

# Theme II

## Indian Political System



### Time Line

Political Formations on the Eve of Babur's Invasion

Timurid Antecedents

Central Asia and Babur

Foundation of Mughal Rule in India

India of Babur's Time

Humayun

Sur Interregnum

Mughal Warfare and Alliances

Autonomous Chieftains

The Nayaks



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**Battle of Panipat, 1526, A Folio from *Baburnama*; Late 16<sup>th</sup> Century,**

**Photograph Source:** <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/14445/the-battle-of-panipat/>

<http://www.oldindianarts.in/2011/10/illustrations-from-manuscript-of.html>

**Source:**[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: The\\_battle\\_o f\\_Panipat\\_and\\_the\\_death\\_of\\_Sultan\\_Ibr%C4%81h%C4%ABm,\\_the\\_last\\_of\\_the\\_L%C5%8Dd%C4%AB\\_Sultans\\_of\\_Delhi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_battle_of_Panipat_and_the_death_of_Sultan_Ibr%C4%81h%C4%ABm,_the_last_of_the_L%C5%8Dd%C4%AB_Sultans_of_Delhi.jpg)

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## UNIT 3 REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLITIES \*

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### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Political Formations on the Eve of Babur's Invasion
  - 3.2.1 Principalities around Delhi and Agra
  - 3.2.2 Northwest India
  - 3.2.3 Western and Central India
  - 3.2.4 Eastern India
  - 3.2.5 Deccan and South India
- 3.3 Rushbrooke Williams on Political Formations on the eve of Babur's Invasion
- 3.4 Critique of Rushbrook Williams
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Keywords
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 3.8 Suggested Readings
- 3.9 Instructional Video Recommendations

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- know the political formations on the eve of Babur's invasion,
- examine Rushbrook Williams's analysis on the political formations on the eve of Babur's invasion, and
- evaluate and assess the critique of Rushbrook Williams's understanding of the political formations on the eve of Babur's invasion.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In our Course **BHIC 107** we have discussed that with the decline of the Tughlaq power Sultanate started showing the signs of disintegration. Timur's onslaught in 1398 exposed the weakness of the Sultanate. The succeeding Saiyyid (1414-1451) and Lodi (1451-1526) rulers did not have that acumen to keep in check the disintegrating forces. The Sultanate was marred with rebellions and revolts. Daulat Khan Lodi revolted in Punjab and even had sent an invitation to Babur to invade Hindustan. Alauddin Khan Lodi and Farmuli nobles also turned against Ibrahim. One of the contributory factor towards the emergence of a number of Afghan *foci* was also probably inherent in Afghan polity what Abbas Khan Sarwani explicitly

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underlines, ‘God in his goodness has granted kingdom of Delhi to Afghans... whatever be conquered shall be shared with us.’ This idea of ‘first among equals’ in spite of Sikandar Lodi’s attempt to centralization, could hardly alter the inherent nature of the Afghan polity. These prominent Afghan nobles were at liberty to create new *jagirs* and *zamindaris* of their own without the permission of the Sultan. Thus, practically each prominent Afghan noble served as an independent Lord in his own jurisdiction. In spite of the prevalent idea of being equal, idea of ‘privileged’ and ‘favoured’ was very much dominant. The favoured clans within the Afghans were Lodis, Sarwanis, Lohanis and Farmulis (Shaikhzadas of Ghazni); while tribes like Surs and Kakkars were completely neglected, even Niazis were looked down upon as uncouth. However, in spite of dominant Afghan nobility, other elements of non-Afghan origin were equally co-opted by the Lodis, particularly the non-Muslims and the Rajputs.

We have already discussed the emergence of new kingdoms in the fifteenth century in our Course **BHIC 107**. Here, our purpose is to look into the interests of regional kingdoms/local powers groups operating in the sixteenth century on the eve of Babur’s invasion. Further, we would also be revisiting Rushbrook Williams’s analysis of the political formations in the subcontinent on the eve of Babur’s invasion.

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## 3.2 POLITICAL FORMATIONS ON THE EVE OF BABUR’S INVASION

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On the eve of Babur’s invasion Indian polity was completely fragmented. According to Ishwari Prasad, ‘India was a congeries of states at the opening of the sixteenth century and likely to be the easy prey of an invader who had the strength and will to attempt her conquest.’

### 3.2.1 Principalities Around Delhi and Agra

On the eve of Babur’s invasion there were numerous Afghan chieftaincies working almost independent of the Lodi Sultanate around Agra and Delhi which were not only powers to reckon with, but were also capable of tilting the balance of power in favour of one or the other groups. *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* provides the graphic account of disintegrative Afghan polity and the presence of its multi-foci:

One half of the whole country was assigned in *jagir* to the Farmulis, and the other half to other Afghan tribes. At this time the Lohanis and Farmulis predominated. The districts of Saran and Champaran were held by Mian Husain; Oudh, Ambala and Hodhna by Mian Muhammad Kala Pahar; Kanauj by Mian Gadai; Shamsabad, Thanesar and Shahabad by Mian Imad; Marahra by Tatar Khan, brother of Mian; and Hariana, Desua, and other detached parganas by Khwajagi Shaikh Said.

The chief of the Sarwanis was Azam Humayun, and the principal chieftains of the Lodis were four: Mahmud Khan, who had Kalpi in *jagir*; Mian Alam, to whom Etawah and Chandwa were assigned; Mubarak Khan whose *jagir* was Lucknow; and Daulat Khan Lodi who held Lahore. Among the Sahu-Khails, the chiefs were Husain Khan and Khan Jahan, both from the same ancestor as Sultan Bahlol; Husain Khan, son of Firoz Khan, and Qutb Khan Lodi Sahu-Khail.

Some kept great establishments, Azam Humayun, Jagirdar of Kara, used to buy 200 copies of the Quran every year, had 45,000 horses under his command,

and 700 elephants. Among those of lesser note, were Daulat Khan, who had 4000 cavalry; Ali Khan Ushe, who had 4000 also; Firoz Khan Sarwani, who had 6000. Among other nobles, there were 25,000 more distributed. Ahmad Khan also, the son of Jumal Khan Lodi Sarang Khani, when he was appointed to Jaunpur, had 20,000 cavalry under him.

Intrigues dominated following the death of Sikandar Lodi (1517). The leader of the intrigues was one of the most prominent Afghan noble Azam Humayun Sarwani. It was reported that it was Azam Humayun had facilitated the escape of prince Jalal Khan (brother of Ibrahim Lodi) to Gwalior at the time of clashed between the Afghan groups following Sikandar's death resulted him in the imprisonment of Azam Humayun. This act of Ibrahim further complicated the situation. Islam Khan, son of Azam Humayun Sarwani, raised the banner of revolt against Ibrahim and captured Agra. Ibrahim's position further got vulnerable when the act of Ibrahim was condemned and other dominant Afghan nobles Azam Humayun Lodi (*muqta* of Kara) and Said Khan Yusuf Khail Lodi (*muqta* of Lucknow) demanded the release of Azam Humayun Sarwani. Though Ibrahim successfully pushed back the designs of Islam Khan and later executed him, at the same time Azam Humayun Sarwani also died/killed in prison. Thus, Ibrahim's policy, instead of winning over the prominent Afghan nobles, sternness of Ibrahim in tackling the rebels further aggravated the feelings of dissensions among the Afghan nobility against Ibrahim. This paid heavily on the Afghan Sultanate. Shaikh Husain (*muqta* of Saran and Champaran), Mian Ma'aruf Farmuli (*muqta* of Oudh), also deserted Ibrahim and joined the Rajput camp, putting Ibrahim almost on the brink of an imminent defeat at the hands of the Rajputs. Mian Bhua, one of the most experienced and respected Afghan noble of Sikandar, with whom Ibrahim shared his fatherly affection was also not spared and was sacked, replaced by his son and finally put to death. *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* records that Ibrahim put many prominent nobles into prison: Fath Khan, son of Azam Humayun Sarwani, Said Khan Lodi and Kabir Khan Lodi. He even blames that Ibrahim intended to put son of Daulat Khan Lodi (Dilawar Khan) but he fled. *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* puts blame on Ibrahim estranging the prominent nobles, 'Said Khan Lodi, Khan-I Jahan Lodi, Mian Husain Farmuli and Mian Ma'aruf Farmuli became apprehensive about their future; they united and organized themselves in the eastern *vilayets* and rebelled against the Sultan. The Sultan also turned hostile to *Masnad-i Ali Dariya Khan*, the *wazir* who was posted in Bihar.' Ibrahim's such acts of highhandedness and no attempts to win over the old influential Afghan nobles estranged the prominent nobles from him and either they themselves rebelled or in need they withdrew their support and often rallied around his opponents to add to his miseries.

The most prominent among them was Afghan chieftain of Mewat, Hasan Khan Mewati. Bayana was controlled by the powerful Afghan chieftain Nizam Khan. Gwalior, lying next to Agra was under the hegemony of Tatar Khan Sarang Khani. Dholpur further south was controlled by another powerful chieftain Muhammad Zaitun.

Clearly, neither there was any unity of purpose among the Afghan chieftains nor they were willing to accept the hegemony of one single command in case of contingency; instead their personal interests predominated.

### 3.2.2 Northwest India

In the early sixteenth century Sindh was ruled by the **Sammas** (1351-1520). In

1520, Sammas were overthrown by the Arghun Shah Beg. His son Shah Husain was ambitious and the power of the **Arghuns** (1520-1591) expanded under his tutelage.

On the eve of Babur's invasion Punjab was under prominent Afghan chieftain Daulat Khan Lodi, son of Tatar Khan. Daulat Khan Lodi was perhaps, what R.P. Tripathi puts it, 'one of the bitterest opponents of Sikandar Lodi'. He, ruling from Lahore as 'uncrowned king' had been in control of affairs of Punjab for past twenty years when Ibrahim ascended the throne. Even Alam Khan Lodi, one of the claimants to the throne of Agra sided with Daulat Khan Lodi. Though, Ibrahim wished to win over the loyalty of Daulat Khan Lodi, disliked being sent his son Dilawar Khan to the capital, instead of paying obeisance personally. Ibrahim warned of the consequences of such act which was conveyed by Dilawar Khan along with the presence of 'suppressed discontent' of the Afghan nobility at the court. Daulat was the first to face the threatening advances of Babur, who in 1518-1519 crossed the Indus and raided Bhira, being governed by Ali Khan, his son, twice. Babur even sent his envoy Mulla Murshid to Ibrahim to surrender Bhira, Khushab, Chinab and Chiniut who was stopped by Daulat Khan and was even denied an audience and kidnapped the envoy instead. Daulat Khan, though had no interests in the court intrigues, was conscious of maintaining his supreme authority in Punjab. With this desire in mind Daulat Khan Lodi had sent an invitation to Babur to attack Hindustan. These developments convince Babur that, 'there was no solidarity among the Afghans and the opportunity was favourable for an adventurous drive' (Tripathi, 1963: 28-29). His son Dilawar Khan Lodi is reported to have visited Babur in Kabul. Ibrahim sent his forces to occupy Lahore under Biban Khan and Mubarak Khan. Without resistance Lahore was occupied and Daulat Khan Lodi moved to Multan to wait for assistance from Babur But found no difficulty in occupying Lahore, even marched towards Dipalpur and occupied that (1524). It was here that Daulat Khan Lodi came to pay respect who in turn was rewarded by the governorships of Jullundhar and Sultanpur districts. But loss of Lahore was immense for Daulat Khan and further misunderstanding between the two led to imprisonment of Daulat Khan and Ghazi Khan. It was a great humiliation that Daulat Khan Lodi had to face at the hands of Babur. Ibrahim Lodi also this time did send a letter showing his utter surprise over intriguing with 'foreigners' for settling internal Afghan dissensions.

Alam Khan Lodi asked Babur to entrust Punjab in lieu of his assistance to help him occupy Delhi.

Dilawar Khan even later reported to have fought on the side of Babur against Rana Sanga in the battle of Khanwah in 1527.

### **3.2.3 Western and Central India**

In the western and central India there were three major powers: Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar. While Gujarat occupied the space on the west coast and the Gulf of Cambay region with its capital at Ahmadabad, Mewar principality bordered Gujarat Sultanate and large part of it fell in the western Rajasthan.

In western India, the power of the house of Mewar and the might of Rana Sangram Singh (1509-1528) reigned supreme. Shaikh Zain, biographer of Babur, writes, 'There was not a single ruler of the first rank in all these great countries like Delhi,

Gujarat, and Mandu, who was able to make head against him.’

In Gujarat, after the death of Mahmud Begada in 1511, Muzaffar Shah II (1511-1526) ascended the throne. However, he had to face the might of the Rana Sanga of Mewar. Gujarat Sultanate had flourishing trading ports and possessed thriving oceanic trade.

In central India, it was ruled over by the Khaljis. However, Malwa, being situated at the heartland of the subcontinent had always been the cockpit of struggle among the Lodi Sultans at Delhi and Gujarat and Mewar on the western sides. It was in the interests of both Gujarat and Mewar either to keep Malwa as an independent buffer or else exercise its physical influence over the territory. Malwa was strategically located and all routes to the Deccan and Gujarat ports from north India must cross Malwa. Besides, the territory was rich in war elephants. Further, it was extremely fertile region and rich in the production of food grains. Gujarat always had to look towards Malwa region for its foodgrain supplies.

The chief feature of the period was the constant tripartite struggle among the Gujarat Sultanate, Malwa and the Rana Sangram Singh of Chittor. During Mahmud II's reign (1510-1531) Rajput influence dominated and the Malwa Sultanate at this time was in the able hands of its Rajput chief minister Medini Rai of Chanderi, who had the support of Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar. The rising influence of Madini Rai, intrigues and clashes marred the Malwa Sultanate that led Mahmud Khalji II to seek refuge in Gujarat. Gujarat Sultan came to his rescue and attacked Medini Rai. Medini Rai got the support of Rana of Mewar thus Malwa Sultanate by the turn of the sixteenth century became the cockpit of struggle between the Sultanate of Gujarat and Rana of Mewar. In the meantime following Muzaffar Shah II's death, Bahadur Shah ascended the throne in Gujarat in 1526. Mahmud Khalji unfortunately gave shelter to Bahadur Shah's brother Chand Khan. This opened up the rivalry between the Gujarat Sultanate and Malwa. In the struggle ultimately Mahmud Khalji was killed, thus ended the Khalji dynasty of Malwa, and the Malwa Sultanate was assimilated into the Gujarat Sultanate by Bahadur Shah.

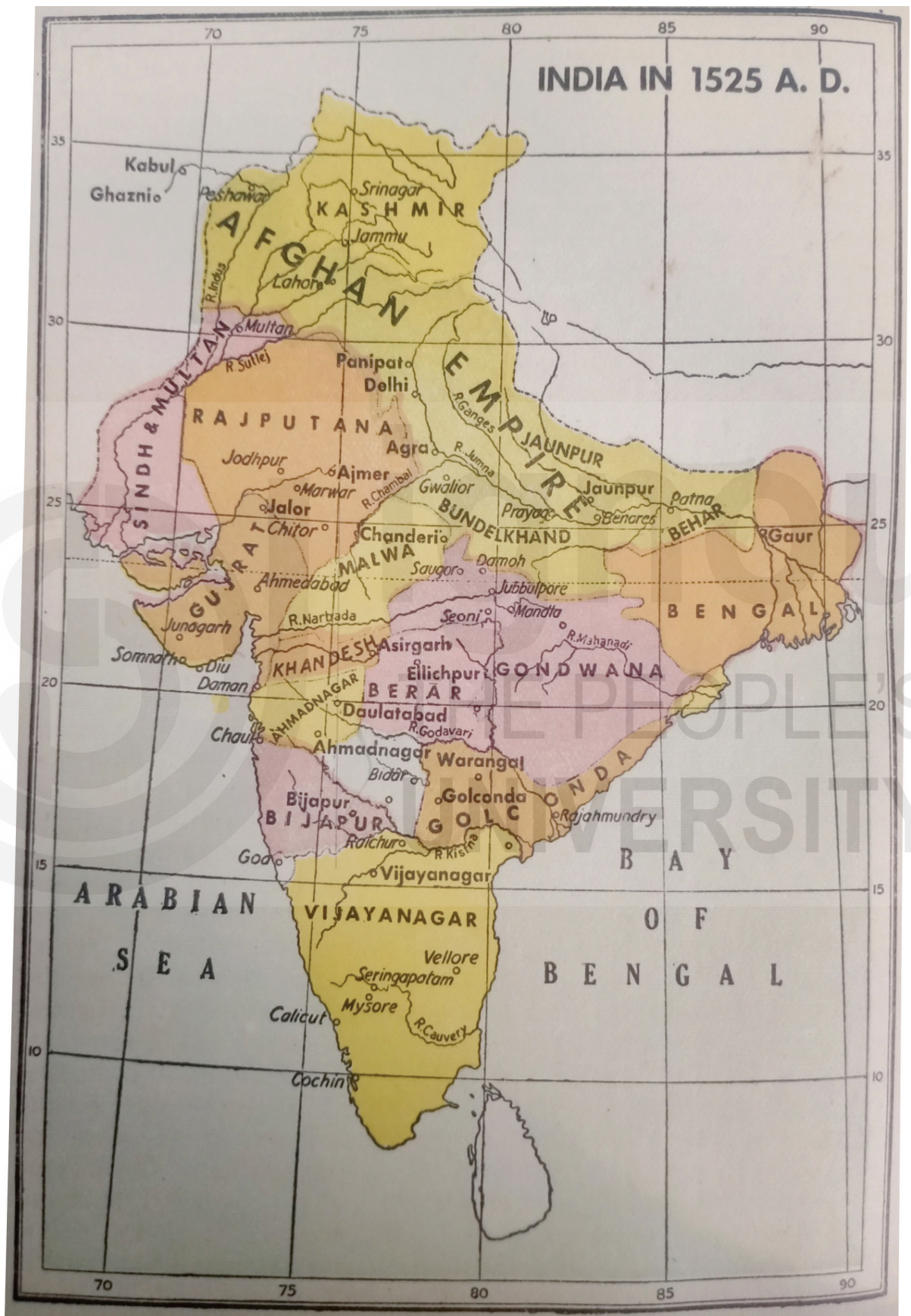
Rana Sangram Singh even asked Babur, when he was in Kabul, to attack Ibrahim Lodi, probably in return of promise to allow him to capture eastern Rajputana.

### 3.2.4 Eastern India

Towards east, in the fifteenth century kingdom of Jaunpur emerged prominent which was again subsumed by Sikander Lodi as part of the empire and was placed under the Afghan nobles. However, by the turn of the fifteenth century, Lohanis and Farmulis emerged prominent in the region. The prominent Afghan chieftains of the region were Jamal Khan Sarang Khani of Jaunpur, Nasir Khan Lohani of Ghazipur and Ma'aruf Farmuli. Darya Khan Lohani of Bihar emerged the leader of the Afghan rebels in the region. Ibrahim Lodi's forces had to face rebuffs many times sent by the Delhi Sultan to quell the Afghan activities in the region at the hands of Darya Khan Lohani.

In Bengal, situation was comparatively not so serious. Husain Shahis were dominant. Bengal Sultanate flourished under Alauddin Husain Shah (1493-1519). His son Nasrat Shah (1519-1533) was equally strong and influential. In the words of Babur he was the ‘a prince of considerable substance’. However, for Ibrahim,

in 1521 advance of Nasiruddin Nasrat Shah towards Bihar was alarming. Nasrat Shah occupied Tirhut and pushed the frontiers of the Bengal Sultanate as far as Monghyr and Hajipur.



Map 3.1: India in 1525

Source: Prasad, Ishwari, (1958) *A Short History of Muslim Rule in India: From the Advent of Islam to the Death of Aurangzeb* (Allahabad: The Indian Press), p. 211



### 3.2.5 Deccan and South India

In the south lied the mighty Vijayanagara empire and at the time of Babur’s invasion was ruled by its most powerful ruler Krishna Deva Raya (1509-1529). Praising the strength of the might of the Vijayanagara rulers Babur records, ‘Of the Pagons the greater both in territory and army, is the Raja of Bijanagar’.

In the Deccan, Bahamani kingdom was on the decline and gave way to the establishment of five Deccani Sultanates: Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar (Khandesh; 1489-1636); Adil Shahis of Bijapur (1489-1686); Qutb Shahis of Golconda (1512-1687); Barid Shahis of Berar (1489-1619); and Imad Shahi kingdom of Bidar (1490-1572). Khandesh was at that time ruled by the Faruqis. However, after Adil Khan Faruqi’s death (1457-1503), his son Miran Muhammad was no match to him.

#### Check Your Progress-1

- 1) Discuss the presence of Afghan chieftaincies around Agra and Delhi.  
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- 2) Mention the tripartite struggle among the kingdoms of Mewar, Malwa and Gujarat.  
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- 3) Write a note on the dominance of Lohani and Farmuli Afghans.  
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- 4) Discuss the political formations in the Deccan and South India on the eve of Babur’s invasion.  
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### 3.3 RUSHBROOKE WILLIAMS ON POLITICAL FORMATIONS ON THE EVE OF BABUR’S INVASION

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Rushbrook Williams in his monumental work *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century* puts forth an argument that on the eve of Babur’s invasion Rajput principalities succeeded in organizing a sort of ‘confederacy’ to siege control over ‘Hindustan’. And, had Babur not intervened Rajputs under the leadership of illustrious Rana Sanga (Rana Sangram Singh) of Mewar would have captured power in northern India.

He further emphasises that this confederation was organized mainly on religious lines and under the leadership of Rana Sanga Rajput confederacy with religious zeal embarks upon to establish 'Hindu' empire. Thus, Rushbrook Williams's main contention is that in the politics of early sixteenth century waning of the 'Muslim' power and the 'Rajput predominance' was the 'leading' factor.

According to Rushbrooke Williams, the 'petty realms' of Hindustan 'fall into four well defined groups'. 'First, there is what may be called the Northern belt of Muhammadan powers, which sweeps in a great semi-circle from the mouth of the Sindh to the Bay of Bengal [Sindh, Multan Punjab, chiefdoms around Agra and Delhi, and Bengal]... The second group may be termed the Southern Muhammadan belt [Gujarat, Malwa, Khandesh, Bahamanids]... Wedged in between the Northern and Southern band of Muhammadan states lies Rajputana... which have overtaken the politics of Islam. Of its principalities the more notable are Marwar, and above all, Mewar, now rapidly rising into a power of the first rank. To the south of the Southern Muhammadan belt there was another great Hindu power, the empire of Vijayanagar... while to the east lies the Hindu kingdom of Orissa, politically of little importance, but acting as a barrier, more or less effectual, to the southerly expansion of Bengal... To sum up... There are two groups of Muhammadan powers, each group menaced on the south by a formidable Hindu polity' (Williams 1918: 4-6). He argues that, 'The Rayas of Vijayanagar were engaged in a constant struggle with the states constituting what I have called the Southern Muhammadan belt...'. By the turn of the fifteenth century Bahmani kingdom disintegrates giving way to the establishment of five Deccani Kingdoms: Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar (Khandesh; 1489-1636), Berar (1484-1527), Ahmadnagar (1489-1633), Bijapur (1489-1686), and Golconda (1512-1687). Rushbrook Williams's (1918: 13) further underlines that, 'Such was the power of the Hindu confederacy [under Sangram Singh], and such the decline of the resources of Islam, when the balance was once more turned against the Rajputs by the coming of Babur and his Turkish warriors from the north.' Rushbrook Williams (1918: 18) emphasizes that, 'The Muhammadan powers were weak, distracted by their own divisions; the Rajput confederacy, led by Mewar, was almost ready to seize the empire which lay within its grasp. But the Fate willed otherwise. That Sangram Singh was cheated of his prize, that the forces of Islam were re-established, that the Rajputs were doomed to endure rather than enjoy...'

This very assumption of Rushbrook Williams is based on Babur's famous passage where Babur mentions:

At the date of my conquest of Hindustan it was governed by Five Musalman rulers (*padshah*) and two Pagans (*kafir*). These were the respected and independent rulers, but there were also, in the hills and jungles, many rais and rajas, held in little esteem (*kichik karim*).

To substantiate his argument another source cited by Rushbrook Williams is *Fathnama* issued by Babur immediately after the battle of Khanwa where he claims victory against the 'pagans' and 'Hindus' and assumed the title *ghazi* (victor in the Holy-war):

For Islam's sake, I wandered in the wilds,  
Prepared for war with pagans and Hindus,  
Resolved myself to meet the martyr's death.  
Thanks to be God! A *ghazi* I became.

Thus Rushbrooke Williams has emphasised that the Rajput confederacy organized under the leadership of Rana Sanga was motivated by religious zeal and intended to overthrow the 'Islamic power'.

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### 3.4 CRITIQUE OF RUSHBROOK WILLIAMS

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Rushbrook Williams's analysis received severe criticism by historians.

They argue that Babur has just narrated the presence of existing powers and nowhere has he elaborated that these powers were organized on religious grounds.

Further, Babur, himself admitted that many of the Hindu *rais* and *ranas* were obedient to 'Islam'.

Historians argue that if one sees the composition of the so-called 'Rajput confederacy', it was not exclusively consisted of Rajput/Hindu chieftains. Many prominent Muslim/Afghan chieftains were very much part of the confederacy and played an important role in the battle of Khanwa (1527) against Babur. The most prominent among them were Hasan Khan Mewati (who died fighting on the side of the Rana), Mahmud Khan Lodi, etc.

In contrast *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* (c. 1560) held Hasan Khan Mewati responsible for creating the 'confederacy' to overthrow the Mughal power in India. He informs that, 'Hasan Khan of Mewat declared Sultan Mahmud, son of Sultan Sikandar (Lodi) as the King (of Delhi), invited the Rana of Chittor (Rana Sanga), (Rai) Salahadi [Rai of Chanderi], the Afghans and turned a rebel against the King (Babur)'.

Further, we do not find any intention of the Rana to proclaim himself to be the 'king' of Hindustan, instead it was Sultan Mahmud Khan Lodi, as informed by *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* was proclaimed the Sultan of Delhi.

Unquestionably, on the eve of Babur's invasion the might of the Rana was 'supreme'. However, never in his endeavours Babur seems to be anxious to ward off the Rajput dominance, instead for him the Afghan menace required to be addressed immediately. Not just Babur, even Humayun throughout considered the Afghans to be his major enemies and he all through remained busy tackling them and even was finally overthrown by Sher Shah, the Afghan. Thus, Rushbrooke Williams's analysis of the formation of Rajput 'confederacy' on religious grounds seems to have been too loosely constructed and thus does not hold ground.

#### Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss Rushbrook Williams analysis of the political formations on the eve of Babur's invasion.

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- 2) Provide the critique of Rushbrook Williams's analysis of the political formations on the eve of Babur's invasion.

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### 3.5 SUMMARY

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On the eve of Babur's invasion the power of the Lodi Sultanate was on the wane and the Lodi influence just shrank to the areas in and around Delhi. The intrigues and ambitions of the Afghan chieftains further aggravated the situation. In contrast, on the eve of Babur's invasion east and the Deccan and the South were comparatively ruled under the powerful rulers. However, the region of Western and Central India was marked by the constant struggle and Malwa often fell prey to the ambitions of Gujarat and Mewar rulers. The principalities ruled by both the powerful 'Hindu' (Mewar and Vijayanagara) and 'Muslim' (Delhi, Agra, Bengal, Bihar and the Northwest frontier) rulers often clashed over to usurp each other's territories. However, it would be wrong to accept Rushbrook Williams's analysis that there was a creation of a 'Rajput confederacy' by Rajput forces against Babur on religious lines. One of the prominent Afghan chieftains of the time Hasan Khan Mewati fought and died fighting against the forces of Babur in the battle of Khanwa.

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### 3.6 KEYWORDS

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**Sarwanis**

A Pashtun tribe of Afghanistan

**Lohanis/Nohanis**

An Afghan tribe; they were prominent in the region of Bihar. Darya Khan Nohani was their most prominent leader who rebelled against Ibrahim Lodi and declared himself independent and assumed the title of Sultan Muhammad

**Farmulis**

A Pashtun tribe of Afghanistan; Shaikhzadas of Ghazni; the most prominent Farmuli noble was Ma'aruf Farmuli who was *muqta* of Qanauj and rebelled against Ibrahim Lodi; Shaikh Bayazid Farmuli was another powerful noble of Ibrahim (*muqta* of Oudh); Farmuli noble Ali Khan Farmuli fought for Sultan Ibrahim Lodi against Babur

**Kakkars/Khokkars**

A warlike tribe inhabited the northern and western Punjab/Salt Range region

**Niazis**

A Pashtun tribe of Afghanistan. Lodi noble Langar Khan Niazi sided with Babur in the battle of Panipat

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### 3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress-1

1. See Sub-section 3.2.1
2. See Sub-section 3.2.3
3. See Sub-section 3.2.4
4. See Sub-section 3.2.5

## Check Your Progress-2

1. See Section 3.3
2. See Section 3.4

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### 3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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### 3.9 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

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**Talking History |8| Delhi: The Foundation of Mughal Empire | Rajya Sabha TV**

<https://www.youtu.be/anQWopp1NCo>

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## UNIT 4 TIMURID ANTECEDENTS\*

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- 4.3 The Antecedents of Uzbegs and the Safavis
- 4.4 The Historical Perspective on the Eve of the Political Formations in Central Asia
- 4.5 Establishment of Uzbeg Power in Transoxiana
  - 4.5.1 The Tripartite Conflict of the Uzbegs, Persians and Timurids
  - 4.5.2 Recovery and Resurgence of the Uzbeg Power
  - 4.5.3 The Uzbeg Empire
- 4.6 Origin of the Safavis: Historical Perspective
  - 4.6.1 The Aq Qyunlus and Qara Qyunlus
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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The study of this unit would enable you to:

- understand the appearance of the Mughals on Indian borders and to learn about their origin and antecedents,
- demarcate the geographical boundary of the two powerful neighbouring states of the Mughal Empire,
- acquaint yourself with the historical perspective of the establishment of the Uzbeg and Safavi Empires,

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\* Prof. Mansura Haider, Centre of Advanced Study in History Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The present Unit is taken from IGNOU Course EHI-04: India from 16th to mid-18th Century, Block 1, Unit 1.

- analyse the factors which influenced and shaped the internal and external decisions and policies of the Mughals at earlier stages, and
- learn about Babur's encounters in Central Asia.

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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The conquest of India by the Mughals was a direct consequence of the political reshuffling and dynastic changes which took place on its north-western frontier at the turn of the 15th century. These in turn led to the formation of two new states i.e., Turan (Transoxiana in Central Asia) under the Uzbegs and Iran (Persia) under the Safavi rulers..

A study of the political formations in West and Central Asia in the first decade of the sixteenth century is important due to the geographical proximity and the age-old close cultural and commercial contacts existing between these regions and India. The fugitive Uzbek princes of Dasht-i-Qipchaq, led by Shaibani Khan, wrested Central Asia from the Timurids, exterminating the dynasty founded by Timur. In fact, this led Babur (one of the very few Timurid survivors) to turn towards India.

The Mughals, having originated from and ruled over Central Asia for over thirteen decades (1370-1505) naturally brought with them a well-tryed administrative system and a bequest in the form of Turco-Mongol terminology, institutions (both political and economic) and practices (see Themes III&IV) which had a bearing on the Mughal rule in India. The history of Mughal India can be better understood if we have some idea of its neighbouring regions rather than studying it in isolation. Such a study, therefore, assists us in understanding the historical perspective, socio-economic background and the ethos of the Mughal rulers in India. The twin states of Central Asia and Persia rose and fell almost simultaneously with that of the Mughals. The political and cultural relations at all levels increased during the sixteenth century between these states. The common cultural heritage through the ages was enriched further due to a continuous exchange of ideas and movement of men and commodities.

It is worth mentioning here that the definition of West and Central Asia is a polemic issue as its frontiers fluctuated more with the interpretations than with its geographical or territorial extent. It is safer to call the region with which we are concerned here by a generally accepted term, i.e., 'the inner Asia'. The regions described as West and Central Asia, therefore, refer in this context to the two 'states' known as Turan and Iran. These two states which developed as separate political and cultural entities in the sixteenth century had often formed part (as a province) of a large empire under one central authority (such as the Umayyads, Abbasids, Mongols and the Timurids). The two states, therefore, carried elements of common heritage in many of their administrative and organizational features. The religio-political and socio-economic transformations arising out of the changing regimes added their own new distinctive features without obliterating their deep-rooted and age-old similarities, traditions and common heritage. Although both these states had tribal bases in the 16th century, their cultural and racial distinctions were retained (and even heightened due to sectarian differences) until their disintegration. This unit takes into account the various aspects related to Turan and Iran.

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## 4.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DELIMITATION OF TURAN AND IRAN

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The inner Asian region called Turan acquired the name Mawaraunnahr (literally meaning between the two rivers) from its Arab conquerors as the region was situated between the two rivers Syr and Amu. The above region was surrounded by Aral sea, river Syr and Turkestan in the North; Iran, river Amu and Afghanistan in the South; Tienshan and Hindukush mountains in the East up to the Karokorum deserts, and the Caspian sea in the West with its diverse geographical features (arid and semi-arid lands, steppes, deserts, mountains, valleys and oases). Thus, the region was a chequer-board of varied patterns of life-style ranging from nomadism, pastoralism to a settled mode of living. This region is also a land of inland drainage with enclosed basins away from the sea and is isolated from Atlantic and Pacific circulations. Apart from agriculture, cattle-breeding was a popular profession. The region was famous for its horses which were exported in large numbers to India. Samarqandi paper and fruits (both fresh and dry) were other items of export. The eastern ridges of Elburz Mountains separated Iranian plateau from Turkestan (Iran).

In terms of physical geography, Iran or Persia consists of extensive mountain ranges extending from Asia Minor and Caucasus to the plains of Punjab called Iranian Plateau. A chain of mountains surrounds the sandy saline deserts of the central plateau thus converting it into a closed basin.

Iran had four major divisions, namely:

- the Zagros system comprising Khuzistan and small outer plains,
- the northern highlands of Iran (i.e., Elburz and Talish system) and the Caspian plains,
- eastern and south-eastern upland rim, and
- the interior region.

In terms of economic life, considerable variation is noticed such as pastoralism (mainly in the higher regions), agricultural settlements (in low lying areas) and nomadism (towards the West among Kurdish shepherds) all existing simultaneously. The north-western section of Zagros connected ancient east-west trade routes, and the Iranian wool, leather, carpets and silk found commercial outlets from several places.

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## 4.3 THE ANTECEDENTS OF UZBEGS AND THE SAFAVIS

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### The Uzbegs

The Uzbegs of Turan or Transoxiana were the descendants of Chingiz's eldest son, Juji. They derived their name from Uzbeg Khan (1312-40) of the Golden Horde and hailed from Jiji's appanage ? the Dasht-i-Qipchaq. The Uzbegs spoke Chaghatai Turkish and followed Turco-Mongol traditions. They were orthodox Sunni and followed the Hanafite Law. Numerous Turco-Mongol tribes such as the Naiman, Qushji, Durman, Qunghrat and others supported the Uzbeg state. The hostile tribes which eroded their power through constant invasions were the Mongols, Qazaqs and Qirghiz.



**The Safavis**

The Safavis were of the native Iranian stock (from Kurdistan), professed Shii'sm and followed Perso-Islamic traditions of the land they were called upon to govern. They spoke Azari Turkish and also Persian. Being of a humble sufi origin, they later constructed an impressive genealogy. The mainstay of the Safavi power was the constellation of the Turcoman tribes though the Iranian element was equally strong in the administrative bureaucracy. To the two groups were added the Georgians and Circassians later on. The four elements (particularly the Turcoman groups) were as much a source of strength in external political relations as they were a cause of perpetual intrigues internally.

**Check Your Progress-1**

- 1) Describe the significance of the study of Central Asian history in relation to the Mughals.

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- 2) Give a geographical description of Turan and Iran

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- 3) Discuss the antecedents of the Uzbegs and the Safavis.

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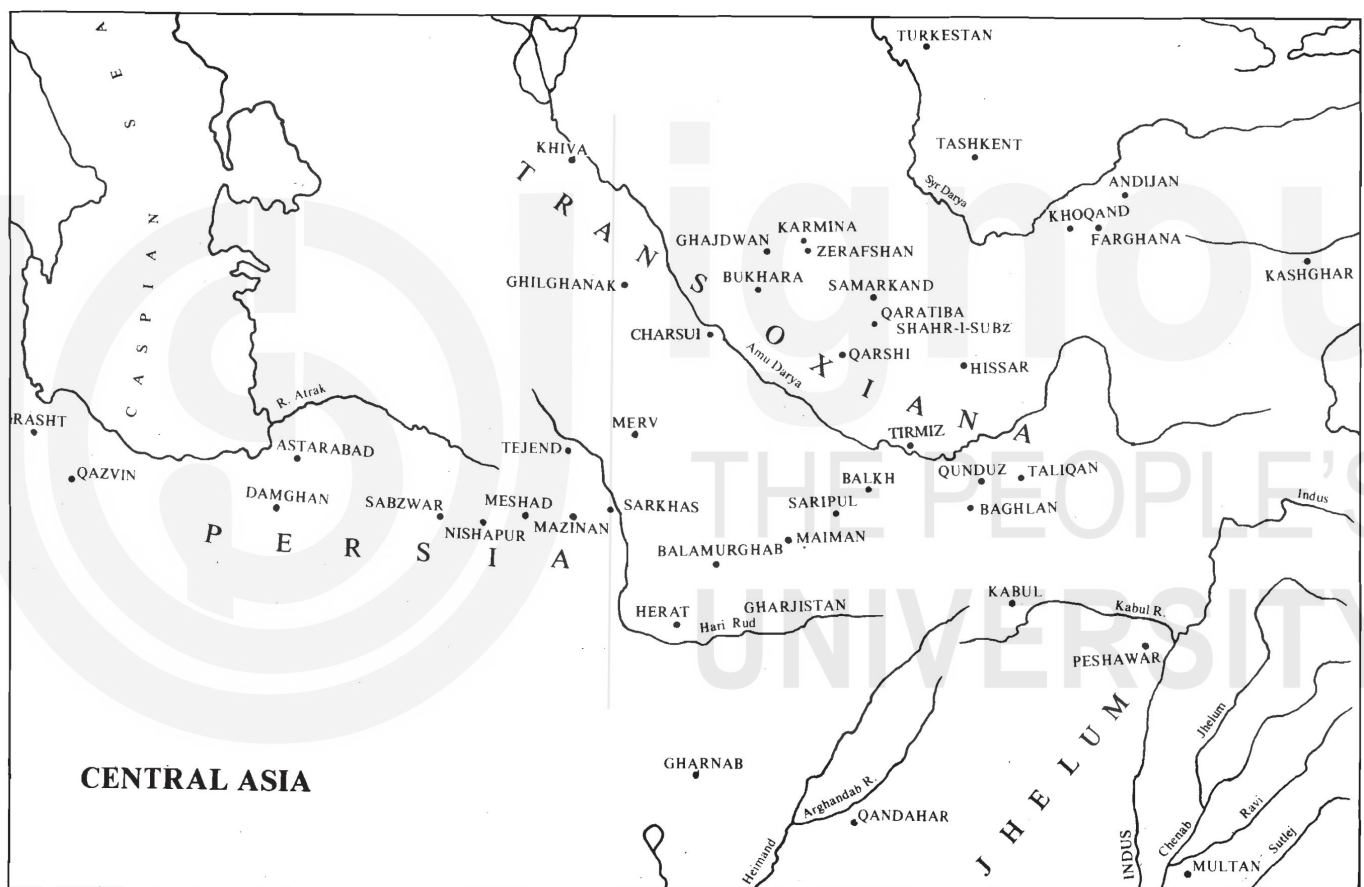
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**4.4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVE OF THE POLITICAL FORMATIONS IN CENTRAL AND WEST ASIA**

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During the civil wars (which were a common occurrence in the Timurid Transoxiana), the Timurid princes of Transoxiana (like Abu Said, Muhammad Jugi, Sultan Husain Baiqra and Manuchihr Mirza) often approached the Uzbeg ruler Abul Khair of Dast-i-Qipchaq for assistance against their respective rivals. The latter successfully intervened in Timurid politics and assisted Abu Said (1451), Muhammad Jugi (1455) and others to gain the throne. After the disintegration of the Empire of Abulkhair (1428-68) in the Dasht, his grandson Shaibani took shelter with the Timurids of Central Asia. At this juncture, there were five states in Transoxiana. The three sons of Sultan Abu Said (1451-69) namely, Sultan Mahmud Mirza, Sultan Ahmad Mirza (1469-94) and Umar Shaikh Mirza ruled over the three states comprising Samarqand and Bukhara, Tirmiz, Hisar, Qunduz and Badakhshan, and Farghana and its vicinity respectively. The fourth Timurid state of Balkh and Khurasan was held by Sultan Husain Baiqra. Again, there was the Mongol Khanate of Tashkand and Moghulistan where the Mongol rulers Yunus

Khan (1462-87) and his two sons, Mahmud Khan and Ahmad Khan, reigned. Yunus Khan's three daughters were married to the three above mentioned sons of Abu Said. The mutual rivalries and jealousies existing among the five states often resulted in bitter wars. In one such conflict when Sultan Ahmad was involved in the battle of Syr against his rival Sultan Mahmud, the former hired Shaibani along with his retinue hoping that he could be a good match to the Mongols in the art of fighting. Although Shaibani appeared in this battle as an ally of Sultan Ahmad Mirza, he served the cause of Mahmud Khan as secret negotiations had already taken place. This led to an unexpected victory for Mahmud Khan. For this timely assistance, Shaibani received the reward in the form of governorship of Otrar? a town in Khwarazmia? which provided him with the long awaited and much desired base in Transoxiana. Thereafter, Shaibani took full advantage of the prevailing anarchy in the various remaining Khanates, and gradually eliminated them with his political acumen and stratagem.



Map 4.1: Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century

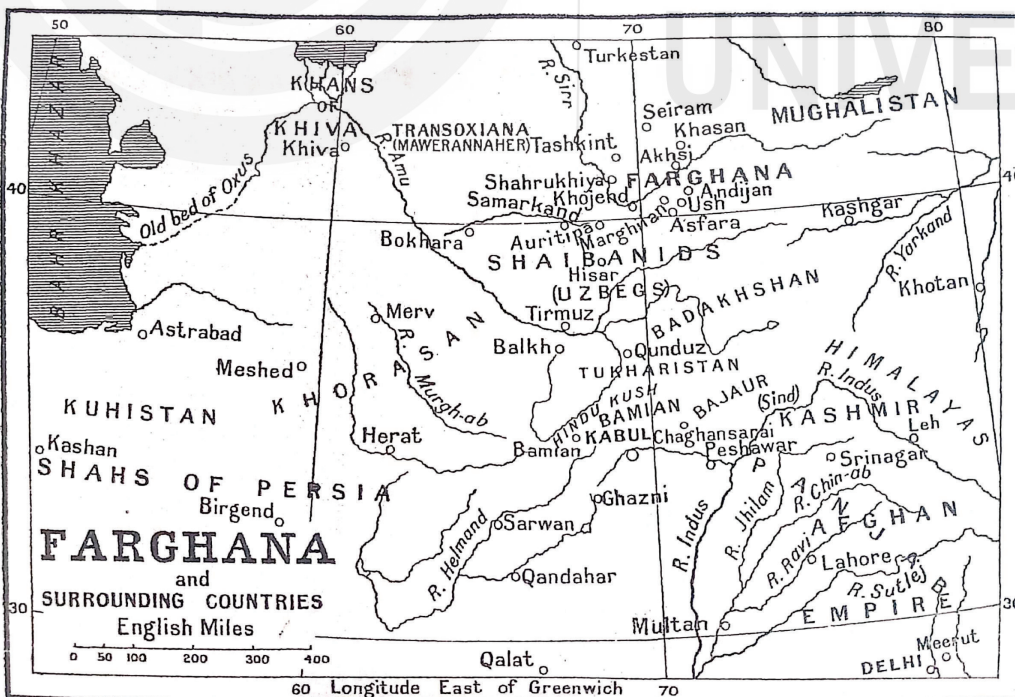
## 4.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF UZBEG POWER IN TRANSOXIANA

After the death of Umar Shaikh and Sultan Ahmad Mirza, Sultan Mahmud Mirza was also assassinated. His two sons, Sultan Ali and Baisundhur Mirza, now became rivals for the throne of Samarqand and Hisar. During the anarchy which prevailed in the Timurid empire, the Tarkhan nobles became powerful. They not only usurped the entire revenue but made opportunistic alliances and used one prince as a counterpoise against the other. Taking advantage, Shaibani wrested Bukhara from its Timurid governor Baqar Tarkhan in 1499, and then besieged Samarqand. Since the queen mother Zuhra Begi was an Uzbek lady, she promised to surrender

Samarqand if Shaibani gave the governorship of the choicest province to her son, Sultan Ali. Thus, Shaibani occupied Samarqand in 1500 without a war though Sultan Ali passed away soon after. The Uzbeks, were, however, soon overthrown as the Samarqandis led by Khwaja Abul Mukarram invited Babur. In the battle of Saripul (1501 Babur was defeated and, since no assistance was forthcoming, he left Samarqand and went to his uncle Mahmud Khan. In early 1503 Shaibani inflicted a crushing defeat upon the joint forces of Babur and his maternal uncles Mahmud and Ahmad Khan, both of whom were made captives. Babur's noble Tambal invited Shaibani to occupy Farghana. Shaibani conquered Farghana and Qunduz (1504) and overran Balkh, Memna and Faryab in 1505. Although Shaibani released the Mongol Khans, Mahmud and Ahmad (the latter died shortly afterwards) due to their past kindness, he ultimately put Mahmud Khan and his five children to death (1508) as their existence would have been a danger to his Empire.

A galaxy of Timurid princes including Babur, Badiuzzaman and Muzaffar Hussain led by Sultan Hussain Baiqra planned to face the Uzbeks unitedly. Before the joint could materialise, Sultan Hussain died in 1506. Herat was plunged into a war of succession. The chaos persisted even after the dual rule of Badiuzzaman and Muzaffar Husain was established. The conquest of the last Timurid principality was, therefore, a foregone conclusion. Soon after, Shaibani undertook a campaign against the Qazaqs of Moghulistan in 1508. Now the entire Transoxiana lay at the feet of Shaibani. The dynasty which was established by Shaibani came to be known as the Shaibanid. The immediate reasons for this transfer of power from the Timurids to the Uzbeks were:

- the personal incompetence of the later Timurid rulers,
- their mutual rivalry,
- the absence of any settled rule for succession, and
- the lack of strong administration.



Map 4.2: Farghana and Its Neighbourhood in the Fifteenth Century

Source: Williams, Rushbrooke L.F., (1918) *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century: A Summary Account of the Political Career of Zahir-Ud-Din Muhammad* (London: Longmans, Green and Co), p. 20

### 4.5.1 The Tripartite Conflict of the Uzbeks, Persians and Timurids

The conquest of Khurasan had brought the border of Shaibanid empire closer to the Safavi one. Since, Shaibani was ambitious, he demanded allegiance from the Shah which eventually led to a war in 1510, in which Shaibani was defeated and killed. Shah Ismail not only occupied Khurasan but also assisted Babur thereafter to reoccupy Transoxiana from the Uzbeks. Babur received a very warm welcome from the Samarqandis, but the latter disapproved his association with 'heretic' Shia Shah Ismail. The subsequent reprisal perpetrated upon the subjects by Babur's greedy followers further provoked the Central Asians to long for the Uzbek rule.

### 4.5.2 Recovery and Resurgence of the Uzbek Power

After their expulsion from Central Asia (1510-11), the Uzbeks had clustered in Turkestan having no courage to face the combined forces of Babur and the Shah. The only aspiring Uzbek prince was Ubaidullah, a nephew of Shaibani. Though his resources were limited, he conquered Transoxiana after defeating Babur. Thereafter, the Uzbeks gradually recovered Bukhara, Samarqand and other territories in 1512-1513.

In 1514, the Ottoman Sultan Salim (1512-20) invited Ubaidullah to join him against Ismail. Although Ubaidullah failed to oblige Salim, the latter managed to inflict a crushing defeat upon the Shah through strategic manoeuvres which were later on applied by Babur in his battle of Panipat in 1526. The most important rulers of the Shaibanid Empire were Ubaidullah and Abdullah Khan ? the latter being a contemporary of Akbar. Both Ubaidullah and Abdullah Khan (whose span of rulership was from 1513-1540 and 1565-1598 respectively) waged several wars against Persia (See Unit 6).

The Astrakhanids: After the death of Abdullah Khan (1598) and the assassination of his only son and successor Abdul Momin six months later, the dynasty came to be known as Astarakhanids. The Uzbek Empire lasted until the Russian conquest. The Empire disintegrated almost at the same time when other Asian states collapsed in the face of colonialism.

### 4.5.3 The Uzbek Empire

The revenue collections of the Uzbek Transoxiana depended mainly upon booty, city taxes and commercial resources. With artificial irrigation and limited agriculture, even a high tax on land (amounting to more than a half) fetched a negligible amount. Situated on the crossroads of caravans (en route the Silk Road), Transoxiana continued to be in a flourishing state in early middle ages. Due to diversion of trade routes under certain Mongol Khans and after the discovery of the sea-route to Asia from Europe in 1498, a decline in trade is noticed by the travellers and chroniclers. The administrative structure of the Timurids underwent a slight change under the Uzbeks as the Turco-Mongol traditions were further strengthened. The socio-religious atmosphere was now characterised by a wave of fanaticism and sectarian bigotry. At the same time, the domination of the Naqshbandi saints over the political arena was a new phenomenon introduced under the Uzbeks.

**Check Your Progress-2**

1) Briefly describe the main stages in the conquest of Transoxiana by the Uzbegs.

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2) Discuss the reasons for the downfall of the Timurids.

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3) Give a short account of the tripartite relations of the Uzbegs, Persians and the Timurids.

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**4.6 ORIGIN OF THE SAFAVIS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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The Safavi Empire sprang up almost in the same geographical area where the Ilkhanid state had once flourished. Hulaku's Empire re-emerged in a diminutive form (the Jalayrid Empire) ? extending over Mesopotamia, Azerbaijan and later on covering the region of Shirvan also. The remaining portions of the Ilkhanid territory were lost to the two Turcoman confederations, namely Aq Quyunlu (the white sheep) and Qara Quyunlu (the black sheep). Aq Quyunlu extended their sway over Diyar-i Bakr with their centre at Amid. Qara Quyunlus had their centre at Arjish (on the eastern shore of lake Van) spreading in the north to Erze Rum and in the south to Mosul. The heterogeneous population of the two regions comprised the Arabs, Armenians, Kurds and others.

**4.6.1 The Aq Quyunlus and Qara Quyunlus**

Under the enterprising Jahanshah, Qara Quyunlu dynasty expanded from Van to the deserts between Persia and Khurasan and from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. They had become independent of the Timurids. Jahanshah was widely known as a progenitor of the Shias while the Aq Quyunlus were Sunnis. The most famous Aq Quyunlu ruler was Uzan Hasan (1453-78) who defeated Jahanshah and established his suzerainty almost over the entire Persia. Hence, the borders of his Empire came closer to that of the Timurids. The Ottoman ruler Muhammad II always looked upon him as a mighty princeling enjoying the resources of Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Azerbaijan and Persia. However, Uzun Hasan was defeated by the Ottomans (in 1473) whose artillery was superior to the former's army. At the time of Uzun Hasan's death (in 1478), his Turcoman Empire extended from upper reaches of Euphrates to the Great Salt Desert and the province of Kirman in South Persia, and from Transcaucasia to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.

Uzun Hasan's sister Khadija Begam was married to a very enterprising and influential shaikh, named Junaid (1447-60). He was the leader of the most popular sufi order called the Safaviya with its Centre at Aradabil. Shaikh Junaid was a successor of Shaikh Safiuddin Ishaq (1252-1334), a disciple and son-in-law of Shaikh Zahid (1218-1301). Safiuddin Ishaq (from whom the Safavi dynasty derived its name) not only inherited the sufi order of Shaikh Zahid but also founded his own order as Safaviya in Ardabil in 1301. Due to their popularity, Shaikh Safiuddin and his successors always aroused the jealousy of the Qara Quyunlu Sultans.

Shaikh Junaid was the first spiritual guide of the Safaviya order. He collected an army of 10,000 to fight the Qara Quyunlu ruler. He imparted militancy to the order replacing the sufis by the ghazis (warriors of faith). After his death in 1455, his son and successor Haider married the daughter of his maternal uncle Amir Hasan Beg who put Jahanshah to death and became the ruler of Azerbaijan and the two Iraqs. Out of this union, three sons were born, namely, Sultan Ali, Ibrahim and Ismail. The youngest Ismail (b. 1487) became founder of the Safavi Empire. Sultan Haider had prepared a scarlet cap of twelve gores (with reference to the twelve Imams), and ordered all his followers to make their headgear after this fashion, hence came the title Qizilbash (redheads).

Haider marched against the tribal elements of Cherkes and Daghistan. On the way, he lost his life in a battle with the forces of the Shirvan ruler Farrukh Yassar, the son-in-law of Yaqub Mirza in 1488. Although Yaqub spared the life of the three sons of Haider for the sake of his own sister Halima Begi Agha, he imprisoned them in the fort of Istakhara. When a civil war broke out between the deceased Yaqub Mirza's sons Baisunghar and Rustam Mirza, the latter sought help from Sultan Ali. As soon as Rustam Mirza achieved success, he put Sultan Ali to death out of jealousy. Sultan Ali had already sensed the imminent danger and had nominated Ismail as his successor (1494). Ismail had to face much difficulty until the death of Rustam Mirza in July 1497 after which Aradabil was engulfed in a civil war. Ismail seized this opportunity and sent his men to collect his scattered followers. Reinforced by the military assistance received from Qaracha Illiyas and strengthened by 7000 of his followers from Turcoman tribes, he subdued Georgia and acquired much booty in 1500. At the age of fourteen, he had an encounter with Farrukh Yassar of Shirvan at Gulistan fort and having killed the ruler, invaded Baku. It was in the year 1501 that Ismail won a victory over Aq Quyunlu, entered the Turcoman capital at Tabriz and ascended the throne with the title Shah.

#### **4.6.2 The Turcomans and the Safavis**

The power of Safavis (the new dynasty which lasted in Persia till 1736), was based on the support given by the Turcoman tribes, namely Shamlu, Rumlu, Takkalu, Zulqadar, Afshar, Qachar, Ustajlu and Warsaq. The Turcoman adherents of Aradabil order were the basis of this new ruling class though the Safavids themselves were not pure Turcomans. The Turcomans were attracted towards the Persian Shah owing to religious affinity and also for social and political reasons. The Turcoman tribes of Asia Minor or Central Asia could not integrate themselves with the Ottomans or the Uzbek Empire due to their racial and religious differences. On the other hand the Ottoman or the Uzbek rule also had no better prospects to offer them. The Turcomans enjoyed an extraordinary position in the Persian Empire. Initially, almost all the important civil, military and administrative posts were

held by them. The traditions of governance and administration were borrowed by the Safavis from the rulers of Tabriz. The tribal loyalties of these Turcomans sustained Shah Ismail well. The Shah not only carried the traditions of the god-king (combining in himself the spiritual and temporal powers) but also legitimised his rule in the name of his relationship with his grandfather Uzun Hasan. Shah Ismail's kinship with Aq Quyunlu was important for him. Undoubtedly, the Qara Quyunlu and Aq Quyunlu had previously created certain pre-conditions for the establishment of a new dynasty with older political and cultural traditions of Persia.

### 4.6.3 Shiism and the Safavis

The new dynasty had created a somewhat changed military and political structure with the Shia creed as state religion and Iranicisation of Persian Islam ? sprouting into a new cultural entity, i.e., the evolution of a 'Persian People'. The Safavi state originated from a religious-cum-political nucleus. Thus, the inter-twinning of religion and politics which is noticed at the outset, seems to match the sectarian attitude of the Sunni Ottoman and the Uzbek states. Shah Ismail received full support from Kashan and Qum which were mainly inhabited by the Shias. Elsewhere (as in the Sunni Baghdad or Herat), the population resisted his advance and he faced reprisal.

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## 4.7 THE SAFAVIS AND THE UZBEG-OTTOMAN CONFRONTATION

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The rising power of the Shia 'Safavis' (new contenders of supremacy in the Muslim world) checked the Ottomans from incorporating Persia into their domain. In fact, the Perso-Uzbek and Perso-Ottoman wars were a continuous feature of the sixteenth century.

Although Shah Ismail (1502-1524) did not fight any war after his debacle at Chaldiran in 1514 at the hands of the Ottoman ruler Salim (1512-1520), his son and successor Shah Tahmasp (1524-76) had to face both the Uzbeks and the Ottomans almost incessantly. The five major invasions of the Uzbeks on Khurasan (1524-38) and four full-scale Ottoman invasions on Azerbaijan (1534-35, 1548, 1553) failed to overwhelm Shah Tahmasp, though he signed a peace at Amasya (29 May 1555) with the Ottomans. Besides these external dangers there also emerged some internal problems. For example, the two different racial and linguistic groups of the Turcomans and Iranians (each of whom had different origins, culture, and customs) were joined by new constituents? the Georgians and the Circassians. This led to increased court intrigues.

While the Safavis had pragmatic relations with the Mughals of India (see Unit 6), they also maintained good relations, though occasionally, with the Russians and the Portuguese.

Apart from Shah Tahmasp, Shah Abbas I (1588-1629, whose reign is said to be the zenith of the Safavi power) Shah Abbas II (1642-66) and Shah Safi were other important Safavi rulers. With Shah Abbas I, the Safavi state gradually developed from its theocratic base and military structure into a full-bloomed Empire of the Orient. He introduced many administrative and military reforms. A new group of loyalists (the Ghulams) was created who occupied many new posts. The army was organised on the pattern suggested by Robert Sherley who was appointed as

'Master General against the Turks'. A centrally paid strong army was organised, and a regiment of artillery with 500 guns was established.

**Check Your Progress-3**

- 1) Briefly discuss the achievements of Shah Abbas I.

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- 2) Write a few lines on the Qara Quyunlu and Aq Quyunlu.

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- 3) Discuss the early history of the Safavi

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- 4) Highlight the importance of the Turcomans in the Safavi Empire.

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**4.8 CENTRAL ASIA AND BABUR**

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By the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the power of the Timurids was on the decline in the region. By this time the Uzbegs succeeded in establishing strong footholds in Transoxiana under Shaibani Khan. Around the same time, the Safavis rose into prominence under Shah Ismail in Iran; while further west the Ottoman Turks dominated the scene. Shaibani Khan overran almost whole of Transoxiana and Khorasan. However, finally in 1510 Shah Ismail of Iran defeated Shaibani Khan. In a short while (1512) the Ottoman Sultan defeated Shah Ismail, thus leaving the stage again to the Uzbegs to become the master of the whole Transoxiana. Babur ascended the throne at Farghana (a small principality in Transoxiana) in 1494 at the tender age of twelve. However, it was not a smooth succession for Babur. Both the Mongol Khans as well as the Timurid princes, specially Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarqand, an uncle of Babur, had interests in Farghana. Besides, Babur had to face the discontented nobility. Against all odds Babur struggled to strengthen his foothold in Central Asia and did succeed in taking Samarqand twice (1497, 1500). But he could hardly hold that for long. With Shaibani Khan's success over Khorasan (1507) the last of the four Timurid centres of power finally sealed Babur's fate in Central Asia and he was left with no option but to look towards Kabul where the conditions were most favourable. Its ruler Ulugh Beg Mirza had already died (1501). Babur occupied Kabul in 1504. Yet Babur could not completely leave the

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<sup>1</sup> This Section is taken from IGNOU Course EHI-04: *India from 16th to mid-18th Century*, Block 2, Unit 5, Section 5.3 written by Dr. Meena Bhargava, Indraprastha College, University of Delhi, Delhi.



dream to rule over Central Asia. With the help of Shah Ismail Safavi, he was able to control over Samarqand (1511) but Shah Ismail's defeat in 1512 and the resurgence of the Uzbegs left Babur with no alternative but to consolidate himself at Kabul.

Thus, it was the Central Asian situation which pressed and convinced (after 1512) Babur to abandon the hopes of creating an Empire in Central Asia and look towards India. The rich resources of India and the meagre income of Afghanistan, as Abul Fazl comments, might have been another attraction for Babur. The unstable political situation after Sikandar Lodi's death convinced him of political discontentment and disorder in the Lodi Empire. Invitations from Rana Sanga and Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Punjab, might have whetted Babur's ambitions. Perhaps Timur's legacy also provided some background for his invasion. After the siege of Bhira in 1519, Babur asked Ibrahim Lodi to return western Punjab which belonged to his uncle Ulugh Beg Mizra. Thus, Babur had both reasons and opportunity to look towards India.

**Check Your Progress-4**

- 1) Discuss early problems faced by Babur in Central Asia.

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- 2) Why Babur had to forsake his designs in Central Asia?

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**4.9 SUMMARY**

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In this Unit we have tried to trace the antecedents and origin of the Mughals. A geographical sketch of the two powerful neighbouring states of India ? namely, Transoxiana and Iran in Central Asia? has been provided. The ethnic and political antecedents of the Uzbeg and Safavi empires of Transoxiana and Iran respectively have been dealt with. A study of the two empires in its historical perspective is also given. The Mughals originated from Central Asia and ruled over this region for three decades. Therefore the historical perspective, socio-economic-political background and ethos of Mughal rule in India can only be understood against the backdrop of Central Asian history.

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**4.10 KEYWORDS**

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<b>Appanage</b>	Something that is derived as a matter of right on account of one's lineage, position, etc.
<b>Gore</b>	Triangular or wedge-shaped pieces of cloth
<b>Khanate</b>	It denotes the office and jurisdiction of the Khan who was the political and administrative head over a particular territory

<b>Nomadism</b>	A mode of living practised by tribes who do not lead a settled life and wander from place to place in search of livelihood
<b>Ottomans</b>	This is an anglicised corruption of the Arabic Usman. The Ottomans were Turks whose power was rising rapidly in the 15th century. They completed the conquest of Asia Minor after taking Constantinople in 1453
<b>Pastoralism</b>	A mode of living practised by tribes in which animal rearing was an important aspect. This pattern led to nomadism
<b>Shia</b>	A sect of Muslims which upholds the rights of the members of Prophet Muhammad's direct descendants to the religious and political leadership of the Muslim community. The name is derived from Shiat Ali, the Arabic term for the party of Hazrat Ali who was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad and husband of Prophet's daughter Fatima
<b>Sunni</b>	A sect of Muslims disagreeing with the claims of the Shias. Sunni is from the Arabic sunnat, that is, the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad as exemplified in the Hadis, a source for Shariat (a set of rules) next to the Quran
<b>Silk Road</b>	Silk road derived its name after the lucrative Chinese Silk trade along the route from the East (China) to the West (Mediterranean). Originating at Xian (Sian in China), passing through Takla Makran deserts, crossing Pamirs, Afghanistan reaches Levant (Mediterranean). The route began in 130 BCE when the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220CE) opened up trade links with the West the route was in use till 1453 when finally Ottoman rulers boycotted the trade with China and closed the route. \
<b>Turcoman Groups</b>	Tribes of Asia Minor and Central Asia

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## 4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 4.1 Your answer should include the following points:
  - i) the Mughal conquerors originated from and ruled over Central Asia;
  - ii) this had an important bearing on Mughal rule in India;
  - iii) therefore, it is relevant to study the Central Asian relations, etc.
- 2) See Section 4.2 Your answer should include the following points:
  - i) the inner Asian region called Turan acquired the name Transoxiana from its Arab conquerors as the region was situated between the two rivers, namely, Syr and Amu;

- ii) Iran consists of extensive mountain ranges extending from Asia and Caucasus to the plains of Punjab called Iranian plateau, etc.
- 3) See Section 4.3. Your answer should include the following points:
- i) the Uzbegs of Turan were the descendants of Chingiz's eldest son; and
  - ii) they derived their names from Uzbeg Khan, etc.

### Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
- Anarchy in the Timurid empire enabled Uzbegs to wrest Bukhara and Samarqand from Timurids; joint forces of Babur and his maternal uncles defeated by Uzbegs and Farghana, Qunduz, Balkh, Memna and Faryab were taken; Herat occupied by the Uzbegs due to chaos prevailing there, etc. (see Section 4.4 and 4.5).
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
- Personal incompetence of the later Timurid rulers; mutual rivalry, etc. (see Section 4.5).
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:
- Conquest of Khurasan brought the borders of the Uzbegs close to the Safavi Persia; the Uzbegs tried to assert themselves as the supreme power in the region but were subdued by the Persians, etc. (see Sub-section 4.5.1).

### Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Your answer should including the following points:
- Aq Quyunlu (the white sheep) and Qara Quyunlu (the black sheep) were Turcoman confederations; Aq Quyunlu had their centre at Amid while Qara Quyunlu had their Centre at Arjish, etc. (see Sub-section 4.6.1).
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
- The famous Aq Quyunlu leader Uzun Hassan's sister was married to a Shaikh namely Junaid, the leader of a sufi order called Safaviya with its centre at Aradabil; his son and successor Haider put the Qara Quyunlu ruler to death and became the ruler of Azerbaijan; his youngest son Ismail founded the Safavi empire, etc. (see Section 4.6 and Sub-section 4.6.1).
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:
- The Turcoman tribes were the mainstay of the Safavi empire; they formed the basis of the new ruling class, etc. (see Sub-section 4.6.2).
- 4) Your answer should include the following points:
- In Shah Abdas I's time the Safavi state developed into an empire; he introduced many administrative and military reforms, etc. (see Section 4.7).

### Check Your Progress-4

- 1) Discuss, both the Mongol Khans and Timurid princes, specially Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarqand wanted to occupy Farghana (see Section 4.8)

- 2) Discuss, with Shaibani Khan's rising power and his occupation of Khurasan and also the emerging might of the Uzbegs left Babur with no option in Central Asia but to look towards Kabul and India (see Section 4.8)

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## 4.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Cosmo, Nicola Di, Allen J. Frank and Peter B. Golden, (2009) *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Dale, Stephen Frederic, (2018) *Babur: Timurid Prince and Mughal Emperors, 1484-1530* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press).

Dale, Stephen Frederic, (2004) *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India (1483-1530)* (Leiden: Brill).

Tripathi, R. P., (1963) *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Central Book Depot).

Williams, Rushbrooke L.F., (1918) *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century: A Summary Account of the Political Career of Zahir-Ud-Din Muhammad* (London: Longmans, Green and Co).

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## 4.13 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

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**KYRGYZSTAN: Where did the Mughals of India come from?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYWVuCHq7Z0>

**The Timurids and Babur: The Mughal Empire I**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2AVVuB1ws8>

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## UNIT 5 AFGHAN POLITY\*

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### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 The Lodi Empire
  - 5.2.1 Sikandar Lodi
  - 5.2.2 Ibrahim Lodi
- 5.3 Administrative Structure
  - 5.3.1 Nature of Kingship
  - 5.3.2 General Administration
- 5.4 Foundation of Mughal Rule in India
  - 5.4.1 Babur and the Rajput Kingdoms
  - 5.4.2 Babur and the Afghan Chieftains
- 5.5 Humayun: 1530-1540
  - 5.5.1 Bahadur Shah and Humayun
  - 5.5.2 Eastern Afghans and Humayun
  - 5.5.1 Humayun and His Brothers
- 5.6 The Second Afghan Empire in India: 1540-1555
- 5.7 Revival of Mughal Rule in India
- 5.8 Summary
- 5.9 Keywords
- 5.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 5.11 Suggested Readings
- 5.12 Instructional Video Recommendations

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the nature of political authority exercised by Sikandar Lodi,
- analyze the problems faced by Ibrahim Lodi,
- evaluate the early difficulties of Babur in establishing the Mughal rule,
- assess the administrative set-up under the Lodi Sultans,

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\* Prof. Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui and Dr. Rajeev Sharma, Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; and Dr. Meena Bhargava, Department of History, Indraprastha College, Delhi. The present Unit is taken from IGNOU Course EHI-04: *History of India from 16<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Block 1, Unit 2, Block 2, Unit 5 and Block 4 Unit 14.

- list Babur's successful campaigns against the Lodis,
- evaluate the conquests and conflicts of the Mughals with the local ruling powers, specially their clashes with the Afghans and the Rajputs,
- explain the circumstances in which Humayun was defeated by Sher Shah,
- understand the emergence and consolidation of Sher Shah, and
- comprehend the circumstances and factors that led to the revival of Mughals in India under Humayun.

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The first half of the 16th century in North India was a period of political turmoil and instability. This period witnessed frequent changes of ruling dynasties and emergence of diverse ruling groups. The most significant event was the Mughal conquest of India. This influenced, in a major way the Indian polity, economy and society for the coming 200 years. In this Unit we will focus our attention mainly on the first half of the 16th century. Our aim here is to familiarize you with the political background in which the powerful Mughal Empire established itself in India.

At first we will discuss the political developments during this period. Our discussion starts with the Lodi dynasty of the Afghans. After that we shall see how the Mughals defeated the Afghans and established their own political power. Next, we will discuss the overthrow of the Mughals by the Afghans. The Unit ends with the account of the re-establishment of the Mughal power under Humayun. We hope this Unit will also help you in understanding the subsequent Mughal polity of this period. Afghans' bid to challenge and overthrow Mughal authority is also discussed here. A brief survey of the Afghan rule has also been attempted. This Unit deals mainly with the territorial expansion under Babur and Humayun. The organizational aspects of the Mughals will be dealt in subsequent Units.

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## 5.2 THE LODI EMPIRE

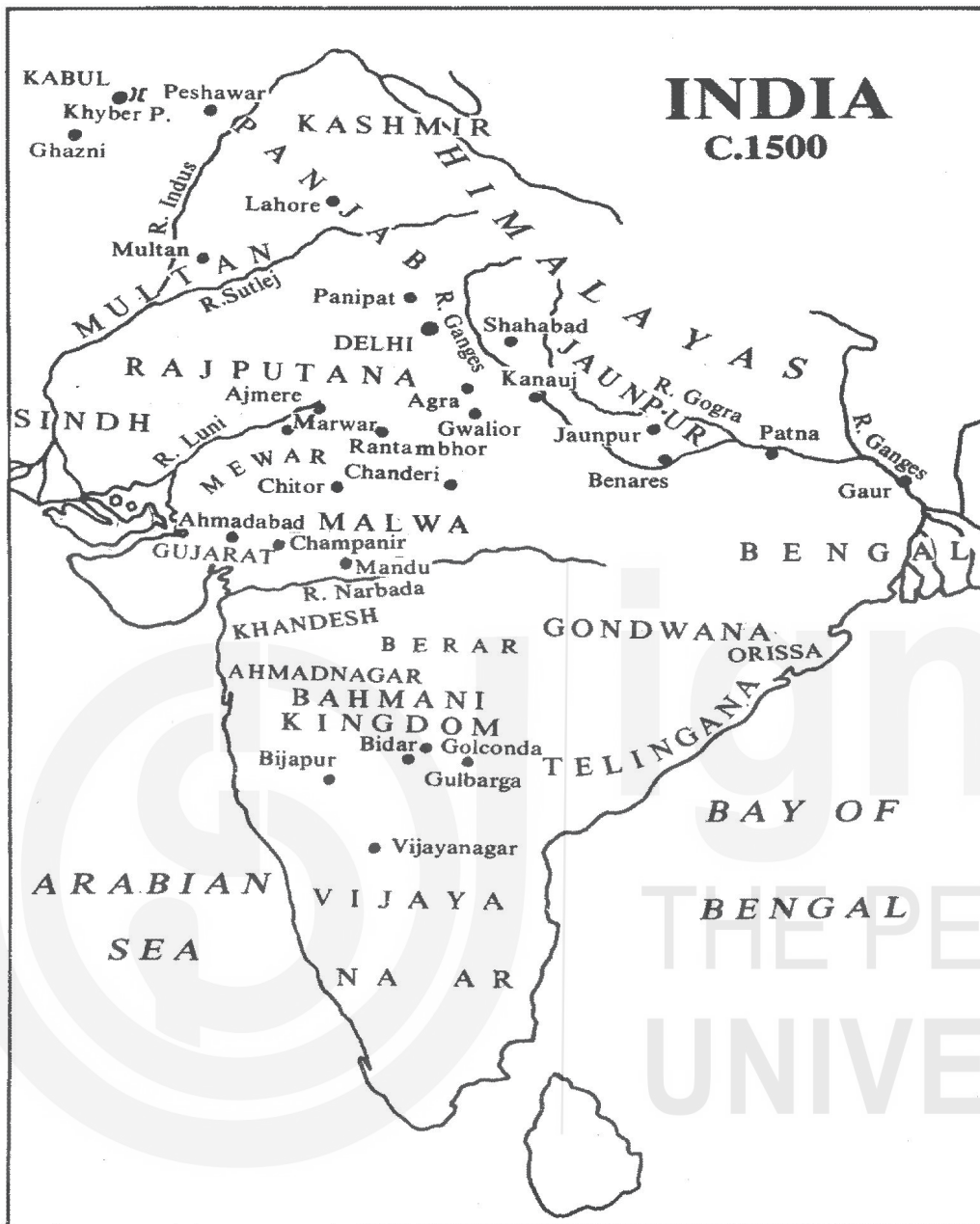
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By the end of 15th century Bahlul Lodi firmly established the Lodi dynasty at Delhi. He succeeded in bringing large area of North India under his control. After his death, his son Sikandar Lodi succeeded him to the throne.

### 5.2.1 Sikandar Lodi

In the sixteenth century the Lodi Empire, under Sultan Sikandar Lodi, in North India reached its zenith. In 1496, Sultan Husain Sharqi, the ex-ruler of Jaunpur was driven away from south Bihar and the Rajput chieftains in alliance with him were either forced into submission, or uprooted. Their *zamindaris* were brought under the control of the Sultan or reduced to the status of vassal principalities. Likewise, the power of those Afghan and non-Afghan nobles, reluctant to acquiesce to the Sultan's authority, was eliminated in the area around Delhi. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, the annexation of Dholpur paved the way for the expansion of the Afghan rule in the regions of Rajputana and Malwa. The forts of Narwar and Chanderi were annexed while the Khanzada of Nagaur acknowledged the suzerainty of the Lodi Sultan in 1510-11. In short, the whole of North India, from Punjab in the north-west to Saran

and Champa ran in north, Bihar in the east, and Chanderi to the south of Delhi were brought under the Lodi rule.



Map 5.1: India from c. 1500

Source: EHI-04: *India from 16<sup>th</sup> to mid - 18th Century*, Block 1, Unit 2, p. 20

### 5.2.2 Ibrahim Lodi

Unlike his father, Sultan Ibrahim Lodi (1517-1526) had to face the hostility of the Afghan nobility soon after his accession to the throne in 1517. He found himself surrounded by powerful nobles bent upon weakening the centre to gain an upper hand for themselves. His father had to fight against his brothers and relatives and was supported by the nobles who wanted to replace the princes in the resourceful provinces. Upon the death of Sultan Sikandar, the nobles decided to divide the Empire between Sultan Ibrahim Lodi and his younger brother Prince Jalal Khan Lodi, the governor of Kalpi.

Sultan Ibrahim was forced by them to accept the division which naturally weakend the centre. Sometime later, some of the senior nobles, like Khan Khanan Nuhani, who came from their provinces to do obeisance to the new

Sultan, criticized the supporters of division, calling their action detrimental to the Empire. They also persuaded the Sultan to rescind the agreement. On their advice, Sultan Ibrahim sent high nobles to Prince Jalal Khan. Their mission was to persuade him to withdraw his claim and acknowledge his elder brother as the Sultan. The efforts went in vain and this created a succession crisis.

At this juncture Sultan Ibrahim appeared more powerful than his rival brother. Hence, the old nobles rallied round him. However, there were few exceptions like Azam Humayun Sarwani, the governor of Kara and his son Fath Khan Sarwani. They stood by Jalal Khan but for some time only. When Sultan Ibrahim marched in person, even these two deserted Jalal Khan and joined the Sultan.

The Sultan deputed Azam Humayun Sarwani against Raja Bikrnmajit of Gwalior. This was done so because Prince Jalal Khan had taken shelter there. From Gwalior, Jalal Khan fled towards Malwa but was captured by the Gonds and sent as prisoner to the Sultan in Agra. However, his escape from Gwalior made the Sultan suspicious of the loyalty of the old nobles to him. Azam Humayun was recalled and thrown into prison. The Raja of Gwalior surrendered to the nobles and agreed to join the service of the Sultan. He was given the territory of Shamsabad (Farrukhabad district) in *iqta*. It was about this time that the celebrated *wazir* Mian Bhua also lost royal confidence and was put under arrest. The imprisonment of the old nobles sparked off wide-spread rebellion in the eastern region.

The Sultan raised his favourites to key positions at the court and sent others to the provinces as governors. As a result, the old nobles became apprehensive of their future and began to build up their power in the provinces. Darya Khan Nuhani, a powerful governor of Bihar, became a rallying point for the dissatisfied nobles in the east. About the same time, Babur occupied the *sarkar* of Bhera and Daulat Khan Lodi, the supreme governor of the trans-Sulterj Punjab, failed to liberate it. When summoned to the court, Daulat Khan did not come and revolted against the Sultan in Lahore. He also invited the uncle of Sultan Ibrahim, Alam Khan Lodi (son of Bahlul Lodi), and declared him as the new Sultan under the title of Sultan Alauddin. Both formed an alliance with Babur, the ruler of Kabul, against Sultan Ibrahim. Rana Sangram Singh and Babur also seem to have reached to an understanding against Ibrahim Lodi.

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## 5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

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A number of new administrative measures were taken during this period. Afghan kingship also showed a marked departure from the Turkish concepts. This change can well be seen in the formulation of almost all the administrative policies.

### 5.3.1 Nature of Kingship

The kingship under the Turkish Sultans was highly centralized. The Sultan's powers were absolute. However, with the rise of the Afghan power, there also followed distinct changes in the monarchy. Afghan monarchy was primarily 'tribal' in nature. For them, king was 'first among equals'.

In fact, political expediency also played its own role. Bahlul, being Afghan, could not look towards Turks for support. He had to virtually accept the terms of his fellow Afghans. The Afghan nobles must have enjoyed complete local autonomy.



The only bond between them and the Sultan was to render military service when the need arose. Such was the position under Bahlul that he neither ever sat on the throne in front of his fellow Afghan nobles, nor did he organized an open *darbar*. He used to call his Afghan nobles *masnad-i ali*.

However, a distinct change came with Sultan Sikandar Lodi who clearly saw the dangers of unrestrained nobility. He is credited with having introduced such important changes into the political system of the Empire that transformed it into a highly centralized political entity.

Unlike his father, Sultan Bahlul Lodi, Sultan Sikandar Lodi demanded obedience from his nobles. His military success made the nobility completely loyal and subservient to him. It also suppressed its sentiments of equality with the Sultan. He is reported to have sat on the throne regularly in an open *darbar* where the nobles were required to stand, showing due respect to the Sultan like servants. Even in his absence, his *farmans* were received by high nobles with respect. The noble to whom the *farman* was sent had to come forward six miles to receive it. A terrace was prepared upon which the courier stood and placed the *farman* on the head of the noble who had to stand below. Then all those concerned had to listen to it while standing. The nobles who failed to retain the confidence of the Sultan fell into disgrace. According to a contemporary writer, 'any one who turned from the path of obedience, he (the Sultan) either got his head severed off the body or banished him from the Empire'.

Though, in general, the Sultan did not tamper with their autonomy at the local level, at times the nobles were transferred and sometimes were even dismissed. The Sultan expelled Sultan Ashraf, son of Ahmad Khan Jilawani, who had declared his independence in Bayana after Sultan Bahlul Lodi's death. He also exiled the twenty-two high Afghan and non-Afghan nobles for their involvement in a conspiracy against him in 1500. Jalal Khan Lodi, who succeeded his father as the governor of Kalpi in 1506, incurred the displeasure of the Sultan by not properly conducting the siege operations against the fort of Narwar in 1508, for which he was thrown into prison.

The nobles were also put to closer scrutiny of their *iqtas*. But, in spite of these changes, the Afghan kingship basically remained unchanged. Some of the offices were made hereditary. The Afghans continued to assume high titles, such as *Khan-i Jahan*, *Khan-i Khanan*, *Azam Humayun*, *Khan-i Azam*, etc. They also enjoyed freedom to maintain informal relations with the Sultan at the playground, marches, hunting, etc. Thus, monarchy under Sikandar was more of a compromise between the Turkish and tribal organizations.

The process of centralization accelerated under Ibrahim. He believed that kingship knows no kinship. Under him, the prestige of the Sultan went so high that even the royal tent was considered worthy of respect. However, Ibrahim's policy had severe consequences and proved ruinous to the interests of the Afghan kingdom. The Afghan nobles were not prepared for the master-servant relationship. This led to dissatisfaction and rebellions to the extent that some of them even collaborated with Babur to depose the Sultan. When the second Afghan Empire (Surs) was established in India, they had learnt the lesson well for they never attempted to establish tribal monarchy. Instead, Sher Shah Sur

succeeded in establishing a highly centralized autocratic monarchy. With the coming of the Mughals on the scene, one finds the opening up of another chapter – the Mughals who were influenced by both, the Turkish and the Mongol traditions.

**5.3.2 General Administration**

Sultan Sikandar Lodi is also praised for introducing sound administrative machinery. He introduced the practice of audit in order to check the accounts of *muqtis* and *walis* (governors). Mubarak Khan Lodi (Tuji Khail), the governor of Jaunpur, was the first noble whose accounts came under scrutiny in 1506. He was found guilty of embezzlement and, therefore, dismissed. Similarly, Khwaja Asghar, a non-Afghan officer-in-charge of Delhi, was thrown into prison for corruption. The Sultan also reorganized the intelligence system in order to keep himself well informed about the conditions in the Empire. As a result, the nobles feared to discuss the political matters among themselves, lest the Sultan be displeased.

Interested in the well-being of the general public, the Sultan had charity houses opened in the capital as well as in the provinces for the benefit of destitute and handicapped people. The deserving persons got financial aid from these charity houses. Scholars and poets were patronized and educational institutions were granted financial aid throughout the Empire. He imposed a ban on the use of any language other than Persian in the government offices. This led many Hindus to learn Persian and they acquired proficiency in Persian within a short span of time. Consequently, they began to look after and supervise the revenue administration. When Babur came to India, he was astonished to see that the revenue department was completely manned by the Hindus.

Likewise, the serious interest taken by Sultan Sikandar Lodi in ensuring impartial justice to all and sundry in his Empire brought peace and prosperity.

**Check Your Progress-1**

- 1) Discuss the extent of Sikandar Lodi’s Empire.  
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- 2) Match the following:
 

1) Azam Humayun	A) Governor of Bihar
2) Darya Khan Nuhani	B) Governor of Punjab
3) Jalal Khan Lodi	C) Governor of Kara
4) Daulat Khan Lodi	D) Governor of Kalpi
- 3) In what way did the Afghan polity differ from the Turkish polity?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

4) Discuss the measures taken by the Surs to curb the power of the nobles.

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## 5.4 FOUNDATION OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA

Much before the final showdown at the battle of Panipat (1526), Babur had invaded India four times. These skirmishes were trials of strength of Mughal arms and Lodi forces.

The first to fall was Bhira (1519-1520), the gateway of Hindustan, followed by Sialkot (1520) and Lahore (1524). Finally, Ibrahim Lodi and Babur's forces met at the historic battlefield of Panipat. The battle lasted for just few hours in favour of Babur. The battle shows Babur's skill in the art of warfare. His soldiers were less in number but their organization was superior. Ibrahim's forces though many times greater in number (approximately 100,000 soldiers and 500-1000 elephants as compared to Babur's 12,000 horsemen) fared badly. Babur successfully applied the Rumi (Ottoman) method of warfare (for details see **Figure 5.1**).

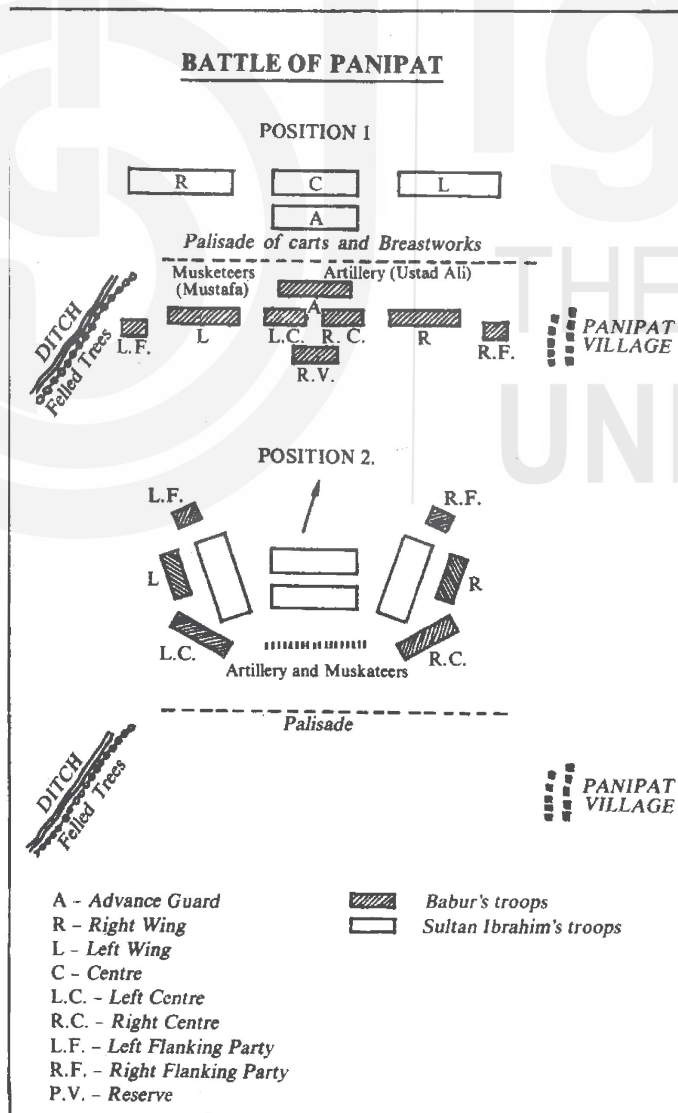


Figure 5.1: Rumi device used by Babur at the Battle of Panipat

Source: EHI-4: *History of India from 16<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Block 2, Unit 5, p. 8

As the Afghans advanced to attack the right flank; Babur ordered his reserve forces under Abdul Aziz to move. The Afghans, greater in number, were unable to move forward nor backward. They were attacked from both sides. This created total confusion among the Afghan forces. Babur took full advantage of the situation, and his right and left wings soon attacked the Afghan forces from the rear side. This was followed with the opening up of fire shots. This completely paralyzed the Afghan army. Afghan casualties reported by Babur were approximately 20,000 including the Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. In the battle it was not Babur's artillery but his 'superb tactics' and the 'mounted archers' played the decisive role, a fact which Babur himself acknowledged.

The battle of Panipat, though formally established the Mughal rule in India, it was the first among the series of battles in the years to come. For example, to secure this triumph, it was equally important to overcome Rana Sanga of Mewar and the chieftains in and around Delhi and Agra. Another important opponent in the eastern India was the Afghans. To add to this, problems were mounting within his own nobility.

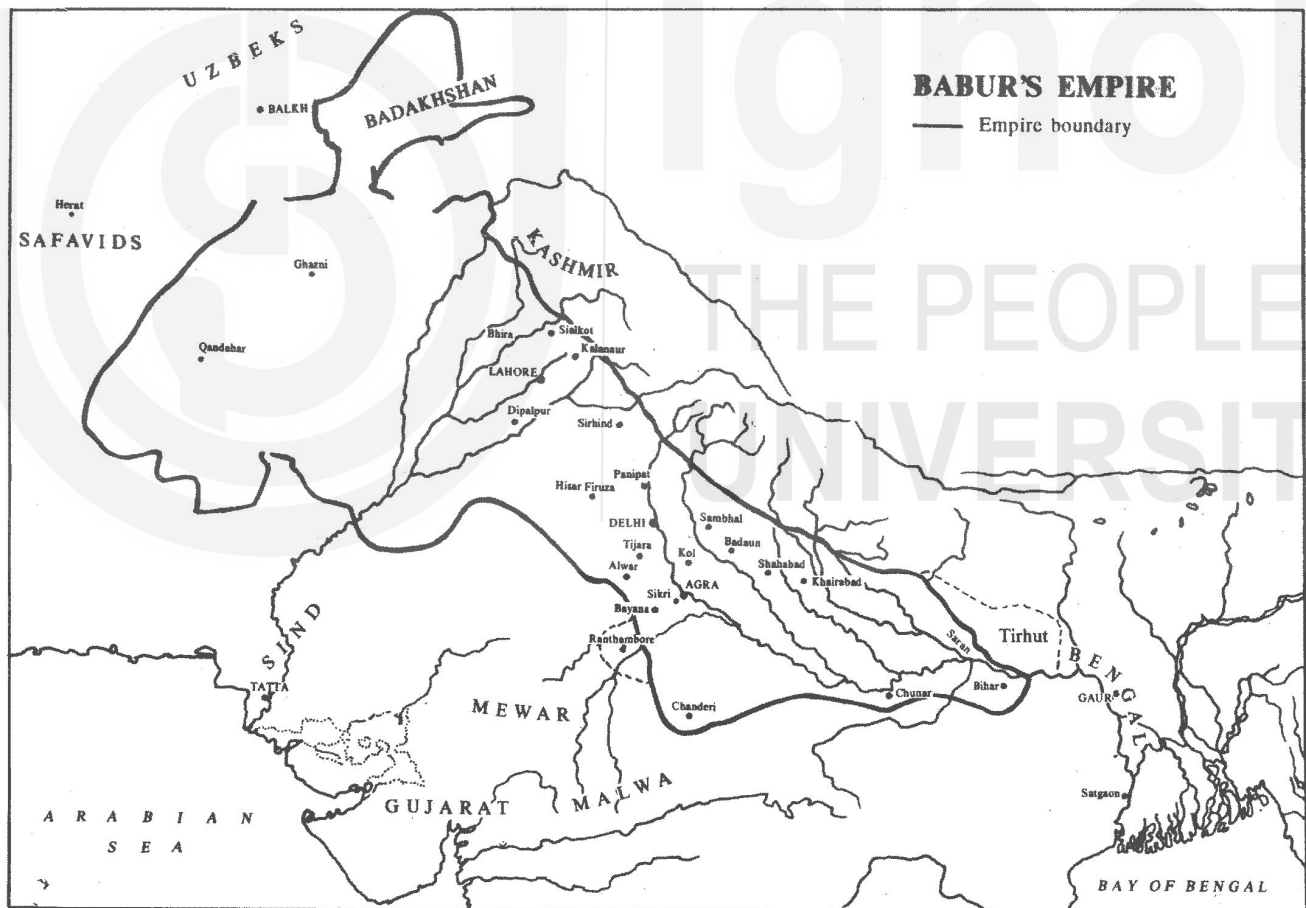
#### **5.4.1 Babur and the Rajput Kingdoms**

We have already discussed that Rana Sanga of Mewar was a power to reckon with. Babur, in his memoirs, has blamed Rana Sanga for breaking his promise by not siding with him in the battle of Panipat against Ibrahim Lodi. Leaving apart the controversy whether it was Rana or Babur who asked for help, the fact remains that there was some understanding on both the sides to join hands against Ibrahim Lodi in which the Rana faltered. Rana expected Babur to return to Kabul and leave him free to establish his hegemony, if not over whole of Hindustan, at least over Rajputana. Babur's decision to stay back must have given a big jolt to Rana's ambitions. Babur was also fully aware of the fact that it would be impossible for him to consolidate his position in India unless he shattered the Rana's power. Rana Sanga this time succeeded in establishing the 'confederacy' against Babur with the help of Afghan nobles. Hasan Khan Mewati not only joined the Rana but also played a crucial role in forming the 'confederacy'. This time (1527) Hasan Khan of Bari and Husain Khan Gurg-andaz joined the Rana. Husain Khan Nuhani occupied Rapri, Rustam Khan prevailed over Koil, while Qutb Khan captured Chandawar. Pressure of eastern Afghans was so much that Sultan Muhammad Dul Dai had to leave Qannauj and join Babur. To add to this, the defeat of Babur's commander Abdul Aziz and Muhibb Ali at Biana and their praise of the valour of the Rajput army completely demoralized Babur's army. Firishta and Badauni (Akbar's contemporary) comment that the sense of defeatism was so strong that it was proposed by a majority at a council of war that the Padshah should withdraw to Punjab and wait for developments of unseen events. The *Baburnama* does not say anything about such a proposal, but this shows the general feeling of 'despair and frustration'. However, Babur prevailed over the situation with his fiery speech touching the religious sentiments of his men.

Babur fortified his position near Sikri at the village Khanwa. Here also he planned and organized his army on the 'Ottoman' lines. This time he took the support of a tank on his left, front side again was defended by carts but ropes were replaced by iron chains. However, this time he used the strong wooden tripods connected with each other by ropes. They offered not only protection and rest to the guns

but also they could move them forward and backward on the wheels. It took around 20-25 days to complete the strategy under Ustad Mustafa and Ustad Ali. In the battle (17<sup>th</sup> March, 1527) Babur made use of his artillery well. Rana Sanga got severely wounded and was carried to Baswa near Amber. Among his other associates, Mahmud Khan Lodi escaped but Hasan Khan Mewati was killed. The Rajputs suffered a big loss. In fact, there was hardly any contingent whose commander was not killed. Shyamal Das (*Vir Vinod*) attributes the treachery of Silhadi of Raisen as the major factor behind the defeat of Rana. But, in fact, it was irrational for Rana to remain inactive for over three weeks. This provided an opportunity to Babur to strengthen himself and prepare for war. Babur's disciplined army, mobile cavalry and his artillery played the most decisive role in the battle.

Though the Mewar Rajputs received a great shock at Khanwa, Medini Rai at Malwa was still a power to reckon with. In 1520, Rana Sanga bestowed Malwa on Medini Rai, the chief noble of Mahmud II of Malwa. In spite of great valour with which the Rajputs fought at Chanderi (1528), Babur faced little difficulty in overcoming Medini Rai. With his defeat, resistance across Rajputana was completely shattered. But Babur had to tackle the Afghans. Mahmud Khan Lodi who had already escaped towards the east could create problems if left unchecked.



Map 5.2: Babur's Empire

Source: EHI-04: *India from 16<sup>th</sup> to Mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century*, Block 2, Unit 5, p.10

### 5.4.2 Babur and the Afghan Chieftains

The Afghans had surrendered Delhi, but they were still powerful in the east (Bihar and parts of Jaunpur) where the Nuhani Afghans were dominant led by Sultan Muhammad Nuhani. The Afghans of Chunar, Jaunpur and Awadh were not ready to cooperate with the Nuhanis in a bid to give a united opposition against the

Mughals. Instead, they surrendered meekly to Humayun (1527). In the meantime, Sultan Muhammad Nuhani died (1528) and left the Nuhani disjunct as his son Jalal Khan was still a minor. But the vacuum was soon filled by the appearance of Prince Mahmud Lodi, son of Sikandar Lodi and brother of Ibrahim. The Afghans, including the non-Nuhani, who were a little hesitant earlier to side with the Nuhani, now readily accepted Mahmud's leadership. Besides, even the Nuhani Afghans like Babban, Bayazid and Fath Khan Sarwani, etc. who felt leaderless with the desertion of Jalal to Bengal, welcomed Mahmud, Nusrat Shah of Bengal also, though apparently advocated friendship with Babur, secretly adopted hostile measures against him. He considered the existence of the Nuhani kingdom in Bihar as buffer between the Mughals and his own possessions in parts of Bihar.

Babur could hardly afford to ignore these developments. He mobilized his forces at Ghagra and inflicted a crushing defeat upon Nusrat Shah's army (1529). Thus ended the Afghan-Nusrat coalition and Nusrat Shah had to surrender large number of Afghan rebels who had taken asylum in his territory. The Afghans were now totally demoralized. Though Babban and Bayazid did attempt to resist at Awadh, but when pressurized (1529) they fled to Mahmud. Thus, within four years Babur succeeded in crushing the hostile powers and now could think of consolidating himself at Delhi. But he could hardly get the opportunity to rule as he died soon after (29 December, 1530).

The establishment of the Mughal Empire under the aegis of Babur was significant. Though the Afghans and Rajputs could not be crushed completely (a task left to his successors), his two major blows at Panipat and Khanwa were certainly decisive and destroyed the balance of power in the region and perhaps was a step towards the establishment of an all-India empire.

**Check Your Progress-2**

- 1) Discuss Babur's success against Ibrahim Lodi at the battle of Panipat.  
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- 2) Discuss the significance of the battle of Khanwa.  
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- 3) Write a note on Nusrat-Afghan coalition against Babur.  
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**5.5 HUMAYUN: 1530-1540**

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The situation under Humayun was quite different. Like Babur he did not command the respect and esteem of the nobility. Moreover, the Chaghatai nobles were not

favourably inclined towards him and the Indian nobles, who had joined Babur's service deserted the Mughals at Humayun's accession. Muhammad Sultan Mirza, a descendant of Timur; Muhammad Zaman and Mir Muhammad Mahdi Khwaja, brother-in-law of Babur, were considered worthy to aspire to the throne; especially Amir Nizamuddin Ali Khalifa, a grandee of Babur, hatched a conspiracy which failed. To sustain imperial power and hegemony, Humayun had to contend against the Afghans both in the east and the west which was supported by a large social base. But, most dangerous of all, was Humayun's brother Kamran Mirza. The situation was further aggravated by the existence of two centres of power within the empire 6 Humayun at the centre and Kamran's autonomous control over Afghanistan and Punjab. Humayun decided to deal, at first, with the western Afghans.

### 5.5.1 Bahadur Shah and Humayun

Humayun's relations with Bahadur Shah represent a curious contrast due to the circumstances. In the beginning (early 1531 to mid-1533), Bahadur Shah assured Humayun of friendship and loyalty. But, at the same time he also attempted to expand his area of influence closer to the Mughal frontiers. The first to taste the wrath was Malwa. Bahadur Shah was a little apprehensive of the Mughal designs on Malwa, He feared that if this buffer state between the two was left unoccupied, the Mughals might attempt to conquer it. Besides, all trade routes to Gujarat ports passed through Malwa. It was also very fertile and rich in grain production and Gujarat depended much upon this region for grain supply. After 1530, Bahadur Shah started putting up military pressure on Malwa and finally occupied it in January 1531. Soon after, Bahadur Shah started making alliances with Humayun's adversaries in the east 6 Sher Shah in Bihar (1531-1532) and Nusrat Shah in Bengal (August-September 1532). Nusrat Shah is also reported to have sent an embassy under Khwajasara Malik (August-September 1532) who was well received by Bahadur Shah. Besides, many disgruntled Afghans of the north and the east also joined him in a bid to oust Mughals in order to regain their lost pride. Sultan Alauddin Lodi, son of Bahlul Lodi, and his sons Fath Khan and Tatar Khan, Rai Nar Singh, nephew of Raja Bikramajit of Gwalior (1528) and Alam Khan Lodi of Kalpi (1531), all looked towards Bahadur Shah and extended their help against the Mughals. Even the eastern Afghans – Babban Khan Lodi (Shahu Khail), Malik Roop Chand, Dattu Sarwani and Ma'ruf Farmuli – joined hands with Bahadur Shah.

Humayun could ill afford to ignore these developments. Situation could have worsened in case of combined Afghan attack from east and the west. In the meantime, Bahadur Shah's aggressive designs continued unabated. He occupied Bhilsa, Raisen, Ujjain and Gagrion. Thus he could well keep the Mughals away from Gwalior, Kalinjar, Bayana and Agra. While Bahadur Shah was busy in expanding towards Malwa and Rajputana, Humayun was besieging Chunar. These developments forced him to rush back to Agra (1532-33). But Bahadur Shah was keen to avoid any clash with the Mughals and immediately sent an embassy under Khurasan Khan (1533-34). Humayun demanded that he should not give shelter to Mughal rebels especially Muhammad Zaman Mirza. At the same time Humayun agreed not to threaten the Gujarati establishments while Bahadur Shah promised to withdraw from Mandu. Bahadur Shah in the meantime was involved in suppressing the Portuguese menace (September-December 1533) and Humayun was busy in tackling the Afghans in the east.

New developments resulted in the invasion of Gujarat by Humayun in 1535. In 1534, Bahadur Shah gave shelter to Muhammad Zaman Mirza and also attacked Chittor. Chittor was important for Bahadur Shah for it could provide him a strong base in Rajputana. It could have also facilitated expansion towards Ajmer, Nagor and Ranthambhor. But Humayun at this point made no attempt to stop Bahadur Shah from conquering Chittor. His move from Agra to Kalpi was too slow. Similarly, he took a longer route to reach Chittor. It seems that Humayun was not very keen to stop Bahadur Shah from occupying Chittor. Bahadur Shah was anxious to reach Mandu before Humayun could intercept. But the latter reached there much before. Mandu was the only route to retreat from Chittor to Gujarat and that was already occupied by Humayun. He blocked Bahadur Shah's camp from all directions, thus, cutting the supplies. Within a month, with no hope left, Gujarati army themselves destroyed their best artillery to stop the Mughals to use it against them. Bahadur Shah fled from Mandu to Champaner, Ahmadabad, and Cambay and crossed Kathiawar and reached Diu. Mughals chased him. But, again, they hardly showed any eagerness for either arresting or killing Bahadur Shah.

It seems that the real aim of Humayun was just to destroy the power of Gujarat. At Champaner, when Bahadur Shah was recognized by Mughal officers, they did not arrest him. Soon Humayun had to leave Mandu and rush to Agra because his long absence from there had resulted in rebellions in Doab and Agra. Mandu was now left under the charge of Mirza Askari. The handling of local population by the Mughals had caused widespread indignation. People were looted and slaughtered. As a result, as soon as Humayun left Mandu people rejoiced Bahadur Shah's return from Diu. Bahadur Shah took advantage of the opportunity and defeated the Mughals at Ahmadabad. In the meantime, to check the Portuguese advance, Bahadur Shah had to return to Diu. But this time the Portuguese succeeded and Bahadur Shah was treacherously murdered (17 February 1537). This created confusion everywhere. The Afghans, left with no alternative, now turned towards Sher Shah for leadership.

### **5.5.2 Eastern Afghans and Humayun**

The Afghans' defeat at the hands of Humayun (siege of Chunar in November, 1531) resulted in the flight of Afghan nobles to Gujarat. This created a political vacuum in the east, providing an opportunity to Sher Khan to consolidate his power.

The period between 1530-1535 proved crucial for Sher Shah. To consolidate his position in the east, he had to tackle with Bengal and Afghan nobles who got shelter under the Bengal ruler. On the other hand, he was hardly in a position to face the Mughals in case of any direct clash. Fortunately, circumstances took a favourable turn for Sher Shah. Considering Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, a serious threat, Humayun decided to tackle him first. During this period Sher Shah was left free to consolidate himself.

Sher Shah had to face two invasions of Bengal rulers. The first attack took place under Qutb Khan, the *muqti* of Munger in 1532-1533 during Sultan Nusrat Shah's reign, and, the second under Ibrahim Khan during Sultan Mahmud Shah's reign (1534). However, Bengal armies were defeated on both the occasions. These successes completely exposed the weakness of the Bengal army. This raised the prestige of Sher Khan. The eastern Afghans who had earlier deserted him now rushed to serve under his banner. Besides, the destruction and death of Bahadur Shah by Humayun left the Afghans with no alternative but to join him against the Mughals.



Now Sher Shah wanted to establish himself as the undisputed Afghan leader. This time (1535) he took the offensive and defeated the Bengal army in the battle of Surajgarh. In a peace settlement after the battle, Sultan Mahmud Shah of Bengal agreed to supply war elephants and financial help to Sher Shah whenever required. This grand success against Bengal, followed by his attacks on the Mughal territories in the east (from Gorakhpur to Banaras), alarmed Humayun. Humayun now deputed Hindu Beg as governor (*hakim*) of Jaunpur to keep an eye on the developments in the eastern region. But, Sher Shah, acting cautiously on the one hand assured Hindu Beg of his loyalty, while on the other utilized the time for strengthening his army for his next onslaught on Mughals. As soon his preparations were over, he wrote a threatening letter to Hindu Beg. At the same time, he launched his second attack on Bengal (1537). Hindu Beg, annoyed with Sher Shah's behaviour, reported his hostile intentions to Humayun. The Afghan nobles suggested Humayun to stop Sher Shah from occupying Bengal, while the Mughal nobles advised him to occupy Chunar first to use it as a base for his operations in the east. The latter option was important for maintaining the line of communications with Agra. But it took too long for Rumi Khan to capture Chunar (6 months). Historians consider it a great 'mistake' that cost Humayun his 'empire'. Though leaving Chunar in the hands of the Afghans could have been unwise, leaving Sher Shah free and unchecked in Bengal was 'equally wrong'.

Sher Shah utilized the time and captured Gaur (April, 1538), the capital of Bengal. At this stage, Humayun asked Sher Shah to transfer Bengal and Rohtasgarh to him, but Sher Shah was not ready to surrender Bengal and the negotiations failed. Now Humayun decided to curb Sher Shah's power but he did not want to involve himself in Bengal politics. Yet, the circumstances were forcing him towards it. Sher Shah shrewdly withdrew from Bengal, and Humayun, with no obvious obstructions, reached Bengal (September, 1538).

He had to stay there for four months until he finally settled the prevailing chaos. In the meantime, Sher Shah succeeded in controlling the routes to Agra thus making communication difficult for Humayun. To add to Humayun's worries, Hindal Mirza, who was sent to gather supplies for his army, assumed sovereign power. Humayun hurried back to Chunar and reached Chausa (March 1539). He encamped on the western side of the river Karmanasa. At this stage Humayun was still in control of the situation. On the front side he was guarded by the river, while to his rear was Chunar, which was still in the hands of his men. Sher Shah, too, showed willingness to accept truce. But at this stage Humayun unnecessarily exposed himself to danger by crossing the river. Sher Shah knowing fully well the paucity of Humayun's provisions, equipment and transport wasted no time in exploiting the situation. He, while pretending to fulfil the terms of the truce, attacked the Mughal army. Panic spread in the Mughal camp. Large number of Mughal forces were killed. Humayun and Askari Mirza managed to flee. Humayun reached Agra by way of Kara Manikpur and Kalpi (July 1539). Raja Virbhan, the ruler of Gahora, helped greatly in rescuing them. Kamran Mirza welcomed Humayun on his return to Agra with his army totally destroyed; while Sher Shah, elated by his victory, proclaimed himself an independent king. Under these circumstances, the final clash was inevitable. Humayun was defeated badly in the battle of Qannauj at the banks of Ganga (1540). This paved the way for the establishment of the second Afghan empire in India. A number of factors had contributed in Humayun's debacle against Sher Shah. These include:

- i) faced hostility of his brothers. On many occasions he dealt with them too kindly.
- ii) Sometime he reacted lethargically when the situation demanded swift action. This can be seen well in his Gujarat and Bengal campaigns.
- iii) He was also victim of an 'inexorable fate'. For example, Mahmud Shah of Bengal kept him unnecessarily involved in Bengal politics. This provided an opportunity to Sher Shah to gain strength.
- iv) Humayun also lacked financial resources for continuous warfare. This weakness became very much evident when in Bengal he got stranded and lacked money and supplies (1539).
- v) Besides, Sher Shah had the courage, experience and organizing abilities; he was also skilled in exploiting political opportunities. Humayun could not match his capabilities.

### 5.5.3 Humayun and His Brothers

Immediately after the death of his father Babur, Humayun divided his empire into four parts giving Mewat to Hindal, Sambhal to Askari and Punjab, Kabul and Qandahar to Kamran. The very division itself was unfavourable to Humayun for he was left with little resources at his disposal. In spite of this kind treatment, his brothers hardly helped him when he needed. His brother Askari Mirza, whom Humayun made governor of Gujarat at the time of Bahadur Shah's attack on Ahmadabad, could not tackle the situation. As a result, Humayun had to lose Malwa (1537). Askari Mirza also sided with Kamran and proceeded to Qandahar at the crucial juncture when Humayun needed their help after his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah at Qannauj. However, Hindal Mirza by and large remained loyal to Humayun and even died fighting for him (1551).

The greatest threat to Humayun arose from Kamran Mirza who had assumed almost a semi-independent position in Afghanistan and Punjab. Thus emerged two centres of power one at Kabul and the other at Agra. This situation prevented the rise of a centralized state and the political instability was evident in the first major crisis which the Mughals faced (1538-1540). Though Kamran Mirza remained loyal to Humayun in the early years and once rushed to Delhi at the call of Yadgar Nasir Mirza (governor of Delhi) to tackle Hindal Mirza (June 1539). Here again, instead of marching towards Chausa to help Humayun, both the brothers, Hindal and Kamran, watched the developments from a distance. Had they extended help to Humayun, he could have defeated Sher Shah.

It seems Kamran was more interested in defending his own territory rather than putting up a united front against the Afghans. Even before Humayun's final clash with Sher Shah (1540), Kamran Mirza, instead of sending his whole army, sent only 3000 troops to serve the Emperor at Lahore. After Humayun's defeat at the hands of Sher Shah (1540), Kamran even sent a proposal to Sher Shah, through Qazi Abdullah, to accept Punjab as the frontier between the two. Sher Shah realized that there was no unanimity between the brothers and forced them to accept Indus as the boundary. Kamran felt that he had to lose Punjab due to the incompetency of his brother and became more anxious to save Kabul and Qandahar for himself. The period between 1545-1553 is one during which Humayun was busy in dealing

with Kamran Mirza. However, it is difficult to put the entire blame for Humayun's failures on his brothers. But their support would have made things easier for Humayun and the Empire could have been saved.

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## 5.6 THE SECOND AFGHAN EMPIRE IN INDIA: 1540-1555

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Finally, after expelling Humayun, Sher Shah became the Emperor of North India from the Indus to the Bay of Bengal in the east and from Himalaya in the north to Malwa in the south. The Baloch chiefs of Multan and upper Sind and Maldeo in western Rajputana and Bhaiya Puran Mal of Raisin were defeated. A centralized political system was again revived by Sher Shah Sur. With Sher Shah Sur, a new era began in the history of North India. Certain important changes took place in the realm of ideas and institutions.

After defeating the Mughal Emperor, Sher Shah declared himself as the sovereign ruler and started building the Second Afghan Empire. The fifteen years (1540-1555) of Afghan rule form an interlude in the history of Mughal Empire. This period, nevertheless, was significant for the administrative innovations and reorganization. During Sher Shah's short reign (1540-1545), he was busy in fighting for keeping his new Empire intact. Here we will give a very brief account of Sher Shah's conflicts during this period.

The Ghakkars (inhabitants on the North-West frontier between the Indus and Jhelum rivers) were the first one to come in conflict with him. But Sher Shah got very little success in this venture. The Ghakkars put up a stiff resistance. Khizr Khan, the governor of Bengal, also showed some signs of independence. All this forced him to withdraw from Punjab and marched towards Bengal (1541). There he dismissed Khizr Khan. Malwa was the next target of Sher-Shah where Qadir Shah showed disobedience. On this way he occupied Gwalior from Abdul Qasim. Qadir Shah also surrendered and was arrested (1542). To tackle the Rajputs, Sher Shah besieged Raisen in 1543. Raja Puran Mai, ruler of Raisen, though offered submission, Sher Shah attacked him. Puran Mai along with many others died in the battle.

The province of Multan was also conquered in 1543. In spite of the defeat of the Rajputs at Raisen, Maldeo of Marwar was still formidable. He had already extended his dominion towards Sambhar, Nagor, Bikaner, Ajmer and Bednar. Sher Shah marched towards him and in 1544 occupied Ajmer, Pali and Mount Abu. Without any serious resistance, Udai Singh also handed over the keys of Chittor to Sher Shah. Thus, almost the whole of Rajputana fell into his hands. Sher Shah also succeeded in occupying the impregnable fort of Kalinjar, but, while besieging it, Sher Shah was severely wounded on account of explosion and died soon after (22 May, 1545). Thus, ended the glorious career of Sher Shah.

Sher Shah's son and successor Islam Shah (1545-1553), though kept the legacy of his father intact, failed to consolidate it any further. He was most of the time busy in suppressing the intrigues within his own camp which emerged under the leadership of his brother Adil Shah along with Azam Humayun and Khawwas Khan. Besides, his humiliating treatment towards the Niyazi Afghans specifically and the Afghans in general generated more resentment rather than gaining any support. The ill effects of which had to be borne by his son and successor. One finds that in spite of all efforts of Islam Shah to clear the road for the smooth succession of his son after his death (1553) internal strife's marred the infant Afghan kingdom to the advantage of Humayun. Soon after Islam Shah's death, Mubariz Khan murdered Islam's son Firuz and ascended the throne with the title of Adil Shah. Sedition and rebellions marred

the entire country and the Empire broke into 'five' kingdoms (Ahmad Khan Sur in Punjab; Ibrahim Shah in Sambhal and Doab; Adil Shah in Chunar and Bihar; Malwa under Baz Bahadur; and Sikandar Shah controlled Delhi and Agra). This provided an ideal climate for Humayun to strike.

### Sur Administration

In the process of evolution of Mughal administrative machinery, the Afghan interlude (1540-1555) was significant. Under Sher Shah Suri the experiment in the formation of a bureaucracy under a centralized despotism had taken place. Akbar gave it a definite shape.

We get very little information about the working of central administration under Sher Shah. But he was an autocrat and kept everything under his direct control and supervision. Therefore, things went well so long as he was alive: his successors were no match to him.

Sher Shah seems to have been inspired by the history of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's (1296-1316) reign. He adopted most of the rules and regulations introduced by the Khalji Sultan. However, like Khaljis he was not harsh in their implementation. In the *doab* region, the *sarkar* (the successor of *shiqq* under the Khaljis) was the administrative-cum-fiscal unit, while *wilayat*, comprising a number of *sarkars* in the outlying regions, such as Bengal, Malwa, Rajputana and Sind and Multan were retained for the convenience of defence. The *sarkar* comprised a number of *parganas*, each *pargana* consisting of a number of villages. The village was the primary fiscal unit.

The noble posted as incharge of *sarkar* or *wilayat* was not given unlimited powers. He was regularly directed through royal *farman* to implement new rules and regulations. The spies informed the king about the conduct of the officers. Anyone who was found failing in his work was punished. For instance, Khizr Turk, the governor of Bengal, was dismissed and thrown into prison because he married the daughter of the ex-Sultan of Bengal without Sher Shah's permission and acted independently.

The *shiqqdar* was in-charge of the *pargana*. His chief function was to collect the revenue at *pargana* level. He was frequently transferred under Sher Shah. He was assisted by two *karkuns* (clerks) who kept the records both in Hindi and Persian. The *munsif* was responsible for measuring the land, etc. Both (*shiqqdar* and *munsif*) were directly appointed by the king. The *qanungo* maintained the records at *pargana* level. He was a hereditary semi-official. The *fotadar* was entrusted with the treasury of the *pargana*.

A number of *parganas* formed a *sarkar* (*shiqq*), headed by *shiqqdar-i shiqqdar*. He was the supervisor and executive officer over the *shiqqdars* of all the *parganas* in a *sarkar* (*shiqq*). The *munsif-i munsifan* performed the duties of *amin* (created later by the Mughals) at *sarkar* (*shiqq*) level. There were 66 *sarkars* (*shiqqs*) in Sher Shah's Empire.

The village was the smallest unit of administration. A group of villages constituted a *pargana* and a few *parganas* a *shiqq* which was equivalent to Mughal *sarkar*. However, in few areas, such as Punjab, Bengal, Malwa, etc. several *shiqqs* were placed under an officer whom we can equate with the Mughal *subadar*. The village-head was known as *muqaddam* who worked as the sole link between the government and the village.

Though he was not the government servant, nonetheless he was responsible for maintaining law and order in his village. Next comes the *patwari*, a village record-keeper. He was also not an employee of the state but of the village community.

Sher Shah attached great importance to the administration of justice. Civil cases of the Muslims were taken care of by the *qazi*, while the criminal cases were tried by the *shiqqdar*. The largest responsibility for detecting crimes rested upon *muqaddams*. If the *muqaddam* of the village, where the crime was committed, failed to capture the culprit, he was liable to severe punishment.

Similarly, Sher Shah's policy with regard to the planting of Afghan colonies in the territories known for recalcitrant inhabitants also demonstrates the nature of kingship under him. For example, Gwalior was one of the places colonized by the Afghans during Sher Shah's reign. In short, Sher Shah was an absolute monarch for all practical purposes.

In organizing his nobility, Sher Shah took people belonging to different ethnic groups in such a way that his dynastic interest could be safeguarded. No group was strong enough to assume the shape of a pressure group. We find the non-Afghan nobles, Khawwas Khan, Haji Khan and Habib Khan Sultani holding the charge of important provinces with large *iqtas*. This shows that the establishment of a pure Afghan nobility was never a consideration with Sher Shah.

On Sher Shah's death, his second son Prince Jalal Khan ascended the throne under the title of Islam Shah. He overpowered and eliminated many senior and experienced nobles who supported his elder brother Adil Khan. After their elimination, Islam Shah was free to translate his political ideas into practice. He shifted his capital from Agra to Gwalior and also brought his father's treasures from Chunar. Thus, Gwalior became the centre of Indo-Muslim Delhi culture.

It is also worth mentioning that Islam Shah went a step further from Sher Shah in centralizing the polity of the Empire. He took away the *iqtas* of the nobles and brought the whole Empire under *khalisa*. The officers were paid in cash instead of *iqtas*. The nobility and army were reorganized into new grades. Officers were appointed from among them to look after and inspect the proper maintenance of soldiers and necessary army equipment by the nobles. The nobles were also denied the possession of war elephants: it was a king's prerogative.

Islam Shah was very harsh in dealing with the nobility but he was benevolent towards the public. He provided people with the security of life and property by holding the officer-in-charge of a territorial unit responsible for the loss of property and life in his jurisdiction. Consequently, the officer in whose territory any crime was committed, went out of his way to arrest the culprit. Like his father, Islam Shah also ensured the administration of impartial justice in the Empire.

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## 5.7 REVIVAL OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA

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After Humayun's defeat at Qannauj, when Askari Mirza and Kamran withdrew to the North-West; Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza decided to be with Humayun. The latter now decided to try his luck in Sind. But, here, Hindal Mirza also deserted him and at the invitation of Kamran marched towards Qandahar. The ruler of Sind, Shah Husain Arghun, also succeeded in winning over Yadgar Nasir Mirza

by giving his daughter in marriage. Humayun himself could not succeed in his bid to occupy Sihwan. Frustrated by all these developments, Humayun alone tried his luck in Rajputana. He was invited by Raja Maldeo, the ruler of Marwar (July 1542). But, at this juncture, Sher Shah asked Maldeo to hand over Humayun. The latter fled in fear (August 1542). He was well received by Rana Birsal. With the help of the Rana, Humayun tried his luck in Sind once more but failed. Now he marched towards Persia via Ghazni (December 1543) where he was well-received by Shah Tahmasp (1544). The latter promised him in regaining Qandahar, Kabul and Ghazni provided he promised to surrender Qandahar to the Shah. It was agreed upon and Qandahar, then under Askari Mirza, was occupied and handed over to the Shah.

But misunderstandings crept up, for the Persians showed no eagerness to help Humayun to occupy Kabul and Ghazni. This compelled Humayun to wrest Qandahar from the Persians (1545). Humayun’s success at Qandahar won over many nobles – specially Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza to change sides. These developments totally demoralized Kamran and he fled from Kabul to Ghazna and thence to Sind and thus, facilitated Humayun’s entry in Kabul (November 1545). From 1545 to 1553, Humayun spent his energies mainly in dealing with his brother Kamran who kept Humayun on his toes. In this conflict Hindal Mirza lost his life on the battlefield (1551). This forced Humayun to have a final showdown. Kamran, to get help from Islam Shah but was cold shouldered. While fleeing from place to place, the Ghakkar chieftain Sultan Adam captured Kamran and handed him over to Humayun. Finally, Kamran was blinded and permitted to proceed to Mecca (where he died in 1557).

With the end of Kamran’s opposition, Humayun emerged an undisputed master of Kabul. With favourable political climate in India, now Humayun could plan for the re-acquisition of his lost Indian Empire. He started in November 1554 and reached Lahore in February 1555. With little difficulty, the Mughals continued their victorious march and occupied Machhiwara. The final clash took place at Sirhind. Sikandar Shah Sur had to flee towards Siwalik and the road to Delhi, thus, lay clear. Humayun reached Salimgarh in June 1555 and occupied Delhi. However, Humayun could hardly accomplish the task of conquest and consolidation. He died soon after (26 January 1556), leaving behind his minor son Akbar under heavy odds.

**Check Your Progress-3**

- 1) Discuss in brief Humayun’s struggle with Bahadur Shah.  
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- 2) Discuss the factors responsible for Humayun’s debacle against Sher Shah.  
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- 3) Write a short note on Humayun’s relations with his brothers.  
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- 4) Discuss the circumstances which facilitated Humayun to regain his power in India.

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## 5.8 SUMMARY

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Polity in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was mainly dominated by the Afghans – the Lodis. The Mughals also emerged on the scene, but they were still struggling to dominate the Afghan polity. This, in fact, was a period of instability. The Afghan nobility was not prepared to accept the autonomy of the Sultan. It played a crucial role in determining the political events of the period. As political expediency demanded, Bahlul was virtually dictated by Afghan nobility. Sikandar, who succeeded in exerting his power, did attempt a compromise. But, Ibrahim and later the Surs established an autocratic centralized monarchy, and made the nobility totally subservient to the Sultan. In spite of political instability, people enjoyed prosperity and economic stability.

In this Unit, we have studied the political situation of India on the eve of Babur's invasion. It would not be fair to assume that Indian politics was determined by religious considerations; rather circumstances and personal interests dominated the political scene. But, even after Panipat, Babur's path was not smooth. He had to face the Rajput chieftains and the dispirited Afghans. The alliances that were forged during these conflicts cut across religious considerations. We have seen that the confederacy had in it both the Rajputs and the Afghan nobles. It was Babur's great generalship that made him victorious against all odds. His son Humayun, who was not as gifted a general as his father, could not stand against the united Afghan opposition and thus failed to keep his father's legacy intact (1540).

As a result, he was thrown into wilderness for almost thirteen years. During this period, we saw the emergence of a great Afghan – Sher Shah – who, though ruled for just five years, left his permanent marks of excellence in history. He not only provided a strong administrative setup, which was followed and further strengthened by Akbar, but also brought almost the whole of north India under one administrative unit. But his successors failed to consolidate further. Their personal intrigues and the prevailing chaos provided an apt opportunity for Humayun to strike. This time Humayun made no mistake. He regained power in 1555. He died soon after leaving the task of consolidation to his son Akbar. We shall read about the developments that followed in the next Unit.

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## 5.9 KEYWORDS

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*Amin*

Revenue assessor

*Baburnama*

Memoir written by Babur (also known as *Tuzuk-i Baburi*)

<b>Indian Political System</b>	<b><i>Muqti</i></b>	Governor; <i>iqta</i> holder
	<b><i>Pargana</i></b>	An administrative unit comprising of a number of villages
	<b><i>Sarkar</i></b>	Territorial division consisted of a number of <i>parganas</i> . Between <i>parganas</i> and <i>sarkars</i> were the <i>shiqqs</i> but from Akbar's reign onwards <i>shiqq</i> was not commonly used.
	<b><i>Wazir</i></b>	Prime Minister
	<b><i>Wilayat</i></b>	Province. Provinces in this period were not well-defined administrative units. The well-defined provinces ( <i>subas</i> ) emerged for the first time during Akbar's reign in 1580.

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## 5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress-1

1. See Section 5.2
2. 1) C-Governor of Kara; 2) A-Governor of Bihar; 3) D-Governor of Kalpi; 4) B-Governor of Punjab
3. See Sub-section 5.3.1
4. See Sub-section 5.3.2

### Check Your Progress-2

1. See Section 5.4
2. See Sub-section 5.4.1
3. See Sub-section 5.4.2

### Check Your Progress-3

1. See Sub-section 5.5.1
2. See Sub-section 5.5.2
3. See Sub-section 5.5.3
4. See Section 5.7

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## 5.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Hasan, Mohibbul, (1985) *Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications).

Pandey, Awadh Behari, (1956) *The First Afghan Empire in India (1451-1526 AD)* (New Delhi: Bookland Limited).

Siddiqui, Iqtidar Husain, (1969) *Some aspects of Afghan Despotism in India* (Aligarh: Three Men Publication).



Tripathi, R. P., (1963) *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot).

Afghan Polity

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## **5.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS**

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**Talking History |8| Delhi: The Foundation of Mughal Empire | Rajya Sabha TV**

<https://www.youtu.be/anQWopp1NCo>

**Talking History |9| Delhi: The Mughal Empire under Humayun | Rajya Sabha TV**

[https://www.youtu.be/SeCpvMT\\_vA4](https://www.youtu.be/SeCpvMT_vA4)



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## Unit 6 MUGHAL CONQUESTS: WARFARE AND ALLIANCES \*

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### Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Power Politics and Regency of Bairam Khan: 1556-1560
- 6.3 Territorial Expansion
  - 6.3.1 North and Central India
  - 6.3.2 Western India
  - 6.3.3 Eastern India
  - 6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581
  - 6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West
  - 6.3.6 Deccan and South India
- 6.4 Territorial Expansion under the Successors of Akbar
- 6.5 Policies towards Autonomous Chieftains
- 6.6 Mughals and the North-West Frontier
  - 6.6.1 Akbar and the North-West Frontier
  - 6.6.2 Jahangir and the North-West Frontier
  - 6.6.3 Shah Jahan and the North-West Frontier
  - 6.6.4 Aurangzeb and the North-West Frontier
- 6.7 Summary
- 6.8 Keywords
- 6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 6.10 Suggested Readings
- 6.11 Instructional Video Recommendations

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- assess how Bairam Khan's regency came to an end and Akbar took control of the affairs of the state,
- evaluate the territorial expansion of Mughal Empire under Akbar and his successors,

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- analyze the problems faced by the Mughals in expanding the Empire,
- understand the relationship between the Mughals and autonomous chiefs and appreciate how did it help in the expansion and consolidation of the Empire, and
- evaluate the relationship between the Mughals and the North-West Frontier.

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## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Humayun had rescued and restored the Mughal Empire in 1555. But, had it not been for Akbar, the Empire perhaps would not have sustained. It was during the rule of Akbar that the Mughal

Empire became a political fact and an important factor in the Indian politics. Akbar's policies were emulated by his successors with few changes or in accordance with the political atmosphere of their times.

In this Unit, we will not go into the details of administrative machinery and the creation of the ruling class (this will be discussed in **Theme III**). Here we will confine ourselves mainly to the territorial expansion under the Mughals and the problems related to it. In the course of developing a large Empire the Mughal rulers had to deal with some political powers who held sway in various regions. Important of these were the Rajputs and the rulers to the south of the Vindhyas like Bijapur, Golkonda and Ahmadnagar and the Marathas. However, here, we will not discuss Mughal-Rajput, Mughal-Maratha relations, and the Deccan policy of the Mughal emperors. All this is discussed in detail in our Course **BHIC 112**.

For expediency, Akbar concentrated on the extension and consolidation of his Empire within India rather than involving himself in ventures beyond the Hindukush or Hormuz. From the very beginning of his reign, he wanted to retain Kabul and Qandahar under his sway as a bulwark against external invaders. Abul Fazl emphasized the fact that Kabul and Qandahar are the twin gates of India, one leading to Central Asia and the other to Persia. Earlier, Babur, too, had noted this aspect in his *Baburnama*. Later Chroniclers also expressed such views. While Akbar and his predecessors had a nostalgic love for their homeland, his successors were drawn into the whirlwind of a reckless imperialist ambition and, hence, in many ways the Mughal Empire had to pay the price for adventures in the North-Western campaigns under Shah Jahan.

We begin this Unit with Akbar's efforts to get rid of his adversaries and to establish himself at the helm of affairs at the Mughal court. Let us take up Bairam Khan's regency.

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## **6.2 POWER POLITICS AND REGENCY OF BAIRAM KHAN: 1556-1560**

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At Humayun's death, Akbar was only thirteen years old. It was his tutor and Humayun's confidant, Bairam Khan, who served as the **regent** from 1556-1560. The period of Bairam Khan's regency could be divided into four phases: The first was from the accession of Akbar to before the second battle of Panipat, i.e., January-October 1556. This was a period when the nobles accepted Bairam Khan's leadership to protect their interests. The second phase was marked by the second battle of Panipat and the arrival of the royal ladies (Hamida Banu Begum and Maham Anaga)

in India. During this period, Bairam Khan was in absolute control of the state affairs. He attempted to create a personal following. In the third phase, which lasted till mid-1559, Bairam Khan's influence and power declined. The last phase witnessed the attempts of Bairam Khan to regain control. There was also growth of factional strife which ultimately led to the dismissal of Bairam Khan.

Politically, the first phase was insecure. It saw not only Humayun's death but also a challenge to the Empire by the Afghan forces under Hemu. The events especially cast a gloom since Akbar was a minor. The only alternative to save the situation was to appoint a regent. But the fear was that the exercise of de facto sovereignty by one of the nobles as regent would disrupt the mutual relations of the nobles and threaten the administration. Despite these fears, Bairam Khan was appointed *wakil*. Surprisingly, there was no opposition to the appointment even by those nobles who could claim *wikalat* either on the basis of long service, blood relationship or past association with Akbar. These included even the most severe critics of Bairam Khan.

While accepting Bairam Khan as the regent, it appears that these nobles wanted to share power and influence with Bairam Khan. Bairam Khan, on the other hand, was determined to exercise power rigidly. On the assumption of the office as *wakil-us Sultanat*, he expected factional conflict and tussle for power. He, therefore, began the process of eliminating all those nobles who would challenge him. He dismissed and imprisoned Shah Abul Ma'ali, his ardent critic. This did not arouse much opposition since Ma'ali was generally unpopular among the nobles.

Subsequently, all such nobles who posed a challenge to Bairam Khan were sent to Kabul. Bairam Khan, however, attempted to win the support of Mun'im Khan, the governor of Kabul and Ali Quli Khan Uzbek, the commander of the Mughal forces in Awadh. Bairam Khan did not trust Mun'im Khan. He wanted to confine him to Kabul and distance him from the court. The opportunity came in May 1556 when Mirza Sulaiman attacked Kabul. Mun'im Khan's contacts were delinked with the court for the next four months and Bairam Khan used this period to strengthen his power at the court.

Tensions were developing in the nobility and it was on the verge of crisis by the second battle of Panipat. The imperial forces led by Tardi Beg failed to defend themselves against the Afghan forces at the battle of Tughlaqabad. At this juncture, trying to assert himself, Bairam Khan, without the sanction of the emperor, ordered the execution of Tardi Beg on the charges of treachery. This aroused dissension in the nobility. But the victory at Panipat revived Bairam Khan's power. He further strengthened his position by distributing titles and *jagirs* in the Doab and granting promotions and rewards to his loyalists. He also gave important positions to his favourites. Pir Muhammad Khan was appointed his personal *wakil*, Khwaja Aminuddin as *bakshi* and Shaikh Gadai as *sadr*.

Bairam Khan was virtually in complete control of the affairs within six months of Tardi Beg's execution. To vest considerable power in himself, he prevented access to the king especially that of his possible rivals. Mun'im Khan and Khwaja Jalaluddin Mahmud were sent away to Kabul and were not allowed to come to the court. The strengthening of Bairam Khan's power and the exercise of de facto authority by him was resented by the nobility.

The first evident decline in Bairam Khan's power was when Akbar was married to the daughter of Mirza Abdullah Mughal, a son-in-law of Mun'im Khan despite

Bairam Khan's resistance. Bairam Khan's position was also affected after the arrival of Hamida Banu Begum from Kabul in April 1557. She was accompanied by Maham Anaga who had earlier supported Bairam Khan in the event of Tardi Beg's execution. Bairam Khan was compelled to compromise on the functioning of the Central government, i.e., he had to share power with leading nobles. Bairam Khan as *wakil* could not place any proposal before the king without the consent of leading nobles. This compromise diminished his power and by 1558 even his personal *wakil*, Pir Muhammad, turned against him.

To regain his power, he attempted a coup in 1559. He replaced Pir Muhammad by Muhammad Khan Sistani as his personal *wakil*. Shaikh Gadai was given additional charge apart from being a *sadr*. Many small ranking officials were also given promotions. But Bairam Khan remained isolated from the large section of the nobility and the king. He aroused their resentment by his authoritarianism.

Scholars like R.P. Tripathi, have accused Bairam Khan of granting favours to the *shias* to the disadvantage of the *sunnis* and thus annoying them. But Iqtidar Alam Khan argues that although Bairam Khan was a *shia*, there is no historical evidence to prove that he granted favours on religious grounds. In fact, Bairam Khan's favourite Shaikh Gadai, the *sadr*, was a Sunni and not a Shia.

Bairam Khan had underestimated the shrewdness of Akbar. He had made no attempt to win the confidence of the king and when the king announced his dismissal in March 1560, all the loyalists of Bairam Khan either supported the king or declared their neutrality.

The study of the period of Bairam Khan's regency indicates that actually the political power was vested in the nobility. The nobles accepted the authority of Bairam Khan in a limited sense. They were not willing to accept his de facto sovereign power. Bairam Khan tried to curb the nobility but he failed to acquire absolute power. To maintain his position, he had to depend on one or the other section of the nobility. Thus, he failed to acquire a stable independent following. In fact, he alienated large sections of the nobility by giving high ranks and promotions to junior officers and creating inefficient *amirs*. At the end of his career, Bairam Khan realized that even his favourites opposed him.

The tussle between Bairam Khan and the nobility was in fact a conflict between the central authority represented by the regent and the nobility. The king during this period was a mere figurehead who often became a tool in the hands of Bairam Khan's opponents. Bairam Khan had tried to weld together the two main groups of the Mughal nobility, i.e., the Chaghatai and Khurasani. But most of the nobles regarded this as an attempt by the regent to curb their power and independence. Even the loyalists of Bairam Khan realized that they could not accept the central authority as represented by Bairam Khan.

Bairam Khan's regency was a period of dilemma for him. While he wanted to curtail the independence of the nobility, he needed their support for his power. This created contradictions in his position throughout this period. It was not possible for him to counterbalance this opposition by introducing a new group. The Afghans could not be recruited because they were the main contenders to the throne. The only alternatives were, therefore, the Rajput chiefs, the *zamindars* or other local chiefs. But inducting them would have been a long process. Thus, whenever Bairam Khan tried to recover his position, he was opposed by the court nobility. Consequently, he often found

himself isolated and was ultimately overthrown.

Bairam Khan's exit confirmed the struggle between the central authority and the forces against it in the Mughal polity. It resulted in the triumph of the latter. This trend would help to understand the difficulties which Akbar faced with his nobility between 1562-1567 after he assumed complete sovereign powers. We notice that throughout Bairam Khan's regency, political power rested with the dominant section of the nobility which consisted of the Chaghtais and other groups of Turani origin. Bairam Khan was able to exercise power as the regent as long as they supported him. The nobles, as mentioned earlier, accepted Bairam Khan in a limited sense and not as a de facto sovereign. They did not oppose him till the Afghans were crushed. But after Hemu's defeat in the second battle of Panipat, they resisted the regent's efforts at centralization and forced him to accept the authority of the leading nobles.

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### 6.3 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

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After overcoming initial problems and consolidating his hold on the throne, Akbar started a policy of extending Mughal territories. Any policy of expansion meant conflict with various political powers spread in different parts of the country. A few of these political powers were well organized, the Rajputs, though spread throughout the country as autonomous chiefs and kings, had major concentration in Rajputana. The Afghans held political control mainly in Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal. In Deccan and South India, the major states were Khandesh, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda and other southern kingdoms. In the north-west some tribes held their sway. Kabul and Qandahar, though held by Mughal factions, were opposed to Akbar.

Akbar through a systematic policy started the task of expanding his Empire. It must be noted that the major expansion of Mughal Empire took place during the reign of Akbar. During the reigns of his successors (Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb), very little was added in terms of territory. The main additions in the later period were made during Aurangzeb's reign in South India and North-East (Assam).

#### 6.3.1 North and Central India

The first expedition was sent to capture Gwalior and Jaunpur in 1559-60. After a brief war, Ram Shah surrendered the Gwalior fort. Khan Zaman was sent to Jaunpur, ruled by Afghans who were defeated easily, and it was annexed to the Mughal Empire.

Malwa in central India was ruled by Baz Bahadur. Adham Khan and others led the expedition against Malwa. Baz Bahadur was defeated and fled towards Burhanpur.

Next, Garh Katanga or Gondwana, an independent state in central India ruled by Rani Durgawati, widow of Dalpat Shah, was conquered in 1564. Later, in 1567, Akbar handed over the kingdom to Chandra Shah, the brother of Dalpat Shah.

During this period, Akbar had to face a series of revolts in central India. Abdullah Khan Uzbek was the leader of the revolt. He was joined by a number of Uzbeks. Khan Zaman and Asaf Khan also rebelled. Akbar with the help of Munim Khan succeeded in suppressing them and consolidated his position.

A long conflict with nobility, which had started after the dismissal of Bairam Khan (1560), now came to an end. Akbar through his diplomatic skills, organizational capabilities and the help of some trusted friends tackled this serious crisis.

## 6.3.2 Western India

### Conquest of Rajputana

Akbar realized that to have a stable Empire, he must subjugate the large tracts under Rajput kings in the neighbouring region of Rajputana. A calculated policy was devised not only to conquer these areas but turn their rulers into allies. Akbar with the exception of Chittor's Rana Pratap, managed to secure the allegiance of all the Rajput kingdoms. A large number of them were absorbed in Mughal nobility and helped Akbar in expanding and consolidating the Mughal Empire (here we are leaving details on Mughal relations with the Rajputs that will be dealt in detail in our Course BHIC-112).

### Conquest of Gujarat

Having consolidated his position in Central India and Rajputana, Akbar turned towards Gujarat in 1572. After Humayun's withdrawal, Gujarat was no longer a unified kingdom. There were various warring principalities. Gujarat, apart from being a fertile region, had a number of busy ports and thriving commercial centres.

Sultan Muzaffer Shah III (r. 1561-1573; d. 1592) was the nominal king claiming overlordship over seven warring principalities. One of the princes, I'timad Khan, had invited Akbar to come and conquer it. Akbar himself marched to Ahmedabad. The town was captured without any serious resistance. Surat with a strong fortress offered some resistance but was also captured. In a short time most of the principalities of Gujarat were subdued.

Akbar organized Gujarat into a province and placed it under Mirza Aziz Koka and returned to the capital. Within six months various rebellious groups came together and revolted against the Mughal rule. The leaders of rebellion were Ikhtiyarul Mulk and Muhammad Husain Mirza. The Mughal governor had to cede a number of territories.

On receiving the news of rebellion in Agra, Akbar started for Ahmadabad. This march is considered as one of the most outstanding feats of Akbar. Travelling at a speed of 50 miles a day Akbar along with a small force reached Gujarat within 10 days and suppressed the rebellion.

For almost a decade there was peace in Gujarat. Meanwhile, Muzaffar III escaped from captivity and took refuge in Junagadh. After 1583, he tried to organize a few rebellions.

## 6.3.3 Eastern India

Ever since the defeat of Humayun at the hands of Sher Shah, Bengal and Bihar were governed by Afghans. In 1564, Sulaiman Karrani, the governor of Bihar, brought Bengal under his rule. Sulaiman realizing the growing strength of Akbar had acknowledged the overlordship of the Mughals. He used to send presents to Akbar. After his death in 1572, followed by some infighting, his younger son Daud came to occupy his throne. Daud refused to acknowledge Mughal suzerainty and got engaged in conflict with the Mughal governor of Jaunpur.

In 1574, Akbar along with Mun'im Khan Khan-i Khanan marched towards Bihar. In a short time, Hajipur and Patna were captured and Daud fled towards Garhi. After a brief stay Akbar returned. Mun'im Khan and Raja Todar Mal continued to chase Daud who later submitted to the Mughals. After a short time, he again rebelled and

was finally killed by the Mughal forces under Khan-i Jahan and Gaur (Bengal) was taken. This ended the independent rule of Bengal in 1576, which had lasted with few interruptions for almost two centuries. Parts of Orissa were still under some Afghan chiefs. Around 1592, Man Singh brought the whole of Orissa under the Mughal rule.

### 6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581

According to V. A. Smith, 'The year 1581 may be regarded as the most critical time in the reign of Akbar, if his early struggle to consolidate his power be not taken into account'.

After the conflict of nobility which had lasted till 1567, now again serious conflicts came to surface in Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat and in the north-west. At the root of these conflicts was the discomfort of Afghans who were overthrown everywhere by the Mughals. Akbar's policy of strict administration of *jagirs* was also responsible for this. By this new policy, the *jagirdars* were asked to submit the accounts of their *jagirs* and a cut was enforced in the military expenditure. The governor of Bengal enforced these regulations ruthlessly, giving rise to revolt. Soon the rebellion spread to Bihar. Masum Khan Kabuli, Roshan Beg, Mirza Sharfuddin and Arab Bahadur were the main leaders of rebels. Muzaffer Khan, Rai Purshottam and other imperial officers tried to crush the rebellion but failed. Akbar immediately sent a large force under Raja Todar Mal and Shaikh Farid Bakhshi. A little later Aziz Koka and Shahbaz Khan were also sent to help Todar Mal. Meanwhile, the rebels declared Akbar's brother Hakim Mirza, who was in Kabul, as their king. The Mughal forces crushed the rebellion in Bihar, Bengal and adjoining regions. A few rebel leaders escaped and took shelter in the forest region of Bengal. They had lost all following but for a few years they continued to harass Mughal officers with their small bands without much success.

Mirza Hakim, to put greater pressure on Akbar, attacked Lahore. Akbar also marched towards Lahore. Hakim Mirza, after hearing the news of Akbar's march, immediately retreated. Hakim Mirza was expecting a number of Mughal officers to join him but all his calculations failed. Akbar after organizing the defence of North West frontier, sent an army to Kabul. Akbar also marched towards it. By the time he reached there, Hakim Mirza had left Kabul and Akbar occupied it. Akbar gave the charge of Kabul to his sister Bakhtunnisa Begam and left for Agra (1581). After some time, Mirza Hakim came back and continued to rule in his sister's name. Mirza Hakim died after four years and Raja Man Singh was appointed governor of Kabul.

Gujarat also witnessed some rebellion at around the same time when Bihar, Bengal and North-West regions were in trouble. Here the ex-ruler Muzaffar Shah escaped from captivity and organized a small force. He started attacking the Mughal territories in Gujarat. I'timad Khan was deputed as the governor of Gujarat. Nizamuddin Ahmed in the capacity of *bakhshi* helped him in his operations against the rebels. In 1584, Muzaffar Shah was defeated at Ahmadabad and Nanded. He escaped towards the Kutch region. Nizamuddin Ahmed followed him there also. In whole of the Kutch region, a number of forts were erected and Mughal officers were appointed. Muzaffar kept brewing some trouble in that region till 1591-92 when he was finally captured.

### 6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West

After the death of Hakim Mirza, Kabul was annexed and given to Raja Man Singh in *jagir*. At around the same time, Akbar decided to settle the various rebellions in the North-West Frontier region and conquer new areas.



### Suppression of the Roshanais

The first to attract Akbar's attention was the Roshanai movement. Roshanai was a sect established by a soldier who was called Pir Roshanai in the frontier region. He had a large following. After his death his son Jalala became the head of the sect. The Roshanais rebelled against the Mughals and cut the road between Kabul and Hindustan. Akbar appointed Zain Khan as commander of a strong force to suppress the Roshanais and establish Mughal control in the region. Sayyid Khan Gakhar and Raja Birbal were also sent with separate forces to assist Zain Khan. In one of the operations Birbal was killed with most of his forces (around 8,000). Subsequently, Zain Khan was also defeated but he could survive to reach Akbar at the fort of Atak. Akbar was greatly shocked by the death of Birbal, one of his most favourite companions. Akbar appointed Raja Todar Mai with a strong force to capture the region. Raja Man Singh was also asked to help in the task. The combined efforts of the two yielded success and the Roshanais were defeated.

### Conquest of Kashmir

Akbar, for a long time, had his eyes set on conquering Kashmir. While camping in Atak, he decided to dispatch an army for the conquest of Kashmir under Raja Bhagwan Das and Shah Quli Mahram. Yusuf Khan, the king of Kashmir, was defeated and he accepted the suzerainty of the Mughals. Akbar was not very pleased with the treaty as he wanted to annex Kashmir. Yusuf's son Yaqub along with a few *amirs* also decided to oppose the Mughals and waged war. But some dissensions set in the Kashmiri forces. Finally, the Mughals emerged victorious and Kashmir was annexed to the Mughal Empire in 1586.

### Conquest of Thatta

Another region in the North-West which was still independent was Thatta in Sindh. Akbar appointed Khan-i Khanan as the governor of Multan and asked him to conquer Sindh and subdue Bilochis in 1590. Thatta was annexed and placed under the governor of Multan as a *sarkar* in that *suba*.

The Mughal forces continued the suppression of Bilochis in the adjoining regions. Finally, by the year 1595, the complete supremacy of Mughals over North-West region was established.

### 6.3.6 Deccan and South India

Akbar had started taking interest in the Deccan states of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda after the conquest of Gujarat and Malwa. The earlier contacts were limited to the visits of emissaries or casual contacts. After 1590, Akbar started a planned Deccan policy to bring these states under Mughal control. Around this time, the Deccan states were facing internal strife and regular conflicts.

In 1591, Akbar sent a few missions to the Deccan states asking them to accept Mughal sovereignty. Faizi was sent to Asir and Burhanpur (Khandesh), Khwaja Aminuddin to Ahmadnagar, Mir Muhammad Amin Mashadi to Bijapur, and Mirza Ma'sud to Golconda. By 1593 all the missions returned without any success. It was reported that only Raja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, was favourably inclined towards the Mughals. Now, Akbar decided to follow a militant policy. Here we will not go into the details of the Deccan policy. We will provide only a brief account of Mughal expansion here (the details would be discussed in **BHIC 112**).

The first expedition was dispatched to Ahmadnagar under the command of Prince Murad and Abdul Rahim Khan Khanan. In 1595, the Mughal forces sieged Ahmadnagar. Its ruler Chand Bibi at the head of a large army faced the Mughals. She approached Ibrahim Ali Shah of Bijapur and Qutb Shah of Golconda for help but with no success. Chand Bibi gave a very serious resistance to the Mughal Army. After heavy losses on both the sides, a treaty was formulated. According to this treaty Chand Bibi ceded Berar. After some time, Chand Bibi attacked Berar to take it back. This time Nizamshahi, Qutbshahi and Adilshahi troops presented a joint front. The Mughals suffered heavy losses but could manage to hold the field. Meanwhile, serious differences between Murad and Khan-i Khanan weakened the Mughal position. Akbar therefore dispatched Abul Fazl to the Deccan and recalled Khan Khanan. After Prince Murad's death in 1598, Prince Daniyal and Khan-i Khanan were sent to the Deccan. Akbar, too, joined them. First, Ahmadnagar was captured. Meanwhile, Chand Bibi died. Next, Asirgarh and adjoining regions were conquered by the Mughals (CE 1600). Adil Shah of Bijapur also expressed allegiance and offered his daughter in marriage to Prince Daniyal. Now Mughal territories in the Deccan included Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Ahmadnagar and Berar.



Map 6.1 Akbar's India

Source:

### Check Your Progress-1

1. How did Bairam Khan deal with the initial challenges to his power?  
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2. Explain the revival of Bairam Khan's power after the second battle of Panipat. And discuss the decline in Bairam Khan's position subsequent to 1557.  
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3. How was Gujarat brought under the Mughal rule?  
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4. Which were the main areas affected by the rebellion of 1581?  
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5. List the *subas* formed in 1580.  
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## 6.5 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF AKBAR

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The territorial expansion under Akbar gave a definite shape to the Mughal Empire. Very little progress was made during the reigns of his successors, viz., Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. After Aurangzeb we find that the process of disintegration of the Empire began. In this Section we will trace the expansion of the Empire during the reigns of Akbar's successors.

During the seventeenth century the main areas of activity were the North-West frontier, Deccan and South India, North-East and some isolated regions.

In the North-West the Roshanais were decisively curbed by 1625-26. Qandahar became a region of conflict between the Persians and Mughals. After Akbar's death, the Persians tried to capture Qandahar but failed under Shah Abbas I, the Safavi ruler. Following this, Shah Abbas I in 1620 requested Jahangir to hand over Qandahar to him but the latter declined to do so. In 1622, after another attack, Qandahar was captured by the Persians. The struggle to capture Qandahar continued till Aurangzeb's reign but Mughals got little success (see **Section 6.6**).

Mewar was the only region in Rajputana which had not come under the Mughals during Akbar's time. Jahangir followed a persistent policy to capture it. After a series of conflicts, Rana Amar Singh finally agreed to accept Mughal suzerainty. All the territories taken from Mewar including the fort of Chittor were returned to Rana Amar Singh and a substantial *jagir* was granted to his son Karan Singh. During the reigns of the successors of Akbar, the Rajputs generally continued to be friendly with the Mughals and held very high *mansabs*.

During the last years of Akbar and early years of Jahangir, Ahmadnagar under Malik Ambar started challenging the Mughal power. Malik Ambar succeeded in getting support of Bijapur in this conflict. A number of expeditions were sent by Jahangir but they failed to achieve any success. During Shahjahan's reign, Mughal conflict with the Deccan kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda was revived. Ahmadnagar was first to be defeated and most parts were integrated into Mughal territory. By 1636, Bijapur and Golconda were also defeated but these kingdoms were not annexed to the Mughal Empire. After a treaty the defeated rulers were to pay annual tributes and recognize Mughal authority. For almost ten years, Shah Jahan kept his son Aurangzeb as the governor of Deccan. During this period, the Marathas were emerging as a strong political power in the region. During Aurangzeb's reign, the struggle with Deccan states and Marathas became more intensive. In fact, Aurangzeb spent the last twenty years of his life in Deccan fighting against them. By 1687, the Deccani kingdoms of Bijapur (1686) and Golconda (1687) were annexed to the Mughal Empire.

#### **Annexation of Assam**

The major success of the Mughals in the north-east was the annexation of Assam. In 1661, Mir Jumla, the governor of Bengal, invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla had 12,000 cavalry, 30,000 soldiers and a fleet of boats with guns under his command. The Ahom resistance was very feeble. Mir Jumla succeeded in capturing Kamrup, the capital of Ahom kingdom. The king fled from the kingdom. In early 1663, the Swargdeo surrendered and peace was established. Assam was annexed and Mughal officers were appointed. Mir Jumla died in 1663. Another notable achievement in north-east was the capture of Chatgaon in 1664 under Shaista Khan, the new governor of Bengal.

The Ahom kingdom could not be directly controlled for long. The Mughal *faujdar*s posted there had to face a number of confrontations. By 1680, Ahoms succeeded in capturing Kamrup and the Mughal control ended.

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## **6.4 POLICIES TOWARDS AUTONOMOUS CHIEFTAINS**

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In his efforts to consolidate the Mughal Empire, Akbar concentrated his attention on chieftains also. Chieftains is a term which is generally used (and has got wide acceptance among historians) for the ruling dynasties spread throughout the country. These rulers enjoyed a different sort of relationship with the Mughals. On the one hand, they were free to carry out administration within their territories. On the other hand, they held subordinate position vis-a-vis the Mughal Emperor.

Akbar's success lies in the fact that he could enlist the support of this group for the stability of his Empire. The subsequent Mughal Emperors also followed more or less similar path.

## The Nature of Power of Chieftains

In contemporary accounts these chiefs are referred to by different names such as *Rai*, *Rana*, *Rawats*, *Rawals*, *Raja*, *Marzban*, *Kalantaran*, etc. Sometimes the term *zamindar* is used to denote both ordinary landholders and autonomous chiefs. But there is a definite difference between the two. The *zamindars* were not independent of the Mughal authority while the chiefs enjoyed comparative autonomy in their territories and had a different relationship with the Mughal Emperors.

The first major study on chieftains was made by Ahsan Raza Khan. He established that they were not confined to peripheral areas of the Empire but were also found in the core regions in the *subas* of Delhi, Agra, Awadh and Allahabad. The largest number of these chieftains were Rajputs but they belonged to all castes including Muslims.

The chieftains were a powerful group possessing large infantry, cavalry and hundreds of miles of land area yielding vast amount of revenue.

## Mughal Encounters with Chieftains

After the defeat of the Lodis, the central power in India, Babur had to face joint rebellions of Afghans and chieftains. Humayun also had to face their hostility.

Akbar's initial contacts with the chieftains were through skirmishes and wars. In many cases the chieftains joined hands with the Afghan and Mughal rebels. In the process of the conquests and consolidation of Mughal power, Akbar got the support and submission of chieftains. There was no formal declared policy of Akbar towards them. On the basis of references in the contemporary sources, we get an idea about the relations between chiefs and the Mughals. These may be summarized as follows:

- 1) After the conquest of or submission they were generally left free to administer their territories. They also had authority to collect revenue, impose taxes, levies and transit tax, etc. In the collection of revenue, the chieftains generally followed local practices rather than the Mughal regulations.
- 2) These autonomous chieftains were taken into military service of the Mughals. They were given *jagirs* and *mansabs*. A.R. Khan estimates that around 61 chiefs were given *mansab* during Akbar's reign. The same trend continued during the reigns of successive Mughal Emperors.
- 3) In many cases where chieftains were not directly absorbed as *mansabdars*, they are found helping the Mughal army in their operation against enemy territories or suppression of rebellions. Throughout the Mughal rule they helped in conquering extensive areas, at times even against their own clansmen.
- 4) Apart from providing military help, they were given important administrative positions like *subadar* (governors), *diwan*, *bakhshi*, etc.
- 5) Often they were assigned their own territories as *jagir*, known as the *watan jagir*, which was hereditary and non-transferable.
- 6) An interesting characteristic of their relations was that the Mughal Emperor retained the right to recognize the chieftain as the ruler in case of disputes within the family. At the same time, those who had accepted the Mughal suzerainty were extended military protection.
- 7) The chieftains were supposed to pay a regular tribute to the Mughal Emperor

called *peshkash*. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of this *peshkash*. This was at times in cash and at others in diamonds, gold, elephants or other rarities.

Apart from being a source of revenue, the payment of *peshkash* was a symbol of submission to the Mughals.

- 8) A number of matrimonial alliances were also established between Mughal royal family and the chieftains.

**Rebellions of Chieftains**

We come across numerous instances of rebellions by chieftains. The causes for such rebellions are often stated as non-payment of revenue or tribute. In case of rebellions, the Mughal policy was not to dispossess the chieftains from their territories. Someone from the same family was left in control of the territory. In some instance, when a chieftain was dispossessed, it was for a short period often as a reprimand. Later, he or one of his family members was reinstated.

The Mughal policy towards chieftains initiated under Akbar continued during the reigns of subsequent Mughal Emperors. The policy of absorbing them into the Mughal nobility paid rich dividends to the Empire. The Mughal Emperor succeeded in getting the support of chieftains and their armies for new conquests. As part of Mughal nobility, their help was also available for administering a large Empire. In addition, a friendly relationship with them ensured peace for the Empire. At the same time, the chieftains also benefited. Now they could retain their territories and administer them as they wished. In addition, they received *jagir* and *mansab*. Often they got territories in *jagir* bigger than their own kingdoms which also provided them security against enemies and rebellions.

**Check Your Progress-2**

- 1. List the main achievements in territorial expansion under Aurangzeb.  
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- 2. How the policy adopted by the Mughals towards the chieftains was one of mutual benefit?  
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**6.6 MUGHALS AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER**

With the expulsion of Babur from Central Asia, the traditional hostility between the Mughals and the Uzbegs was suspended for a while probably due to the fact that there was nothing to quarrel for as in the case of Persians over the issue of Qandahar. Nevertheless, Babur’s exhortations to Humayun to reconquer some parts of Transoxiana and latter’s unsuccessful or temporarily successful attempts continued. However, these were without any lasting effects as Mughal territorial possessions in India were yet to be consolidated and extended. In subsequent years, both the

Uzbegs and the Mughals were faced with numerous internal problems and could not venture to expand. A new chapter began in the history of Mughal-Uzbek relations with the emergence of Abdullah Khan (1560-98) who tried to establish vital contacts with Akbar.

### **6.6.1 Akbar and the North-West Frontier**

The Mughal-Uzbek relations under Akbar can be studied in three phases: (1) 1572-1577, (2) 1583-1589, and (3) 1589-1598.

#### **First Phase (1572-1577)**

It was neither the expectation of some military assistance from Akbar nor a question of exploring the possibility of making an alliance against the Persian Empire which prompted Abdullah to send two embassies in 1572 and 1577. With his designs on territories like Badakhshan and Qandahar, it was only natural that Abdullah should strive to develop friendly relations with Akbar and thereby ward off the danger from this side. These two embassies were thus probing and appeasing missions sent for the following purposes:

- a) To ascertain Akbar's attitude towards Persia and Qandahar,
- b) To find out his general policy in relation to Badakhshan and, if possible,
- c) To mislead Akbar about his own designs on Badakhshan.

The dangers threatening Akbar at his North-Western frontiers e.g., rebellious attitude of Mirza Hakim (ruler of Kabul) and the latter's friendship with Shah Ismail II of Persia; the possibility of triple alliance between Abdullah, Mirza Hakim and Ismail II; and Akbar's own inability to become involved in external affairs necessitated a friendly attitude towards Abdullah Khan. Hence, an embassy was sent in 1578 to Akbar. Akbar rejected the proposal for a joint attack on Persia. It seems that the reaction of Abdullah to this letter was not quite favourable since no further embassies were sent to Akbar for about a decade.

From 1577 onwards, a shift is noticeable in the respective positions of Abdullah Khan and Akbar which also brought about a change in their policies towards each other. By 1583, Abdullah had conquered all of Transoxiana, and had also eliminated all his kinsmen. When his father died in 1583, he became the *Khaqan* and could now compete with his other counterparts in the Muslim world. While Abdullah had improved his position and was now adopting a bolder and demanding attitude towards Akbar, the attitude of Akbar himself had become more conciliatory.

By this time the difficulties of Akbar had increased further. There were troubles in Kashmir and Gujarat, and also tribal commotions in Kabul, Sawad and Bajaur. The frontiers for Akbar had become even more insecure after the death of Mirza Hakim (1585). The Persian Empire had also become weak now under the unsuccessful reign of the incompetent and half-blind ruler Khudabanda (1577-1588) and the Empire had been completely shattered by the invasions of the Ottomans as well as by internal intrigues of the nobles.

#### **Second Phase (1583-1589)**

After a lapse of several years, Abdullah sent another embassy to Akbar in 1586. Akbar responded by sending Hakim Humeim in 1586 as his envoy. It is difficult to

explain why Abdullah chose to send two separate letters simultaneously. Nevertheless, neither of the two letters can be discarded as spurious since Akbar's reply contains answers to the questions raised separately in both the letters. It is clear from the contents of both the written and verbal messages from Abdullah that the purpose of this embassy was not to seek the cooperation of Akbar for an attack on Persia but to prevent him from sending any assistance to the Persian ruler. Abdullah explained that he had discontinued all correspondence with Akbar from 1578-1585 due to the reports that 'Akbar had adopted the religion of metaphysics and the behaviour of Jogis and had deviated from the religion of the Prophet'. In his reply sent through Hakim Humeim, Akbar called it 'fabrications and accusations of certain disaffected persons'.

### **Third Phase (1589-1598)**

The dispatch of Ahmad Ali Ataliq from Abdullah's court marks the beginning of the third phase in the Uzbek-Mughal relations. Through the letter sent with this envoy, Abdullah sought friendship and sent counsel for 'exerting ourselves to strengthen the foundations of concord and make this Hindukush the boundary between us'. Nevertheless, the formal acceptance of this offer of peace was confirmed by Akbar only in 1596 after the conquest of Qandahar.

In the changed circumstances, Akbar was feeling emboldened and was also aware of the aggressive designs of Abdullah Khan due to which he had personally come to Punjab and was planning to occupy Qandahar from 1589 onwards. Akbar entertained designs upon Qandahar and was finally successful in persuading the Mirzas to come to India. After the conquest of Qandahar, Akbar felt the need of reviving his contacts with Abdullah Khan. Since, after the occupation of Qandahar, the Mughal forces had engaged themselves in an armed conflict with the Uzbeks over the possessions of Garmsir and Zamindawar, it had become all the more necessary to pacify Abdullah Khan. Moreover, in 1594, the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-1595) had sent a letter to Abdullah proposing a joint attack on the Persian territory. The fear of the Ottoman-Uzbek friendship might have also alarmed Akbar. No military alliance could take place at this time, as the Uzbek envoy was still on his way to the Ottoman court when Sultan Murad III died in 1595.

The fear of the Uzbeks continued, particularly, in view of the fact that Abdullah Khan had opened correspondence with the new Ottoman ruler Mohammad and had even proposed a joint attack of Persia. After the occupation of Qandahar, Akbar realized the urgency of sending an embassy to Abdullah through Khwaja Ashraj Naqshbandi and showed his willingness to accept the Hindukush as the boundary between the two kingdoms.

### **6.6.2 Jahangir and the North-West Frontier**

Jahangir's relations with Turan were predominantly determined by his relations with Persia. Although his love for Turan is visible in his autobiography, the conquest of Turan was not included in his plans. His relationship with the Uzbeks is best assessed in his own answer to an English traveller, Thomas Coryat's, request for a letter of recommendation in 1616 that:

There was no great amity between the Tartarian princes and himself and his recommendations would not help the traveller at Samarqand.



In the first decade of his rule, Jahangir maintained no active political relations with the Uzbeks, except for attempting to forestall any probable expansionist design on his frontiers. The early indifference of Jahangir towards the Uzbeks was expediently changed as soon as the question of Qandahar was raised by the Shah through his envoy Zainul Beg. In February 1621, Mir Baraka was sent on a 'highly confidential mission' to Imam Quli, the Uzbek ruler who in turn sent an embassy to Nur Jahan Begam. Imam Quli's confidential message received by Jahangir with much enthusiasm as it contained criticism of the Persians and sought an alliance with the Mughals against Persians. Jahangir had been invited to join the holy war which was obligatory on Imam Quli not only to avenge the death of his own father but also to clear the road to Mecca which was under Persian control.

Although Jahangir had himself ignored friendly overtures of the Ottoman Sultan of Turkey, the news of a possible Uzbek-Ottoman alliance was quite disturbing for him. After the capture of Baghdad in 1624, Sultan Murad had sent a favourable reply to Imam Quli's call for an alliance against Persia and had even exhorted him to take away Iran from the control of the Persians. The Ottoman Sultan had sent a similar letter to Jahangir aiming at a triple alliance against Persia. Although several letters were exchanged during 1625-26, no plans could materialize as Jahangir died in 1627.

### **6.6.3 Shah Jahan and the North-West Frontier**

With the accession of Shah Jahan, the Uzbek-Mughal relations took a new turn. The underlying objective of Shah Jahan's foreign policy was three fold:

- i) The recovery of Qandahar;
- ii) The re-conquest of the 'ancestral land'; and
- iii) The hegemony over Deccan.

For this purpose, he wanted to ensure friendship of both the contemporary powers of Persia and Transoxiana alternatively when Qandahar and Transoxiana were invaded. Out of sheer diplomacy, Shah Jahan ignored the invasion of Nazr Muhammad on Kabul and sent an embassy to Imam Quli at Bukhara. Through this exchange of embassies, solidarity against Persia was emphasized. Shah Jahan's embassy led by Safdar Khan arrived in April 1633. This visit was followed by another envoy, Mir Husain, in May 1637. Unlike Jahangir, Shah Jahan even wrote a letter to Murad IV in 1636 expressing his desire to reconquer Qandahar and proposing a tripartite alliance of Mughals, Uzbeks and Ottomans against the Persians. Shah Jahan, however, managed to conquer Qandahar even without the assistance of any of these rulers.

After the capture of Qandahar in 1638, Shah Jahan's sole aim was to conquer his 'ancestral land' of Transoxiana. A large-scale Uzbek invasion of Maruchaq along Persian frontiers provided the much sought after Persian-Mughal entente in April-May 1640. A joint invasion of Balkh was proposed. However, the task was left unfulfilled. The correspondence between the Persians and the Mughals at this juncture shows that the latter succeeded in persuading the Persians to cooperate with them only to a limited extent as the letters from the Persian side smacked of their fear and circumspection. Equally apprehensive were the half-hearted allies – the Uzbeks – as they could sense the expansionist ambitions of Shah Jahan. An opportunity soon appeared in this regard for the Mughals.

The Uzbek Empire was passing through a phase of anarchy. The despotism and stubborn autocracy of Nazr Muhammad provoked opposition of the nobility which now started supporting his son Abdul Aziz. In desperation, Nazr Muhammad sought the assistance of Shah Jahan who immediately seized this opportunity to conquer Balkh on the pretext of saving it from the rebels. The conquest was justified on grounds of extending necessary protection to the Saiyids of Balkh. It was also conveyed through this letter that Nazr Muhammad should be sent to Mecca and should not be allowed to return to Turan. The Persians themselves hesitated to support the cause of Nazr Muhammad as they were doubtful about his success. In fact, Shah Jahan had dispatched three successive envoys to Persia for ensuring Persian neutrality in the Turanian affairs. However, this was not the only factor which determined the Persian attitude towards Nazr Muhammad. They were somewhat reluctant to help him not only because of his sullen temperament but also because of the traditional Uzbek-Persian hostility. The absence of capable leadership in Persia further thwarted such designs. Before the envoys reached Persia Nazr Muhammad had already left for Turan.

The conquest of Balkh and other territories proved easier for Shah Jahan than their occupation. The conquest at the same time was hazardous, too, due to a variety of factors. The evacuation was also difficult for the Mughals and was equally unpleasant for the Persians. Hence, an agreement had to be reached with Nazr Muhammad in October 1647.

In 1650, Shah Jahan sent an embassy to Abdul Aziz, the Uzbek ruler of Turan. But the political realignments taking place in Turan recently had made the situation difficult for Abdul Aziz. His brother Subhan Quli was being supported by his father-in-law Abul Ghazi – the then ruler of Khwarazm and a satellite of Persia. Shah Jahan often persuaded Abdul Aziz to invade Kabul. Shah Jahan's attempt to form an alliance with the Ottoman rulers Murad IV (r. 1623-1640) and Muhammad (Mehmet) IV (r. 1648-1687) had failed. The tenor of the letters sent by the Ottomans to Shah Jahan was distasteful to the latter and not very conducive to mutual understanding. The Mughal occupation of Balkh was also not liked by the Ottomans. Thus, the Mughal-Ottoman relations could not prosper.

#### **6.6.4 Aurangzeb and the North-West Frontier**

Aurangzeb's hostility towards Deccani kingdoms was further accentuated due to secret negotiations between his brother and the Shah of Persia. Aurangzeb desired recognition from Shah through Zulfiqar Khan – the Persian governor – who immediately sent an envoy in 1660

presumably with the Shah's approval. The Shah's letter referred to ancient ties of friendship and the assistance rendered by the Shahs of Iran to the Mughals and explanations for the conquest of Qandahar. Although a warm welcome was given to the envoy, the tenor of the reply was displeasing. A return embassy was sent under Tarbiyat Khan – the governor of Multan – with a friendly letter treating the Qandahar affairs as a closed chapter. But the relations between the two rulers deteriorated and the impertinence of the envoy (who declined to accompany the Shah to Mazandaran) provided the Shah the opportunity to challenge the Mughal Emperor for a trial of strength. The letter sent by the Shah contained references to Aurangzeb's fratricide and his ineffective government resulting in disorder. The

news of the Shah's intended march reached Aurangzeb before the arrival of Tarbiyat Khan. Preparations started for war and an embargo was placed on all kinds of trade with Persia. The governor of Surat was ordered to stop all ships sailing to Persia. But the news of the death of the Shah in 1666 averted the danger. Tarbiyat Khan, however, lost favour and was declined audience for a year because of listening tamely to the Shah's insulting remarks.

The next Persian ruler, Shah Sulaiman (1666-1694), was rather incompetent, and his pious and righteous son and successor Sultan Hussain (r. 1694-1722) lacked diplomacy and political acumen. Aurangzeb was aware of the difficulties involved in the Qandahar campaign. He assisted the rebel Persian governor of Herat in 1688. He persuaded Prince Muazzam to go to Qandahar as he himself was preoccupied with problems of Jats, Sikhs, Marathas, and, the rebel son Akbar who had crowned himself in 1681. Although Aurangzeb was keen to secure help from the Shah, the latter desisted from it. The diplomatic relations with Abdul Aziz and his brother Subhan Quli of Turan were strengthened and their sectarian affinity was emphasized. The plans of raid on Bala Murghab in 1685 and the proposed anti-Persian alliance and a joint invasion of Iran were also contemplated. Almost simultaneously the Uzbek ruler Abdul Aziz sought friendship of Shah Abbas II (r. 1642-1666). But the Perso-Uzbek alliance could not materialize as Turan was threatened by Urganj and Khwarazm and torn by internal and external dissensions, devoid of a good leadership. The Safavi Empire was also, during this period, in a state of slow but sure dissolution. It was in no position to extend its support to Deccan Kingdoms. By 1687, Aurangzeb managed to destroy the two remaining Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda and annexed their territories. As no threats existed from Central Asia and Iran, Aurangzeb's position was strengthened.

Thus, Aurangzeb left the Mughal Empire in a 'state of diplomatic isolation' except for an insignificant embassy from Bukhara in 1698. Although Aurangzeb never dreamt of the recovery of Qandahar, the Mughal-Safavi relations deteriorated gradually and even an embassy from the Ottoman ruler remained unanswered.

### **Check Your Progress-3**

1. Discuss Akbar's policy towards northwest frontier.

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2. What were the objectives of Shahjahan's northwest frontier policy?

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3. Write a note on Aurangzeb's policy towards Persia.

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## 6.7 SUMMARY

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In this Unit, we studied the fact that Akbar became Emperor at a very young age. During the first four years, Bairam Khan worked as regent for the young Emperor. The nobility was divided into various factions each trying to establish its supremacy. Akbar gradually took control of the situation and created a dedicated group of nobles faithful to him. The Mughal Empire's control at that time was limited to a small territory.

Akbar started a policy of conquests and brought large areas in the east, west, north and south under the Empire, though success in the south was confined to the regions of Deccan only. Along with conquests, the process of consolidation was also initiated. As a result, the conquered territories were placed under a unified administrative system. The consolidated Empire created by Akbar was maintained with a measure of success by his successors for more than hundred years. During the reign of Aurangzeb, new territories in the south (Bijapur, Golconda, etc.) and in the North-East were added. The notable achievement of the Mughal Emperors lay in securing the help of the autonomous chieftains for the expansion and consolidation of the Empire.

In the ultimate analysis, this unit has tried to bring out the geo-political and commercial significance of the North-West frontier, control over which was the bone of contention between the Mughals, Safavis and Uzbegs.

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## 6.8 KEYWORDS

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### *Akbarnama*

The official chronicle of the reign of Akbar, written in Persian by the court historian Abul Fazl ibn Mubarak.

### *Pargana*

An administrative unit comprising of a number of villages.

### *Regent*

A person who administers a state/kingdom when the legal monarch is a minor or unable to rule due to other reasons.

### *Suba*

A province; *Subas* were established by Emperor Akbar during the administrative reorganization in 1580. Initially, there were 12 provinces and after the Deccan conquest, the number reached 15.

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## 6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise-1

1. See Section 6.2
2. See Section 6.2
3. See Sub-section 6.3.2
4. See Sub-section 6.3.4

### Check Your Progress Exercise-2

1. See Section 6.4
2. See Section 6.5
3. See Section 6.7
4. See Section 6.7

### Check Your Progress Exercise-3

1. See Sub-section 6.6.1
2. See Sub-section 6.6.3
3. See Sub-section 6.6.4

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## 6.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Hasan, Mohibbul, (1985) *Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications).

Khan, A. R., (1977) *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar* (Simla: IAS).

Prasad, Beni, (1962) *History of Jahangir* (New Delhi: Indian Press).

Tripathi, R. P., (1963) *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi: Central Book Depot).

Varma, Ramesh Chandra, (1967) *Foreign Policy of the Great Mughals, 1526-1727 A.D.* (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala & Co.).

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## 6.15 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

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### Harbans Mukhia in Kitab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRpHubqTPtY>

### Desh Deshantar: Role and Contribution of Sher Shah Suri & Akbar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3zSukHOQmY>

### The Myth and Reality of Emperor Aurangzeb – An Illustrated Lecture | The Hindu Lit for Life 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riEfw0JbtB0>

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## Unit 7 THE NAYAKAS\*

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### Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Historiography
- 7.3 Historical Sources
- 7.4 Emergence and Development of the *Nayaka* Kingdoms
  - 7.4.1 Migration of the *Nayakas* and the Vijayanagara State
  - 7.4.2 Madurai, Tanjore and Senji: The Beginnings
  - 7.4.3 The bases of the *Nayaka* State Formation
- 7.5 Relationship with the Vijayanagara Rulers
- 7.6 *Nayaka* Rulers and Chieftains: Consolidation and Administration
- 7.7 Warfare Technology of the *Nayaka* States
- 7.8 Kingship, Legitimacy and the Image of the King
  - 7.8.1 Use of the Past
  - 7.8.2 Capital City as a Source of Authority
  - 7.8.3 Representation of the Enemy
- 7.9 Political Economy of the *Nayaka* States
- 7.10 Cultural Developments
- 7.11 A New Ethos
- 7.12 Decline of the *Nayaka* Kingdoms
- 7.13 Summary
- 7.14 Keywords
- 7.15 Answers to check your progress exercise
- 7.16 Suggested Readings
- 7.17 Instructional Video Recommendations

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to know about the following:

- History of south India from the middle of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century.
- The emergence and consolidation of the *nayaka* kingdoms of southern India.

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- Nature of kingship and legitimations in *nayaka* states
- Political Economy of the *nayaka* kingdoms
- Emergence of a new cultural ethos in the sixteenth and seventeenth century CE.
- The decline of the *nayaka* kingdoms of Madurai, Tanjore and Gingee.

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, during the period of Vijayanagara rulers, Krishnadevaraya (1509-29 CE) and Achyutadevaraya (1529-42 CE), the military leaders or *nayakas* emerged in large numbers in the administration. These *nayakas* were assigned territories (*sima, sime, sirmai*) by the Vijayanagara kings and in exchange the *nayakas* had to maintain an armed contingent and collect taxes on behalf of the state. Such a landed assignment known as the *nayakatana or nayakkattanam* became the basis for the emergence of independent political formations, which gradually acquired the status of kingdoms during the Vijayanagara rule. Some of these powerful *nayaka* polities were Ikkeri and Odeyars in northern and southern Karnataka regions respectively and Senji (Gingee), Tanjavur and Madurai in the old territorial divisions of Tondaimanadalam, Chola mandalam and Pandiamandalam respectively in the Tamil region (Wagoner 1993: 24). These polities despite being powerful independent kingdoms claimed symbolic allegiance to the Vijayanagara Empire (1336-1672 CE) by portraying themselves as loyal feudatories of the Vijayanagara rulers. It should be noted that the Mughals were ruling simultaneously while the *nayakas* were in power in south India. During this period the arrival of the Jesuits, foreign travellers, the British, French, Dutch and other European Companies and their interactions influenced the *nayaka* states in particular and the history of south India in general. The *nayaka* polities continued till 1730s in the eighteenth century when Madurai, the last of the major *nayaka* states declined.

This unit will discuss the historical importance of the *nayaka* kingdoms from the period of their emergence in the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century when they declined, the sources especially the textual narratives composed in the respective *nayaka* kingdoms, the aspects of political formation, authority and legitimation, political economy and cultural developments. The unit will highlight the emergence of a new ethos that was not only politically significant, but was also noteworthy for its rich culture.

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## 7.2 HISTORIOGRAPHY

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The period from the latter half of sixteenth century till the middle of the eighteenth century, that is, after the defeat of the Vijayanagara ruler Rama Raja (1542-65 CE) in the hands of the five Deccani sultanates of Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Berar till the rise of Hyder Ali in 1761 CE has been virtually ignored and considered as ‘something akin to a blackhole in south Indian history (Rao et.al. 1992: x). Many historical researches do not consider it worthwhile to deal with this period as according to them, it represented the end of the Empire with the defeat of the Vijayanagara army in 1565 CE at Talikota and political chaos due to the presence of numerous polities. Therefore, the history of the powerful *nayaka*

kingdoms situated in this period did not receive much scholarly attention till recently.

It needs to be pointed out that despite the defeat of the Vijayanagara ruler and the abandonment of the capital near Hampi, the Empire continued to exist for almost another hundred years under the rule of the last line of Vijayanagara kings, the **Aravidus** (1570-1646). The Aravidus established themselves at the fortified sites of Penukonda and then at Chandragiri, near the shrines at Tirumala-Tirupati, in southern Andhra. A civil war over succession in 1614 CE left the Aravidus with a much-reduced kingdom. The last of the Vijayanagara kings Sriranga III died in 1672 CE, more than hundred year later than the **battle of Talikota** ( also known as Rakshasa Tangadi).

Further, the presence of many kingdoms and absence of a strong Vijayanagara Empire did not mean anarchy. This period corresponding to the development and consolidation of the *nayaka* states was one of the politically dynamic periods in the history of south India. A culturally vibrant period with a new ethos, the *nayaka* states were famous for their elaborate temple and civic architecture, and artistic and cultural achievements, which reflected the Dravidian as well as Islamic influences. The famous Tanjore paintings belonging to a classical school of south Indian art developed in the *nayaka* kingdom of Tanjavur. The relationship between the *nayaka* and Vijayanagara states is one of the fascinating themes of study. These *nayaka* kingdoms though were once a part of the Vijayanagara Empire, possessed distinct political and geographical identity and had a specific social, economic and cultural milieu.

Historiographically there have been significant contribution to the study of the individual *nayaka* kingdoms of Senji, Ikkeri, Odeyars, Madurai and Tanjore. Some of the notable are those of R. Sathyanatha Aiyar on Madurai (1924), Srinivasachari on Senji (1943) Vriddhagirisan on Tanjore (1947) and K.D. Swaminathan on Ikkeri (1967). These works provide a comprehensive geographical, political and cultural history of the respective *nayaka* kingdoms using a wide variety of historical sources and have formed the bedrock on which later historiographical research is based upon. The recent work of Velecheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjaya Subrahmanyam titled *Symbols of Substance* (1992) followed by Philip B. Wagoner's *Tidings of the King* (1993) are useful contributions in understanding the history of the *nayaka* rule.

The *Symbols of Substance* deals with the political culture of three major *nayaka* states of Tanjavur, Madurai and Senji along with minor polities located on the peripheries of these kingdoms. The book explains that the transition in the *nayaka* period was due to the social flux caused by migrations of several groups from the Telegu region and social mobility of marginal groups present in the *nayaka* states to a position of political influence. It also highlights the issues of war and contestations and the nature of the *nayaka* kingship. According to the authors, the *nayaka* kingship had limited political authority but made inflated claims of a glorious polity. While discussing the emergence of institutions, the authors analyse the literary texts of this period to support their arguments.

The *Tidings of the King*, a translation and ethnohistorical analysis of a Telugu text called the *Rayavacakamu* deals with the period of Krishnadevaraya. However, Wagoner points out that the text was written in the court of the Madurai Nayaka, that is more than a hundred years later. It was, according to Wagoner, composed



with the purpose of acquiring political legitimacy for the Madurai ruler by claiming his lineage as a loyal feudatory of the powerful and famous king, Krishnadevaraya. But at the same time it did not recognise the political authority of the contemporary Vijayanagara ruler of the Aravidu dynasty as the latter was weak and declining. Such a paradox is reflected in the text that further asserts that the Aravidu dynasty did not possess any moral and ritual authority as the source of that authority, the capital city, Vijayanagara was destroyed in 1565 CE by a confederation of the Muslim states of Deccan and no other city of the same stature developed subsequently.

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### 7.3 HISTORICAL SOURCES

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The sources for the history of the *nayaka* period are of various types. Inscriptions carved on the stone walls of numerous temples patronised by the *nayakas* are an important source that give us information about land grants, donors, donee and various ritual and administrative activities. However after the sixteenth century, the inscriptions started diminishing in number.

There are numerous literary texts commissioned by the *nayaka* courts of Senji, Madurai, Tanjavur and other polities and have been considered lately as significant sources of the *nayaka* history. These texts were composed in Telugu, Sanskrit and Tamil and were primarily meant for ‘an educated, multi-lingual audience of courtiers, courtesans, pandits and officials.’ (Rao et.al.1992: 334). These literary texts were usually courtly dramas in the form of *yakshgana* plays consisting of songs and dance and themes of love, *kavya* texts which were a mixture of prose and poetry (*campu* style) with mythological themes, chronicles, treatises on grammar, philosophy and astrology, devotional (*bhakti*) poetry, other minor works (*laghukavya*, *prabandha*) and several others.

The example of the *Rayavackamu* cited above will be discussed briefly here to demonstrate the nature of one of the textual sources belonging to the *nayaka* period. The *Rayavackamu* was written by a *sthanapati*, the agent of Vishvanatha Nayaka (1595-1602 CE), the ruler of Madurai. Written in the form of a diplomatic “report” or “tidings” (*vacakamu*) of “the king” (*raya*), the text recounted political affairs and events of the Vijayanagara state during the time of Krishnadevaraya- a period of unprecedented development in politics, art, culture and economy (Wagoner 1992: 3) According to Wagoner, despite the author’s claim that he resided in Krishnadevaraya’s court while writing the text, the *Rayavacakamu* was composed in the court of the Madurai *nayaka* in the sixteenth- seventeenth centuries (Wagoner 1993: 7-10). According to many scholars, the text is a work of *ethnohistory*, that is, “an indigenous discourse about the past”, which needs to be understood in its own cultural terms and not from the point of modern historical worldview. (Dirks, 1987: 57-8). Thus the *Rayavackamu* located in the ‘intellectual world’ of the seventeenth century *nayaka* period in Madurai, reflected its ‘experience and sensibilities’ (Wagoner 1993: 8) and was a source of information for that period.

Accounts of foreign travellers who visited the *nayaka* courts have also provided information for this period. For example, the sixteenth century travel accounts of Italians merchants like Cesare Federici and Gasparo Balbi, Flemish gem trader Jacques de Coutre and Iceland traveller Jon Olafsson are useful in understanding the history of this period (Rao et.al. 1992: 338). The Jesuit letters dating from 1540s published in various volumes provide us with the information of court politics

and social conditions in the *nayaka* states. The Portuguese records belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth century and the English and Dutch Company records from the factories at Armagon, Madras and Pulicat also provide us with rich information, especially about the Coromandel.

These variety of sources depending on their nature had different viewpoints. For instance, the literary texts produced in the *nayaka* courts would like us to believe that the *nayaka* ruler was powerful and independent of the Vijayanagara political authority. However, the Jesuit accounts and records in Dutch and Portuguese give a different picture. The Dutch and Portuguese records inform us that the big *nayaka* in the seventeenth century paid tribute regularly to the Vijayanagara king. In case, any *nayaka* defaulted or refused to pay the remissions, the Vijayanagara ruler sent an army to extract the tribute. This happened in the case of Senji *nayaka* who refused to pay the tribute and had to be subordinated by the army of the Vijayanagara ruler, Venkata II. Even after the civil war of 1614 CE that reduced the status of the Aravidu dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire considerably, the *nayakas* continued to pay one fourth of their revenue collection as a tribute (Rao et.al 1992: 105-7; Karashima 2014: 227).

**Check Your Progress-1**

1. Give three characteristics of the *nayaka* kingdoms:  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
2. Match the following:
 

i) Ikkeri	a. Pandiamandalam
ii) Madurai	b. Tondaimanalam
iii) Odeyars	c. Cholamandalam
iv) Senji	d. South Karnataka
v) Tanjavur	e. North Karnataka
3. Put a ✓ for a True and a × for a False statement:
  - i) Achyutadevaraya was the last ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire. ( )
  - ii) The battle of Talikota in 1565 CE marked the end of the Vijayanagara Empire. ( )
  - iii) Nayakas were powerful rulers claiming a connection with the Vijayanagara rulers ( )
  - iv) Literary texts are exaggerated accounts and donot help in understanding the history of the *nayakas*. ( )

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## 7.4 EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NAYAKA KINGDOMS

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According to some historians, the *nayaka* kingdoms emerged after the downfall of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565 CE. However, the Vijayanagara rule survived

for more than hundred years after the battle, existing simultaneously with the independent *nayaka* kingdoms in the later part of sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth century. In fact, the Vijayanagara rulers after 1565 CE continued to assign *nayakkattanams*.

#### 7.4.1 Migration of the *Nayakas* and the Vijayanagara State

The *nayaka* political elites were mostly Telugus in their origin and traced their lineage to those warrior groups that had migrated from the Andhra region and settled in the Kannada and Tamil regions of the Vijayanagara Empire during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They were called the *vadugas* or northerners- a term used for Telugu migrants into the Tamil country. Hence their 'socio-political universe' was always the Andhra region (Rao et. al. 1992: 7). It is stated that most of them belonged to the Telugu speaking Balija caste groups, were highly mobile and were both martial and mercantilist in their orientation.. They contributed significantly to the *nayaka* state systems and their cultural and political traditions. For instance, the Bajigas restructured the revenue systems of the Madurai and Tanjavur *nayaka* kingdoms (Rao et al 1992: 10). Several warrior groups also came from the Kannada region and settled in the Tamil region during the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Undoubtedly, the *nayaka* polities emerged and developed from the administrative power that the *nayaka* officials had over the territories assigned to them during the Vijayanagara rule. Epigraphical evidence attests the presence of a large number of *nayaka* officials in the fifteenth and sixteenth century CE. Fernao Nuniz, a Portuguese traveller informs us that there were 'two hundred captains' who were assigned territories by the Vijayanagara king and the *nayakas* 'on their part, had to collect revenue in their territories to remit a certain amount to the state and also to maintain an armed contingent of a certain size for the king, apart from carrying out general administration in the territories through his agents.' (Karashima 1992:195-6). There was a hierarchy amongst the *nayaka* officials themselves. Some of them enjoyed the status of an overlord and others were often subordinate chiefs or agents of the big *nayakas*. Studies suggest that the king transferred them but when the political authority of the rulers weakened especially after 1565 CE, some of the *nayakas* asserted their independence in their respective localities.

Based on the genealogies of the *nayakas* of Madurai, Tanjavur, Senji and Ikkeri in the inscriptions and literary texts, it can be concluded that the ancestors of the respective *nayaka* dynasties can be traced to the sixteenth century CE when they were appointed as *nayaka* officials during the time of the Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya. For instance, the *nayaka* kingdoms of Senji, Madurai and Ikkeri (north Karnataka) emerged in the sixteenth century during the period of Krishnadevaraya's reign. The *nayaka* kingdoms of Tanjore and Madurai were founded during Achyutadevaraya's reign. Tanjavur (modern Tanjore and North Arcot) emerged under Sevappa Nayaka during Achyutadevaraya's time in 1532 CE. The historical chronicles inform us that these three *nayakas* were three generals who were deputed to take care of the Tamil region by Krishnadevaraya.

#### 7.4.2 Madurai, Tanjore and Senji: The Beginnings

Although the historical origins of the Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji *nayakas* are obscure, it is possible to get some information from the sources. Nagama Nayaka and his son Visvanatha Nayaka were the founders of the Madurai *nayaka* state

(Rao et.al. 1992: 44-56). The emergence of the Madurai *nayakas* is fairly well documented in the chronicles. These chronicles represent the glories of the military skills of the Madurai *nayakas*, especially Visvanatha and their ability to negotiate with the chieftains of the region. Visvantha is credited with construction of forts, temples, irrigation canals, creation of *brahmana* settlements and negotiations with the Jesuits who operated in and around Madurai amongst the local fishing (*paravas*) population. It should be noted that the Madurai *nayakas* based their polity on the Kakatiya model that was aggressive with the domination of warriors (Aiyar 1924:1-47; Rao et.al. 1992: 39-40, 41). But they also claimed a strong loyalty to their Vijayanagara overlords. In fact the chronicles tell us that Krishnadevaraya was so impressed with their loyalty that he gave way the only image of Durga that was divine source of power and protection for the Vijayanagara Empire.

The chronicles on Tanjavur, while documenting the history of the region especially in the eighteenth century discuss the role of one Cevappa, whose father Timmappa Nayaka was the holder of a *nayakkattanam* in the Arcot region of Tamil Nadu. Cevappa's wife was the sister-in-law of Achyutadevaraya and through this matrimonial alliance he received Tanjavur. He was also probably in close service of the Vijayanagara ruler. The Tanjavur *nayakas* based their polity on the brahmanical principles and had *brahmana gurus* or preceptors, the most famous being Govinda Dikshita (Vridhagirisan 2011: 1-23, 113-24; Rao et.al. 1992: 41).

The founder of the Senji *nayaka* lineage in the historical chronicles is Tubaki Krishnappa Nayaka. There are narratives of how he constructed a fort magically on the Senji mountains (Srinivasachari 1943: 1-26). It is said that this construction was done at the behest of a wild boar, an incarnation of Vishnu, who led the *nayaka* from Kanchipuram to Senji. In some documents, Krishnappa Nayaka (Srinivasachari 1943: 131-51) is depicted as belonging to a shepherd family pre-dating the Vijayanagara times. Thus the origin story of the Senji *nayaka* kingdom is based upon 'a fortress and a state', 'created not by conquering new lands but out of an abundance of fluid resources, magically attained and continually reproduced...' (Rao et.al. 1992: 41-2). Historically speaking, the Senji *nayakas* could establish their power after a long struggle in the last two decades of the sixteenth century notably under one Kondama Nayaka (1578-94 CE) and then under Muttu Krishanappa. The *nayakas* then repaired the fort that already existed and urban centre developed around it. However, due to the lack of a legitimate genealogical tradition, which the Madurai and Tanjavur *nayakas* possessed, several chieftains and *nayakas* challenged the authority of the Senji *nayakas*. The pressures from these chieftains and the Vijayanagara *rayas* of the Aravidu dynasty at Chandragiri ultimately proved to be harmful for the Senji *nayakas* in the seventeenth century (Srinivasachari 1943: 27-64; Rao et.al. 1992: 42-4)

### 7.4.3 The bases of the Nayaka State Formation

The formation of the *nayaka* states and their consolidation was based upon six main components that marked a substantial departure from the previous period. *One* was the possession of liquid capital that is money, which had become more important than landed property. In fact, sources tell us that Nagama Nayaka of Madurai asserted his right to be the king on the basis of his possession of large amount of money. *Two*, the significant role of mercenaries in state formation cannot be ignored. They were mobile, had no ties with land and were equipped with arms, good horses that enabled them to travel swiftly without much preparation

*Three*, a territory in which this mobile warrior elite would settle down and consolidate their power. *Fourth*, the allegiance to the Vijayanagara king was essential, even if the latter had become weak for that legitimized the newly founded kingship. *Fifth*, the consolidation of power had to be based on divine sanction and display of complete devotion to the divine power was crucial. For instance, goddess Minakshi was the patron deity of the Madurai *nayakas*. *Sixth*, the role of *brahmanas* to compose genealogies for providing a *kshatriya* lineage, or function as ministers and advisers was not relevant any more. The *nayakas* could assert their independence if they possessed money, were mobile and well equipped, controlled a region and had the legitimizing authority of the Vijayanagara king and divinity (Rao et.al. 1992: 54-6).

These six requirements for state formation and consolidation of power also influenced the ideology of kingship, which will be discussed below.

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## 7.5 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VIJAYANAGARA RULERS

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The relations between the *nayakas* and the Vijayanagar ruler fluctuated from display of loyalty to rebellion. At times the *nayakas* sought the help of the Vijayanagara rulers to counter each other. For example, the Senji *nayakas* remained loyal to the Vijayanagara rulers till 1592 CE. Similarly, the *nayakas* of Tanjore remained loyal to the Vijayanagara through the sixteenth century and supported Venkatapatideva, the Vijayanagara king against the invasion from the Golconda sultanate. The Madura *nayaka*, Visvappa and his successors also remained loyal to the Vijayanagara rulers and even supported the *raya* against the Portuguese. Similarly, the *nayakas* of Ikkeri were also loyal to the Vijayanagara rulers. Sadasiva Nayaka (1540-65 CE) at Ikkeri helped Rama Raya to defeat the Bijapur Sultan. Thereafter, Rama Raya rewarded him with the title of *Raya*.

Both Krishnadevaraya and Achyutadevaraya often transferred the *nayakas* from one place to another. But the *nayakas* especially of these four polities often managed to avoid the transfer, held on to their territories and strengthened their position after 1565 CE. However, despite defying the Vijayanagara authority, they continued to claim loyalty to the Vijayanagara rule and considered themselves to be responsible for the administration of their territories (Karashima 2014: 227).

After 1592 CE, the Vijayanagara king, Venkatapati I shifted his capital from Penukonda to Chandragiri in order to control the *nayakas*. This generated resentment amongst the *nayakas*, who often evaded the payment of tribute to the Vijayanagara state. In fact, whenever the Vijayanagara rulers increased their power to centralize the administration, the *nayakas* responded by challenging the ruler's authority. For instance, after 1580s the Madurai *nayakas* rebelled against the Vijayanagara rulers and refused to pay taxes to them. Venkatapati I had to send his army to subjugate the Madura *nayakas* in order to collect the revenue.

Often the Vijayanagara rulers also tried to set up one *nayaka* against another so that no powerful alternative arose to challenge the Vijayanagara authority. For example, Venkatapati instigated the *nayakas* of Vellore to challenge the authority of their feudal overlord, the Senji *nayakas* and ultimately by 1608 CE Venkatapati overtook both Senji and Vellore. Similarly the Ikkeri *nayakas* who had remained loyal to the Vijayanagara rulers throughout the sixteenth century, rebelled in the

seventeenth century under Venkatappa Nayaka (1586-1629 CE) of Ikkeri during the reign of Vekatapati I.

Some of the *nayaka* kingdoms always remained difficult for the Vijayanagara rulers to control. The Odeyara chiefs, who had settled in the region of Mysore in the thirteenth century, predating the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire, never accepted the authority of the Vijayanagara rulers. Even Krishnadeveraya found the Odeyars, difficult to control. It was under Chamaraja III (1513-53CE) and his son Timmaraja (1553-72CE) that the Odeyars became powerful. By 1610 CE, the Odeyar *raja* could establish his independence when the Odeyars successfully eliminated the Vijayanagara viceroy from Seringapattanam and declared it as the capital of Odeyar *nayaka* kingdom.

After 1614 CE, a change in the political attitude of the *nayakas* is visible. In 1614 CE, Vijayanagara ruler Venkata II died without leaving an heir. Thereafter a prolonged war of succession broke out between two sets of claimants to throne; each supported by the *nayakas* of Madurai and Senji one hand and *nayakas* of Tanjavur on the other hand. There were heavy losses and the Vijayanagara ruler became weak with virtually no power in his hands. Though the relationship between the *nayaka* states and the Vijayanagara rulers continued as that of the overlord and feudatory in the 1640s, it was in name only. In 1642 CE Sriranga II ascended the Vijayanagara throne. Soon thereafter, the Madura and Senji *nayakas* rebelled against him and he had to shift to stay in the *nayaka* kingdom of Tanjavur for sometime. In 1649 CE, Bijapur attacked Tanjavur and Sriranga II sought refuge with the *nayakas* of Odeyars and relocated himself in Mysore. A few years later, on account of the conflict between Golconda and Bijapur and the Mughal invasions of these Deccani Sultanates, Sriranga II moved to Carnatic in the Coromandel and seized back Chandragiri, the capital of the Vijayanagaras from the Golconda sultan. Due to his conflicts with the *nayakas* of Senji, Tanjavur and Madurai, Sriranga II again sought asylum in Karnataka with Sivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri who symbolically considered him as his overlord.

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## 7.6 NAYAKA RULERS AND CHIEFTAINS: CONSOLIDATION AND ADMINISTRATION

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In the Tamil, Karnataka and Telugu regions, there was always the presence of petty chieftains who had powerful local roots, controlled a large part of agrarian production and trade and possessed large territories called *palaiyam*. Some of them also possessed a big army. These chieftains were known as *palaiyakaran* in Tamil, *palegana* in Kannada, *palegadu* in Telugu and poligars in English. (Karashima. 2014: 228). During the seventeenth century CE, the *nayakas* employed these chieftains 'for local administration and guarding the forest areas and highways.' Most of these poligars were loyal to their respective *nayaka* overlords and also supported them militarily especially during invasions of other powers. However, some of these chieftains or poligars were able to assert their power and made their respective *palaiyams* as independent chieftaincies, especially in the eighteenth century. One of the well-known examples is that of the Sethupathis of Ramanathapuram, who were Marava chieftains or poligars (Dirks. 1987; Karashima.2014: 228).

### Check Your Progress 2

1. Give a brief account of the rise of the *nayaka* polities in south India from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century.

.....

.....

.....

2. Who were poligars and what was their role in *nayaka* polity?

.....

.....

.....

3. Briefly state any three bases of the *nayaka* state formations.

.....

.....

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4. Discuss briefly the relationship of the *nayaka* polities with the Vijayanagara state.

.....

.....

.....

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## 7.7 WARFARE TECHNOLOGY OF THE NAYAKA STATE

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Since this was a period of conflict between the *nayaka* states, Aravidu rulers of the Vijayanagara kingdom, lesser *nayaka* subordinates, chieftains, Bijapur and Golconda sultanates, the development of warfare technology would have received some patronage and attention. The geographical knowledge of the terrain and issues of mobility were crucial as the *nayaka* warriors and chieftains like the Maravas, Sethupathis and Kallars engaged in guerilla warfare (Rao et.al 1992: 238-9). This period is known for the construction of forts and fortresses for the purpose of defense and security. The fort at Senji is well known and was considered to be practically impregnable.

The *nayaka* polities were familiar with the use of firearms and used it during armed combats. (Rao et.al 1992: 220-41) The literary sources provide information about firearms and firearms technology while discussing warfare, hunting and romance. (Rao et.al 1992: 224-26). Interestingly they used ‘firearms as a poetic device in diverse contexts...’ (Rao et.al 1992: 224). The European trading companies were the major supplier of firearms to the *nayaka* states. The Dutch factory records inform us about local chieftains making several requests for canons to be given on loan or sold to them. (Rao et.al 1992: 230).

However, some historians feel that despite an environment of warfare and presence

of a strong martial culture, firearms were not widely used. Rather their use was often looked down upon and swords and lances were considered to be a greater test of courage as using them brought a warrior face to face with the enemy. (Rao et.al 1992: 235-36). Thus, it is emphasized that though new military innovations were accepted and widely known, it was not a period of 'military revolution' as the *nayaka* states did not easily incorporate these new technologies into their warfare infrastructure. In addition there was a heavy dependence on cavalry than on infantry. It is for these reasons that the Bijapur and Golaconda armies with a skilled use of firearms and a well-organized infantry could overwhelm the *nayaka* armies in various battles. (Rao et.al 1992: 239-41)

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## 7.8 KINGSHIP, LEGITIMACY AND THE IMAGE OF THE KING

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The previous polities of south India, for instance, the Pallavas, Cholas and to a great extent the Vijayanagara Empire derived the legitimacy for their rule from the Vedic rituals. The *nayaka* rulers in addition to the Vedic rituals derived their respective legitimacies from the authority of the greater power of Vijayanagara by claiming a lineage based upon loyalty and political ties with its rulers. Thus all the *nayakas* of Senji, Madurai, Tanjavur, Ikkeri and Mysore claimed that they were loyal subordinates of the Vijayanagara rulers and the latter had granted them special favours and positions in the past. Such a political lineage not only bestowed prestige to the *nayaka* rulers but also strengthened their position by empowering them with some kind of moral and ritual authority to rule at a time when the politics of south India was dominated by small states always in competition and warfare with each other.

This is well documented in the textual sources of the *nayaka* period. Citing from the *Rayavacakamu*, Wagoner points out that the *nayaka* states in general and the *nayaka* kingdom of Madurai in particular despite being powerful 'never assumed the titles and positions of "great kings or universal overlords" (Dirks 1987:45), but instead remained content to follow the political mode of dependent kingship, professing subordination to the Vijayanagara throne and thereby strengthening their own authority through a reflected glory.' (Wagoner 1993:10). Thus the mechanisms of legitimacy that consolidated the *nayaka* kingship documented in the *Rayavacakamu* was as follows:

### 7.8.1 Use of the Past

According to Wagoner, Madurai ruler, Visvanatha Nayaka deemed it appropriate to commission a genealogical text that would claim a lineage to a glorious past of the Vijayanagara Empire with a grand capital city and a great ruler, Krishnadevaraya. Such a connection it was felt would bestow prestige upon Madurai as a legitimate successor state. Since the contemporary Vijayanagara dynasty of the Aravidus that co-existed with the *nayaka* kingdoms was a mere a shadow of a glorious past and the Vijayanagara king, Vekatapati represented a 'faded' monarchical power, identifying with such a state would diminish the prestige of Madurai. (Wagoner 1993: 10-11, 23-33).



### 7.8.2 Capital City as a Source of Authority

According to the *Rayavacakamu*, Vijayanagara or *City of Victory* was a glorious capital city and an important source of power and authority. In a separate chapter devoted to the city, the text informs us that the city was founded by divine power three hundred years before Krishnadevaraya's reign. Therefore it was implied that the persona of the individual ruler including Krishnadevaraya was secondary and derived from 'the physical possession of the city', which was the only source of legitimacy and power for every ruler. The destruction of the city after the battle of Talikota in 1565 CE also meant the loss of the source of ritual power and 'destruction of legitimate dynastic authority'. Since the Vijayanagara kingdom in the seventeenth century could never find an alternative to the city of Vijayanagara, it was thus devoid of any legitimizing authority, with a diminished stature of the ruler. (Wagoner 1993:11-12, 33-50).

### 7.8.3 Representation of the Enemy

Since the destroyer of the city of Vijayanagara were the Deccani sultanates whose rulers were Muslims, the *Rayavacakamu* portrayed them in a critical manner as people belonging to an alien culture, hostile to the *dharmic* kingship of the Vijayanagara rulers. Defining them as the 'Demons of the Kali Age', the text condemns their social practices and cultural sensibilities. It also portrayed a picture of a strong enemy, confronting whom implied military prestige. (Wagoner 1993: 12, 50-63). It should be noted that such a description of the Muslim presence as a threat was a standard theme in the Telugu poetry of the seventeenth century and had become a literary convention. (Rao et.al. 1992:7)

Therefore, the nature of the *nayaka* kingship was a balance between dependence upon and independence from the Vijayanagara rule. Despite becoming independent in the sixteenth century and not paying any tribute to the Vijayanagara ruler, the *nayaka* politics sought legitimacy from a distant glorious past and a magnificent city that was 'a powerful talisman bestowing an invincible authority on its possessor.' (Wagoner 1993: 11). In fact, the status of a loyal feudal subordinate who owed allegiance to his powerful Vijayanagara overlords gave the *nayaka* kingdoms legitimacy and prestige which enabled them to exercise power over the powerful chieftains and poligars who were placed lower in the political hierarchy. Thus sovereignty was always indirectly claimed.

Another important feature of the *nayaka* kingship was that it did not any longer require the brahmanical sanction of a *kshatriya* lineage. Though the Vedic and Puranic ideas were acknowledged but they now exercised lesser influence on the development of kingship and the political ideology related to it. The Sanskrit framework was no longer necessary to camouflage the non-*brahmana shudra* background of the *nayaka* king and was upheld with pride as an equally respectable pedigree. This new model of kingship was no longer based on *dharmic* ideology that upheld the king as a guardian of the traditional *varna* hierarchy. (Rao et.al. 1992: 79; 57-82)

The notion of *bhoga* came to be identified with the kingship and the image of the king. It implied that the king's ritual role as a donor of lands to the temples and *brahmanas* was no longer important as it was in the previous regimes. Rather, kingship meant lavish spending on food and distributing the food amongst people

of the kingdom. Thus the ritual role of *annadana* (giver of food) shaped the image of a ruler as generous and not land grants any more. The idea of *bhoga* also advocated extravagant lifestyles, elaborate court life, dance, music, literature and sensuous pleasures. The personality of the king had to exemplify these qualities and in addition to being a warrior, he was supposed to possess intelligence, wit and refined manners. However, the king continued to bestow land and other gifts to the *brahmanas* and temples, but now gifting of fluid resources (*dravya*) acquired predominance. (Rao et.al. 1992: 61-72).

**Check Your Progress 3**

1. Why did the *nayaka* states need legitimacy from the sixteenth century Vijayanagara state?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
2. Explain the process of political legitimation as portrayed in the *Rayavacakamu*.  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
3. Which of the following statement is false?
  - a. *Rayavacakamu* is a Telugu text. ( )
  - b. The glorious past of the Vijayanagara Empire was used by the *nayakas* to legitimize their kingship. ( )
  - c. The *nayaka* period witnessed a glorious military revolution. ( )
  - d. The Muslim rulers of Deccan were condemned for their attack on the city of Vijayanagara. ( )
4. The notion of *bhoga* implied that:
  - a. Land was no longer important
  - b. Land was important
  - c. Land was irrelevant
  - d. None of the above

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**7.9 POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE NAYAKA STATES**

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The new political ideology of kingship and the ideal image of the king were rooted in the changing context of the economy from the fifteenth century onwards. A form of mercantilism developed and the *nayaka* rulers took interest in maritime matters and developed an efficient method for custom duty collection. This was a period when south India had flourishing trading relations with the world economy and new crops and manufacturing commodities were produced. (Rao et.al. 1992:

107-11) Trade was also encouraged for it fostered diplomatic relations with various powers across the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Several items were exported and imported, especially precious metals, war-horses and elephants. The *nayakas* especially the Madurai *nayakas* took interest in pearl fishery and delegated agents on their behalf for it. They also interacted with the Portuguese and Dutch who also engaged in pearl fishing. The *nayakas* controlled the retail trade in pearl and collected a large amount of taxes from it. (Rao et.al. 1992:111). Thus there was money and gold in circulation in large numbers and this income from trade was as significant as the income from the agrarian sector. The elites owned ships and several mercantile families like the Balijas had trading relations with Burma, the Malay Peninsula and Sri Lanka (Rao et.al.1992: 108-09).

The *nayaka* states developed several urban centres. Those towns that existed before the *nayaka* rule, underwent transformation and adopted the new ethos. These towns became centres of circulation and redistribution of resources and encouraged extravagant consumption for population who lived there, mainly warriors, artisans, specialist cultivators and traders. Foreign travel accounts give detailed descriptions of flourishing court towns of Velur, Madurai, Tiruchchirapalli, Senji, Tanjavur, Odeyars and Ikkeri that flourished. The military character of *nayaka* towns with fortified urban settlements known as *palaiyams* developed and were described vividly in the accounts of the foreign merchants, Jesuits, European Companies and so on. Large-scale construction of temples in these towns also took place. These accounts describe the urban lifestyle as martial in spirit, with an influential urban population being warriors, cavalymen and soldiers who also moved in and out of the *nayaka* courts. The market towns, *pettai* also emerged during this period in large numbers with periodic markets and some of them gradually developed into *palaiyams*. (Rao et.al. 1992: 82-92)

The fiscal resources in the *nayaka* kingdoms were based upon a range of complex landed rights over agricultural land and its income. (Rao et.al. 1992: These rights were held by individuals, corporate bodies, temples and monastic organizations and often required the recognition of the state, which in turn took tax remissions. The most significant of these rights was *kani*, the right to possession of property, especially agricultural land and its produce. The other rights like the *amaram*, *nayakkattanam* and *palaiyams*, were the rights of the warrior groups that gave them fiscal claims over the landed produce. The state controlled these rights with help of its elaborate administrative machinery comprising powerful officials like *dalavay*, *rayasam* and *pradhani*. Since these rights were competitive and conflicts were common, the transfer of fiscal resources to the *nayaka* state varied and the *nayaka* rulers had to devise various strategies to collect taxes. For instance, the Madurai *nayakas* frequently visited the southern parts of their territory to ensure a smooth collection of fiscal resources. The *nayakas* controlled certain parts of their territories directly and used the administrative machinery to collect taxes.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, a new fiscal commercial arrangement developed, known as the revenue farming. The evidence tells us that the revenue farmers belonged to several social groups including the *brahmanas*, *velalas*, *chettis*, and migrant Telugu warriors. These revenue farmers not only collected land tax, but a host of other dues on trade, artisanal and non-agricultural products. Hence they needed to possess good commercial knowledge in order to assess 'the revenue potential of a region'. According to Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam, the state encouraged revenue farmers as they had superior information networks about

assessing the revenue potential of a region. In addition, they took the risk of a poor collection while passing on the fixed amount to the state whose fiscal stability was thus ensured. (Rao et.al.1992: 1054-05). But there was always the danger of these revenue farmers becoming powerful with an army of their own and not paying the revenue finally, causing fiscal loss to the state.

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## 7.10 CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Nayak rule was noted for its artistic and cultural achievements, and the creation of a unique style of temple architecture. In many ways, it was an elaboration upon Vijaynagara architecture. The Nayaka rulers often made additions to the already existing temple structures that existed from the previous reigns (Karashima 2014: 221). The temple architecture consisted of large pillared halls (*mandapa*) on the outer side of the main *sanctum sanctorum*. These pillars ranged from one hundred to one thousand in number. Tall gateways (*gopurams*) with more storeys, slender in appearance were constructed around the temple. The granite basement of these *gopurams* developed into elaborate structures. (Karashima 2014: 221). The Madurai *nayakas* constructed the tallest gateway (*gopura*) in Tamil Nadu. The gateway was located in Srivilliputtur near Madurai.

The temple structures, including the *mandapa* and *gopurams* were carved with elaborate sculptures that gave a heavy and rich look. There were painted stucco statues on the surface, and long corridors were constructed around the temples. Some of the elaborate sculptures on the pillars and architecture of the *nayaka* period can be found in the Meenakshi temple at Madurai, most of which was constructed in the seventeenth century during the period of Tirumalai Nayaka (1623-59CE). The sculptures on the pillars usually were images of god, tribal heroes, folk deities and lifesize images of *nayaka* rulers and their queens. (Karashima 2014: 221). In addition to the Meenakshi temple at Madurai, other famous temples with elaborate *nayaka* period sculptures and architectures are found in Jalagandesvara temple at Vellore, Aghoresvara temple at Ikkeri, Ramesvara and Virabhadra temples at Keladi and Ahobilam and Somapalem temples in the Andhra region. (Karashima 2014: 221).

One of the new features during the Nayaka period was the construction of numerous palaces and forts. The fort complex at Senji in Tamil Nadu spread over three hills with palaces and temple structures constructed by the Senji *nayakas*. The fort had a reputation of being a strong structure that could never be destroyed and its architectural layout made it inaccessible. The site of the fort was developed in the ninth century during the Chola period and gradually over a period of time additions were made to it by various ruling dynasties and powerful overlords. However, the Senji *nayakas* made significant contributions to the development and construction of the fort. The utility of the fort as a strong battlement is established when at various points of time, it was captured by the Marathas, Bijapur sultans, the Mughals, Nawabs of Carnatic, the French, Hyder Ali and finally the British. The *nayaka* civic architecture combined Dravidian and Islamic styles, as exemplified by the palace erected by King Thirumalai Nayak of the Madurai Nayak dynasty in 1636 CE.

Painting and art also received patronage and developed during the *nayaka* period. For instance, Tanjavur painting, a famous South Indian school of classical painting, emerged under the *nayakas*. These paintings were usually in bright colours and

gold foils, tiny glass beads and pieces and precious and semi-precious stones were inlaid into the paintings. The theme of these paintings was usually devotional, the subjects mostly being gods, goddesses, saints and narratives from various religious texts. There was an influence of the Deccani and Vijayanagara art forms and later on of the Marathas and European Companies on the Tanjavur or Tanjore paintings.

The *nayaka* courts emerged as a centre of literary development and performance arts. One of the unique features of the *nayaka* literary tradition was that it was expressed in multiple languages. This multilingualism also influenced the courtly performance of dance dramas, music and dance. Such a culture of ‘polyglossia’ (existence of multiple languages) was due to the social changes that had taken place from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century (Peterson 2011:285-301) A rich Sanskrit and regional linguistic traditions in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada had already developed under the Vijayanagara rule and continued to flourish in the *nayaka* kingdoms especially with the migration of the Telugu warrior communities. In addition, the presence of the Deccani sultans, the Mughals, merchant communities, *palaiyakkarars*, British, French and other European Companies also contributed towards the development of a cosmopolitan environment which influenced the literature and arts in the *nayaka* kingdoms.

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## 7.11 A NEW ETHOS

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The historians consider the period between the sixteenth and seventeenth century as characterized by a new ethos, a departure from the previous period and culturally and politically innovative. Based on various genres of literary works produced in the *nayaka* kingdoms, like court literature, dance-dramas, praise-poems and so on, Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam demonstrate in their work, *Symbols of Substance* the areas in which change and difference were noted. According to them, one of the fundamental features of this new ethos was increasing use of ‘money’ that acquired prominence over landed property. Wars and rebellions, according to these authors took place over the acquisition of this liquid wealth (Rao et. al.1992: 57-110) The rebellion of Nagama Nayaka of Madurai against Krishnadevaraya is cited in this case (Karashima 2014:228). Such an ethos was due to the involvement of south India with the world economy through international trade and exchange. This is a period when the Portuguese, French and other European Companies entered the south Indian commercial system, established their factories and also interfered in the local politics.

Another area that experienced a new flavor, according to the *Symbols of Substance* was the image of the king and idea of kingship. The king was now apart from a warrior, a man of aesthetics, intelligent, a sensuous hero, a good lover who enjoyed life and had many pursuits. Hence, the personal qualities of the king were held in high esteem and the three authors illustrate this new image by citing the personality of Vishvanatha Nayaka of Madurai as an instance (Rao et. al.1992: 57-72; 169-80). Similarly the social markers of caste, lineage and position were now no longer dependent on the brahmanical supremacy. Rather the authors demonstrate through examples from literary texts that instead of attributing importance to the *kshatriya* status, the *shudra* origin of the *nayakas* was upheld, accorded social prestige and considered as a significant factor in acquiring the status of a king, thus inverting the classic Sanskrit *varna* scheme (Rao et. al.1992: 13). In fact the social landscape expanded ‘with realistic portrayal of predatory bandit castes, alluring courtesans,

pretentious doctors, Mleccha merchants, Deccani soldiers, and local little kings of ‘an altogether new type’ and ‘the Balija elite with its heroic ethos, at home, at war...’ (Rao et al 1992: 12)

Enjoyment of sensuous pleasure, food, wealth and songs and dance became the spirit of this period. Money and personal qualities of a warrior hero were given more importance, which was not the case before. Such a spirit, according to Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam described in the *nayaka* literature was probably introduced from the earlier period with the migrations of the Telugu warriors from the northern areas and their subsequent interactions with the Tamil and Kannada environment (Rao et. al.1992: 27-56).

Culturally as discussed above, this was a period of great literary development. Different genres of literature were developed at the court of the *nayaka* rulers who were also authors of some of these works. Many of these compositions became themes of performance, which the *nayakas* patronized actively. New forms of literary tradition developed, namely ‘the short lyric *padam*, which was both sung and mimed, and the musical drama form called *yakshagana*, which drew from literary and theatrical traditions of the adjacent regions of Karnataka and Andhra.’ (Peterson 2011: 291) In fact, the *yakshgana* texts were inspired by the classical Telugu tradition and became subjects of several courtly performances. In fact, Telugu became an important language of literary productions.

Thus a new ethos emerged that created a wide canvass for cultural creativity (Peterson 2011:28, 50-90; Rao et.al. 1992). Such an ethos is well documented in Tanjavur in the courts of the Madurai *nayakas*. Raghunatha Nayaka (1600-34 CE) and his son Vijayaraghava (1634-73 CE) not only patronized various kinds of literature, they also composed court poems (*kavyas*) in Telugu and Sanskrit. Their ministers, queens and courtesans also composed in Telugu and Sanskrit (Peterson 2011: 291) In the seventeenth century, especially under these two *nayaka* rulers, Tanjavur became the centre of dance and music. Subsequently the advent of the Marathas further contributed towards Tanjavur’s cosmopolitanism and multilingualism (Rao et.al.1992).

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## 7.12 DECLINE OF THE NAYAKA KINGDOMS

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The repeated attacks of the Deccani sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda proved to be fatal for the various *nayaka* kingdoms. The *nayaka* rule in Senji virtually came to an end by 1650 CE after being defeated by Bijapur. However, the *nayakas* of Tanjavur, Madurai, Mysore and Ikkeri managed to survive for sometime. Finally in 1676 CE, Tanjavur was attacked and conquered by the Bijapur Sultanate, putting an end to the *nayaka* rule there. A Maratha general named Venkhoji (Ekoji) led the Bijapur army. He was the half-brother of Shivaji and carried out the orders of his Bijapur overlord by placing a child prince on the throne of Tanjavur. After sometime, Venkhoji asserted his independence and established the Maratha rule in Tanjavur. The Maratha-Bhonsle clan continued to rule till 1855 CE till the British annexed Tanjavur under the Doctrine of Lapse (Rao et.al. 1992: 314). The Madurai *nayaka* polity came to an end in 1732 CE, when the Nawab of Arcot captured it. Similarly, Ikkeri polity was overtaken by Hyder Ali and merged with Mysore in 1763 CE (Karashima 2014:228)

The *nayaka* rulers also fought amongst themselves. As already stated above, each

of these kingdoms was separate, with an identity of their own, with a distinct language, court culture, political dynamics and regional configurations. The Ikkeri *nayakas* had hostile relations with the **Odeyar** chiefs of Mysore and Bijapur Sultan. Their desire to acquire control over the rich tract of Gersoppa in the north Canara region that had a flourishing pepper cultivation often led to warfare with the queen of that region.

By the eighteenth century CE, the *nayaka* polities had disappeared and the Mughal rule spread in the south with the help of the Nizam of Hyderabad and Nawab of Arcot. The Nawabs, Marathas, Mysore and the poligars now were politically powerful and controlled the politics in the south as was evident in their negotiations with each other in the Carnatic and Mysore wars. The arrival of the English and the French on the scene further complicated the political dynamics.

**Check Your Progress 4**

1. In what ways did trade contribute to the development of the *nayaka* economy?

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 .....

2. Discuss briefly revenue farming in the *nayaka* states?

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 .....  
 .....

3. Describe any *two* features of cultural development in the *nayaka* period.

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 .....

4. Give *three* reasons for characterizing the *nayaka* period as an era of new ethos.

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**7.13 SUMMARY**

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This unit discussed the main features of the *nayaka* states with a special focus on Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji. The historiography has usually neglected this period from the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, when the Vijayanagara Empire was considered to be weak and its capital lay in ruins. It is lately that research on these years preceding the British rule in south India has become important for analysis. The Telugu origins of the *nayakas* and the experience that they carried from the northern Andhra region shaped the economy, polity and culture of the Vijayanagara Empire. While these Teulgu warrior groups were absorbed into the Vijayanagara administration as *nayaka* officials and given territories to administer,

they gradually became powerful and asserted their independence with new kingdoms. These *nayaka* states became centres of new political practice, ideologies of authority different from the previous times, changed social orientation, a transformed political economy and cultural milieu. All these features became hallmarks of the new ethos of this period and provided a context for the historical developments in the eighteenth century south India.

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## 7.14 KEYWORDS

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**Aravidu**

Vijayanagara dynasty ruled from 1570-1646

**Battle of Talikota**

Battle of Talikota was fought between the Vijayanagara ruler Aliya Rama Raya and the combined forces of the Deccani Sultanates in 1565. It resulted in the defeat of the Vijayanagara ruler and the decline of the Vijayanagara power in South India

*Nayakatana*

Territorial assignments made to the *nayaks* for the maintenance of their troops

**Odeyar**

Dynasty that ruled over the kingdom of Mysore between 1399-1950. They were the feudatories of the Vijayanagara rulers. Later, with the decline of Vijayanagara power, Raja Odeyar got the opportunity to occupy Srirangapatnam and declared his independence from Vijayanagara yoke in 1610.

*Paravas*

Local fishing community in the Madurai region

*Sima, Sime, Simai*

Territories assigned to *nayaks*

*Vadugas*

Telugu *nayaks* migrated from the Andhra region and got settled in in Kannada and Tamil regions during the 14-15<sup>th</sup> centuries

*Yakshagana*

Musical drama form

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## 7.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE\*

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### Check Your Progress-1

1. See Sections 7.2, 7.3
2. i-e; ii-a; iii-d; iv-b; v-c
3. i-X; ii-X; iii-"; iv-X

### Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 7.4
2. See Section 7.6



3. See Sub-section 7.4.3

4. See Section 7.5

### Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 7.8

2. See Sub-section 7.8.3

3. (d)

4. (d)

### Check Your Progress 4

1. See Section 7.9

2. See Section 7.9

3. See Section 7.10

4. See Section 7.11

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## 7.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## **7.17 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **Thirumalai Nayakar History in English**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOzuMShsQe4>

### **Madurai Nayak dynasty**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89XKif7Z4po&t=2s>

### **The Nayakas of Chitradurga**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDEvXEbFyb4>

### **The Nayakas of Keladi**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwelidKR-qM>

### **Thanjavur Nayak kingdom**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iCiLjZOuPY>

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