic and human rights of individuals as well as religious minorities. There are seven fundamental rights: the right to equality, the right to freedom, the right against exploitation, the right to freedom of religion, culture and educational rights, the right to property and the right to constitutional remedies. The Directive Principles are a set of guidelines or instructions to the state to introduce certain basic socio-economic reforms to make the fundamental rights more effective. Though there is no legal sanction behind the enforcement of these policy measures, they reflect the basic welfare-oriented norms of the Indian political system. These normative features, however, only represent the declared agenda of the Indian nation state. The functional and enforcement aspects are hindered by other dimensions such as the power of the urban and rural rich and the resultant increasing political and social marginalisation of the poor.

After independence, India made secularism the foundation of its constitution, state and society. Secularism was defined as the separation of religion from politics and state, confining religion to the private sphere of individual citizen, state neutrality towards all religions and absence of discrimination on the ground of religion. A massive contradiction between rhetoric and public pronouncements and the actual reality of political practice was again visible from the inception of Independent Indian political system. The constitution retained separate personal laws for Hindus and Muslims and treated all Hindus as a homogenised community (including Sikhs) for the purpose of the Hindu Code Bill. Even this Hindu Code Bill had to be dropped due to the opposition of conservative social forces especially around the question of granting more legal rights to the Hindu women. The sections of Bill were passed as four separate acts: The Hindu Marriage act, the Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act.

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## **27.6 THE NATURE OF POST- COLONIAL INDIAN STATE AND THE NEW RULING BLOC**

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Some scholars give primacy to the role of Congress as a party at the expense of other institutions of the post-colonial polity in India in striving to establish a democratic polity. While the Congress was the main force, its ability to enforce central authority over a fragmented social structure and a myriad of princely states owed much to the civil bureaucracy, the army and the police all of which represented the colonial institutional legacies. The Congress adopted a policy of class- conciliation and accommodation under the guise of a multi-class coalition of anti- imperialist forces during the phase of its mass- mobilisation. However, at the time of independence, it gave up the radical socio-economic programme in order to achieve a new reconciliation between the nation and the state. Now,

there was a need to silence the voices of radical transformation and unfold a strategy of building the nation-state from above. The result was a new partnership between the Congress and unrepresentative administrative machinery, the civil bureaucracy and the police in particular. This necessitated the retention of Indian Civil Service with its nomenclature changed in the name of pragmatism as well as the Indian police service along with an assortment of Paramilitary forces. This bureaucracy was neither civil nor service-oriented but encouraged a new nexus between the business and the state, thereby empowering itself by appropriating power and resources. This convergence of the ideals of nation and state necessitated formation of a new ruling bloc, a new coalition of dominant classes to restructure and remould the institutions of the state.

The chief force in the new coalition of classes that took power from the British was the indigenous capitalist class. This class developed gradually, initially benefiting from its role as subordinate agents of metropolitan capital and later as financiers of colonial state and its agencies. The Indian socio-economic formation at the time of transfer of power may be characterised as a late, backward, post-colonial capitalism, which adopted pre-capitalist production forms. The persistence of semi-feudal forms established a nexus between local agrarian magnates who controlled the local power structures and industrial and business interests. Parliamentary democracy form was adopted as it suited the business interests because of its market-oriented political mechanism. The legal system, property structure and institutions of governance all provided the basic institutional framework for capitalist development. The bureaucratic-managerial elites also played a significant role as a relatively weak capitalist class was not in a position to completely subordinate the "highly developed colonial state apparatus", which the post-colonial state inherited. The new state machinery was ideologically committed to massive capitalist development through capital-intensive heavy industries. The growth of non-market mechanisms (the so-called planning) through allocation of resources and economic patronage by the government resulted in further augmentation of the power of the bureaucracy. In short, a new ruling bloc consisting of indigenous capitalist and business class, semi-feudal agrarian magnates and bureaucratic managerial bourgeoisie took over power from the British (metropolitan) bourgeoisie in 1947. It decided the matters related to social development and policy as well as allocation of material resources according to its own convenience.

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## 27.7 SUMMARY

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The British rule in India came to an end on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. For decades Indian nationalists had resisted the British colonial power and tried to counter its hegemony. Nationalists used certain ideological and cultural markers to develop the conception of the Indian nation. The British contended that India was not a nation and would never become one because its people were divided along caste and community lines. The retreat of colonial power was only a partial success as the Imperial power succeeded in dividing the subcontinent according to its own design. The partition also ensured that the institutional patterns created by the colonial power remained intact. The transfer of power to the Congress and Muslim League in two parts of the subcontinent also silenced the radical voices and discourses regarding the post-colonial political scenario. Although India under Congress opted for a democratic and secular political set-up, the new polity suited the interests of a new ruling bloc of capitalists, large landowners

and bureaucratic-managerial elites. The gradual, conservative social change that was introduced from 'above', abandoning earlier mass-mobilisational forms, shaped the destiny of the Indian people.

**End of the Colonial  
State – Establishment  
of Democratic Polity**

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## **27.8 GLOSSARY**

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- De-colonisation** : the process of end of colonialism or the retreat of an Imperial power from its colony.
- Managing Agency System** : nexus between the business and the State
- Passive revolution** : a gradual process of social transformation with little or no mass-mobilisation.
- Ruling bloc** : a coalition of social classes that share political power.

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## **27.9 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Discuss how the Colonial and the nationalist legacy influenced the shape of the post Colonial Indian polity.
- 2) What were the main features of the post Colonial Indian State?

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