

# Medieval India

A HISTORY TEXTBOOK  
FOR CLASS XI

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# MEDIEVAL INDIA

*A Textbook for Classes XI—XII*

PART II

SATISH CHANDRA



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

**First Edition**

June 1978

Jyaistha 1900

**Reprinted**

March 1980

Phalguna 1901

April 1981

Chaitra 1903

April 1982

Chaitra 1904

March 1983

Chaitra 1904

**P.D. 16T—RSS**

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**Rs. 3.65**

**PUBLISHED AT THE PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT BY V.K. PANDIT SECRETARY, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING, SRI AUROBINDO MARG, NEW DELHI 110016 AND PRINTED AT SUPREME OFFSET PRESS, K-5 MALVIYA NAGAR NEW DELHI-110017**

## *Foreword*

IN THE new pattern of education, the higher secondary stage (the +2 stage) has been visualised as terminal so as to enable students to enter life and to equip them for advanced education. The courses up to Class X have been designed for general education without any diversification. But at the higher secondary stage the student would be initiated into the study of specialised courses in a few subjects of his choice.

The Editorial Board in History finalised the courses of studies at the +2 stage and started preparing a series of textbooks based on these courses.

The present volume dealing with a historical survey of medieval India has been prepared by Professor Satish Chandra, who is also the Chairman of the History Editorial Board. The NCERT is grateful to him for completing the work in a very short time. The NCERT is also grateful to many other persons, both belonging to the NCERT and outside, and organisations for their help and cooperation. Our special thanks are due to Shri S. H. Khan for preparing the exercises, to Dr. S. K. Saini and Km. Indira Srinivasan for their help in preparing the press copy, to Shri A. K. Ghose for the maps, and to the Archaeological Survey of India for making available to us photographs which have been included in this book.

This volume on medieval India is the second in the series of textbooks which are being brought out by the NCERT for the higher secondary stage. The book is being brought out in two parts. The first part of the book was published in February 1978. This is the second part of the book.

The NCERT will be grateful for any comments and suggestions on any aspect of the present volume.

SHIB K. MITRA  
*Director*

National Council of  
Educational Research and Training

New Delhi

## *Preface*

**HISTORY FORMS** a part of an undiversified curriculum in general education for the first ten years of schooling. The course in history up to this stage is, therefore, aimed at acquainting the pupil with important trends and developments in the history of India and of the world. The courses at the + 2 or the higher secondary stage have been framed keeping in view the foundations to be laid during the ten years of general education. Their main purposes are to broaden and deepen the historical knowledge of the pupil, to introduce him to the rigorous of the discipline, and to prepare him for higher academic studies in the subject.

The courses in history at the higher secondary stage which have been framed by the Editorial Board are the results of discussions with teachers, teacher-educators and experts. The Board plans to prepare other textbooks for the courses in history. The syllabus included optional courses on the history of regions outside India, and textbooks on these courses would be prepared when these courses are introduced in schools.

The present volume covers medieval India from about the eighth century to about the early eighteenth century. Effort has been made in this book to highlight the forces and factors which moulded Indian society and culture in medieval times. The book points out the significant changes that took place in the medieval period of our history. Attention has been paid to the contribution of the people, belonging to different regions and adhering to different faiths, to the growth of Indian society and culture in this period.

The Editorial Board is grateful to Professor Satish Chandra for undertaking the writing of this book. The Board also sincerely thanks all the other persons for their help in connection with the publication of this book.

**HISTORY EDITORIAL BOARD**

**New Delhi**

## CHAPTER XII

# Struggle for Empire in North India

## Mughals and Afghans (1525-1556)

### Central Asia and Babur

IMPORTANT changes took place in Central and West Asia during the fifteenth century. After the disintegration of the Mongol empire in the fourteenth century, Timur united Iran and Turan under one rule once again. Timur's empire extended from the lower Volga to the river Indus, and included Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Iran, Trans-Oxiana, Afghanistan and a part of the Punjab. Timur died in 1404, but his grandson, Shahrukh Mirza (d. 1448), was able to keep intact a large part of his empire. He gave patronage to arts and letters, and in his time, Samarqand and Herat became the cultural centres of West Asia. The ruler of Samarqand had great prestige in the entire Islamic world.

The power of the Timurids declined rapidly during the second half of the fifteenth century, largely due to the Timurid tradition of partitioning the empire. The various Timurid principalities which arose were always fighting and wrangling among themselves. This provided an opportunity to two new elements to come to the forefront. From the north, a Mongol tribe, the Uzbeks, thrust into Trans-Oxiana. The Uzbeks had become Muslims, but were looked down upon by the Timurids who considered them to be uncultured barbarians. Further to the west, a

new dynasty, the Safavid dynasty, began to dominate Iran. The Safavids descended from an order of saints who traced their ancestry to the Prophet. They supported the Shiite sect among the Muslims, and persecuted those who were not prepared to accept the Shiite tenets. The Uzbeks, on the other hand, were Sunnis. Thus, political conflict between these two elements was embittered by sectarian conflict. Further to the west of Iran, the power of the Ottoman Turks was rising. They wanted to dominate eastern Europe as well as Iraq and Iran.

Thus, the scene was set for the conflict of three mighty empires in Asia during the sixteenth century.

In 1494, at the young age of 14, Babur succeeded to Farghana, a small state in Trans-Oxiana. Oblivious of the Uzbek danger, the Timurid princes were busy fighting one another. Babur, too, made a bid to conquer Samarqand from his uncle. He won the city twice but lost it in no time on both the occasions. The second time the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, was called in to help oust Babur. Shaibani defeated Babur and conquered Samarqand. Soon, he overran the rest of the Timurid kingdoms in the area. This forced Babur to move towards Kabul which he conquered in 1504. For the next 14 years, Babur

kept biding his time for the reconquest of his homeland from the Uzbeks. He tried to enlist the help of his uncle, the ruler of Herat, in the enterprise but to no avail. Ultimately, Herat, too, was overrun by Shaibani Khan. This led to a direct conflict between the Uzbeks and the Safavids since the latter also laid claim to Herat and the surrounding area which is called Khorasan by contemporary writers. In a famous battle in 1510, Shah Ismail, the Shah of Iran, defeated and killed Shaibani Khan. Babur now made another attempt to recover Samarqand, this time with the help of the Iranian forces. He was duly installed at Samarqand, but chafed under the control of the Iranian generals who wanted to treat Babur as the governor of an Iranian province rather than as an independent prince. Meanwhile, the Uzbeks recovered rapidly from their defeat. Once again Babur was ousted from Samarqand and had to return to Kabul. Finally, Shah Ismail himself was defeated in a famous battle by the Ottoman sultan, thus leaving the Uzbeks masters of Trans-Oxiana.

These developments finally forced Babur to look towards India.

### Conquest of India

Babur says that from the time he obtained Kabul (1504) to his victory at Panipat, "I had never ceased to think of the conquest of Hindustan." But he had never found a suitable opportunity for undertaking it, "hindered as I was sometimes by the apprehensions of my *begs*, sometimes by the disagreement between my brothers and myself". Like countless earlier invaders from Central Asia, Babur was drawn to India by the lure of its fabulous wealth. India was the land of gold and riches. Babur's ancestor, Timur, had not only carried away a vast treasure and many skilful artisans, who helped him to consolidate his

Asian empire and beautify his capital, but also annexed some areas in the Punjab. These areas remained in the possession of Timur's successors for several generations. When Babur conquered Afghanistan, he felt that he had a legitimate right to these areas.

Another reason why Babur coveted the Punjab parganas was the meagre income of Kabul. The historian Abul Fazl remarks: "He (Babur) ruled over Badakhshan, Qandhar and Kabul which did not yield sufficient income for the requirements of the army; in fact, in some of the border territories the expense on controlling the armies and administration was greater than the income". With these meagre resources Babur could not provide well for his *begs* and kinsmen. He was also apprehensive of an Uzbek attack on Kabul, and considered India to be a good place of refuge, and a suitable base for operations against the Uzbeks.

The political situation in north-west India was suitable for Babur's entry into India. Sikandar Lodi had died in 1517, and Ibrahim Lodi had succeeded him. Ibrahim's efforts to create a large centralised empire had alarmed the Afghan chief as well as the Rajputs. Amongst the most powerful of the Afghan chiefs was Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of the Punjab, who was almost an independent ruler. Daulat Khan attempted to conciliate Ibrahim Lodi by sending his son to his court to pay homage. At the same time, he wanted to strengthen his position by annexing the frontier tracts of Bhira, etc.

In 1518-19, Babur conquered the powerful fort of Bhira. He then sent letters and verbal messages to Daulat Khan and Ibrahim Lodi, asking for the cession of the areas which had belonged to the Turks. But Daulat Khan detained Babur's envoy at Lahore, neither granting him audience nor allowing him to go

to Ibrahim Lodi. When Babur returned to Kabul, Daulat Khan expelled his agent from Bhira.

In 1520-21, Babur once again crossed the Indus, and easily captured Bhira and Sialkot, the twin gateways to Hindustan. Lahore also capitulated to him. He might have proceeded further but for the news of a revolt at Qandhar. He retraced his steps, and after a siege of a year and a half recaptured Qandhar. Thus reassured, Babur was once again able to turn his attention towards India.

It was about this time that Babur received an embassy from Daulat Khan Lodi, led by his son, Dilawar Khan. They invited Babur to India, and suggested that he should displace Ibrahim Lodi since he was a tyrant and enjoyed no support from his nobles. It is probable that a messenger from Rana Sanga arrived at the same time, inviting Babur to invade India. These embassies convinced Babur that the time was ripe for his conquest of the whole of the Punjab, if not of India itself.

In 1525, while Babur was at Peshawar, he received the news that Daulat Khan Lodi had changed sides again. He had collected an army of 30,000-40,000 men, ousted Babur's men from Sialkot, and was marching on Lahore. At Babur's approach, the army of Daulat Khan melted away. Daulat Khan submitted and was pardoned. Thus, within three weeks of crossing the Indus, Babur became the master of the Punjab.

#### **The Battle of Panipat (20 April 1526)**

A conflict with Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler of Delhi, was inevitable, and Babur prepared for it by marching towards Delhi. Ibrahim Lodi met Babur at Panipat with a force estimated at 100,000 men and 1000 elephants. Since the Indian armies generally contained large hordes of servants, the fighting men on

Ibrahim Lodi's side must have been far less than this figure. Babur had crossed the Indus with a force of 12,000, but this had been swelled by his army in India, and the large number of Hindustani nobles and soldiers who joined Babur in the Punjab. Even then, Babur's army was numerically inferior. Babur strengthened his position by resting one wing of his army in the city of Panipat which had a large number of houses, and protected the other by means of a ditch filled with branches of trees. In front, he lashed together a large number of carts, to act as a defending wall. Between two carts, breastworks were erected on which soldiers could rest their guns and fire. Babur calls this device an Ottoman (Rumi) device, for it had been used by the Ottomans in their famous battle against Shah Ismail of Iran. Babur had also secured the services of two Ottoman master-gunners, Ustad Ali and Mustafa. The use of gunpowder had been gradually developing in India. Babur says that he used it for the first time in his attack on the fortress of Bhira. Apparently, gunpowder was known in India but its use became common in north India from the time of Babur's advent.

Ibrahim Lodi had no idea of the strongly defended position of Babur. He had apparently expected Babur to fight a mobile mode of warfare which was usual with the Central Asians, making rapid advance or retreating as the need arose. After skirmishing for seven or eight days, Ibrahim Lodi's forces came out for the fateful battle. Seeing the strength of Babur's position, they hesitated. While Ibrahim was still reorganising his forces, the two extreme wings of Babur's army wheeled round and attacked Ibrahim's forces from the side and rear. Babur's gunners used their guns with good effect from the front. But Babur gives a large part of the credit of his victory

to his bowmen. Curiously, he makes little reference to Ibrahim's elephants. Apparently, Ibrahim had little time to use them.

Despite these early setbacks, Ibrahim Lodi's army fought valiantly. The battle raged for two or three hours. Ibrahim Lodi fought to the last, with a group of 5000-6000 people around him. It is estimated that besides him, more than 15,000 of his men were killed in the battle.

The battle of Panipat is regarded as one of the decisive battles of Indian history. It broke the back of Lodi power, and brought under Babur's control the entire area up to Delhi and Agra. The treasures stored up by Ibrahim Lodi in Agra relieved Babur from his financial difficulties. The rich territory up to Jaunpur also lay open to Babur. However, Babur had to wage two hard-fought battles, one against Rana Sanga of Mewar, and the other against the eastern Afghans, before he could consolidate his hold on this area. Viewed from this angle, the battle of Panipat was not as decisive in the political field as has been made out. Its real importance lies in the fact that it opened a new phase in the struggle for domination in north India.

The difficulties of Babur after his victory at Panipat were manifold. Many of his *begs* were not prepared for a long campaign in India. With the onset of the hot weather, their misgivings had increased. They were far away from home in a strange and hostile land. Babur tells us that the people of India displayed "remarkable hostility", abandoning their villages at the approach of the Mughal armies. Obviously, the memories of Timur's sacking and plundering of the towns and villages were still fresh in their minds.

Babur knew that the resources in India alone would enable him to found a strong empire and satisfy his *begs*. "Not for us the

poverty of Kabul again", he records in his diary. He thus took a firm stand, proclaiming his intention to stay on in India, and granting leave to a number of his *begs* who wanted to go back to Kabul. This immediately cleared the air. But it also invited the hostility of Rana Sanga who began his preparations for a showdown with Babur.

#### The Battle of Khanwa

The growing conflict between Rana Sanga and Ibrahim Lodi for the domination of eastern Rajasthan and Malwa has already been mentioned. After defeating Mahmud Khalji of Malwa, the influence of the Rana had gradually extended up to Piliya Khar—a small river in the neighbourhood of Agra. The establishment of an empire in the Indo-Gangetic valley by Babur was a threat to Rana Sanga. Sanga set preparations afoot to expel Babur or, at any rate, to confine him to the Punjab.

Babur accuses Rana Sanga of breach of agreement. He says that Sanga had invited him to India, and promised to join him against Ibrahim Lodi, but made no move while he (Babur) conquered Delhi and Agra. We do not know what precise agreement Sanga had made. He might have hoped for a long-drawn-out warfare during which he (Sanga) would have been able to seize the areas he coveted. Or he might have hoped that like Timur, Babur would withdraw after sacking Delhi and weakening the Lodis. Babur's decision to stay on in India completely changed the situation.

Many Afghans, including Mahmud Lodi, a younger brother of Ibrahim Lodi, rallied to Rana Sanga, in the hope of regaining the throne of Delhi in case Sanga won. Hasan Khan Mewati, the ruler of Mewat, also cast in his lot with Sanga. Almost all the Rajput

rulers of note sent contingents to serve under Rana Sanga.

The reputation of Rana Sanga, and his early success against some of the outlying Mughal posts such as Bayana, demoralised Babur's soldiers. To rally them, Babur solemnly declared the war against Sanga to be a *jihad*. On the eve of the battle, he emptied all the wine jars and broke the wine flasks to demonstrate what a staunch Muslim he was. He also, banned the sale and purchase of wine throughout his dominions and abolished customs taxes on the Muslims.

Having carefully selected a site, Babur entrenched himself at Khanwa about 40 km from Agra. As at Panipat, he lashed together a number of wagons as an outer bastion and dug a trench in front for double protection. Gaps were left in the defences for his musketeers to fire and advance behind wheeled tripods.

The battle of Khanwa (1527) was fiercely contested. According to Babur, Sanga's forces exceeded 200,000 including 10,000 Afghan cavalymen, and an equal force fielded by Hasan Khan Mewati. As usual, these figures may be greatly exaggerated, though Babur's forces were undoubtedly inferior in number. Sanga made ferocious attacks on Babur's right and almost breached it. However, the Mughal artillery took a heavy toll of life, and slowly, Sanga's forces were pushed back. At this juncture, Babur ordered his soldiers in the centre, who had been sheltering behind their tripods, to launch an attack. The artillery also advanced behind the chained wagons. Sanga's forces were thus hemmed in, and were defeated after a great slaughter. Rana Sanga escaped and wanted to renew the conflict with Babur. But he was poisoned by his own nobles who considered such a course to be dangerous and suicidal.

Thus died one of the most valiant warriors produced by Rajasthan. With Sanga's death, the dream of a united Rajasthan extending up to Agra received a serious setback.

The battle of Khanwa secured Babur's position in the Delhi-Agra region. Babur strengthened his position further by conquering the chain of forts—Gwalior, Dholpur, etc., east of Agra. He also annexed large parts of Alwar from Hasan Khan Mewati. He then led a campaign against Medini Rai of Chanderi in Malwa. Chanderi was captured after the Rajput defenders had died fighting to the last man and their women performed *jauhar*. Babur had to cut short his plan of further campaigns in the area on hearing of the growing activities of the Afghans in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

#### The Afghans

Although the Afghans had been defeated, they had not been reconciled to the Mughal rule. Eastern Uttar Pradesh was still under the domination of the Afghan chiefs who had tendered their allegiance to Babur but were prepared to throw it off at any time. The Afghan sardars were being backed by Nusrat Shah, the ruler of Bengal, who had married a daughter of Ibrahim Lodi. A number of times, the Afghans had ousted the Mughal officials in eastern Uttar Pradesh and reached up to Kanauj. But their greatest weakness was the lack of a popular leader. After some time, Mahmud Lodi, a brother of Ibrahim Lodi, who had fought against Babur at Khanwa, reached Bihar at the invitation of the Afghan leaders. The Afghans hailed him as their ruler, and mustered strength under him.

This was a threat which Babur could not ignore. Hence, at the beginning of 1529, he left Agra for the east. Crossing the Ganga near Banaras, he faced the combined forces of the Afghans and Nusrat Shah of Bengal at the crossing of the river Ghagra. Although Babur

crossed the river, and compelled the Bengal and the Afghan armies to retreat, he could not win a decisive victory. Ill, and anxious about the situation in Central Asia, Babur decided to patch up an agreement with the Afghans. He put forward a vague claim for suzerainty over Bihar, but left most of it in the hands of the Afghan chiefs. He then returned to Agra. Shortly afterwards, while on his way to Kabul, Babur died near Lahore.

### Significance of Babur's Advent into India

Babur's advent into India was significant from many points of view. For the first time since the downfall of the Kushan empire, Kabul and Qandhar became integral parts of an empire comprising north India. Since these areas had always acted as staging places for an invasion of India, by dominating them Babur and his successors were able to give to India security from external invasions for almost 200 years. Economically also, the control of Kabul and Qandhar strengthened India's foreign trade since these two towns were the starting points for caravans meant for China and the Mediterranean seaports. Thus India could take a greater share in the great trans-Asian trade.

In north India, Babur smashed the power of the Lodis and of the Rajput Confederacy led by Rana Sanga. Thereby, he destroyed the balance of power obtaining in the area. This was a long step towards the establishment of an all-India empire. However, a number of conditions had still to be fulfilled before this could be achieved. Babur showed what a skilled combination of artillery and cavalry could achieve. His victories led to rapid popularisation of gunpowder and artillery in India, thereby reducing the importance of forts.

Babur introduced a new mode of warfare

in India. Although gunpowder was known in India before, by his new military methods as well as by his personal conduct, Babur re-established the prestige of the Crown which had been eroded since the death of Firuz Tughlaq. Although Sikandar Lodi and Ibrahim Lodi had tried to re-establish the prestige of the Crown, Afghan ideas of tribal independence and equality had resulted in only a partial success. Babur had the prestige of being a descendant of two of the most famous warriors of Asia, Chingiz and Timur. None of his nobles could, therefore, claim a status of equality with him or aspire to his throne. The challenge to his position, if any, could come only from a Timurid prince.

Babur endeared himself to his *begs* by his personal qualities. He was always prepared to share the hardships with his soldiers. Once, at the height of winter, Babur was returning to Kabul. The snow was so deep that horses would sink into it and parties of soldiers had to trample the snow so that the horses could pass. Without hesitation, Babur joined in the back-breaking task. "At every step, the snow came up to the waist or the chest", he says. "After a few steps, the man in front would be exhausted, and another would take his place. When 10, 15 or 20 persons had trampled the snow thoroughly, then alone a horse could pass over it." Following Babur's example, his *begs* also joined in the task.

Babur was fond of wine and good company and was a good and merry companion. At the same time, he was a stern disciplinarian and a hard taskmaster. He took good care of his *begs*, and was prepared to excuse many of their faults as long as they were not disloyal. He was prepared to adopt the same attitude towards his Afghan and Indian nobles. However, he did have a streak of cruelty, probably inherited from his ancestors, for he made

towers of skulls from the heads of his opponents on a number of occasions. These, and other instances of personal cruelty, have to be seen in the context of the harsh times in which Babur lived.

Though an orthodox Sunni, Babur was not bigoted or led by the religious divines. At a time when there was a bitter sectarian feud between the Shias and the Sunnis in Iran and Turan, his court was free from theological and sectarian conflicts. Though he declared the battle against Sanga a *jihad* and assumed the title of *ghazi* after the victory, the reasons were clearly political. Though it was a period of war, only a few instances can be found of destruction of temples.

Babur was deeply learned in Persian and Arabic, and is regarded as one of the two most famous writers in the Turkish language which was his mother tongue. As a prose writer he had no equal, and his famous memoirs, the *Tuzuk -i-Baburi* is considered one of the classics of world literature. His other works include a *masnavi* and the Turkish translation of a well-known Sufi work. He was in touch with the famous poets and artists of the time and described their works in his memoirs. He was a keen naturalist, and has described the flora and fauna of India in considerable detail.

Thus, Babur introduced a new concept of the state which was to be based on the strength and prestige of the Crown, absence of religious and sectarian bigotry, and the careful fostering of culture and the fine arts. He thus provided a precedent and a direction for his successors.

#### **Humayun's Conquest of Gujarat and his Tussle with Sher Shah**

Humayun succeeded Babur in December 1530 at the young age of 23. He had to

grapple with a number of problems left behind by Babur. The administration had not yet been consolidated, and the finances were precarious. The Afghans had not been subdued, and were nursing the hope of expelling the Mughals from India. Finally, there was the Timurid legacy of partitioning the empire among all the brothers. Babur had counselled Humayun to deal kindly with his brothers, but had not favoured the partitioning of the infant Mughal empire, which would have been disastrous.

When Humayun ascended the throne at Agra, the empire included Kabul and Qandhar, while there was loose control over Badakhshan beyond the Hindukush mountains. Kabul and Qandhar were under the charge of Humayun's younger brother, Kamran. It was only natural that they should remain in his charge. However, Kamran was not satisfied with these poverty-stricken areas. He marched on Lahore and Multan, and occupied them. Humayun, who was busy elsewhere, and did not want to start a civil war, had little option but to agree. Kamran accepted the suzerainty of Humayun, and promised to help him whenever necessary. Kamran's action created the apprehension that the other brothers of Humayun might also follow the same path whenever an opportunity arose. However, the granting of the Punjab and Multan to Kamran had the advantage that Humayun was free to devote his attention to the eastern parts without having to bother about his western frontier.

Apart from these, Humayun had to deal with the rapid growth of the power of the Afghans in the east, and the growing sweep of conquests of Bahadur Shah, the ruler of Gujarat. At the outset, Humayun was inclined to consider the Afghan danger to be the more serious of the two. In 1532, at a place called

Daurah, he defeated the Afghan forces which had conquered Bihar and overrun Jaunpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh. After this success, Humayun besieged Chunar. This powerful fort commanded the land and the river route between Agra and the east, and was known as the gateway of eastern India. It had recently come in the possession of an Afghan sardar, Sher Khan, who had become the most powerful of the Afghan sardars.

After the siege of Chunar had gone on for four months, Sher Khan persuaded Humayun to allow him to retain possession of the fort. In return, he promised to be loyal to the Mughals and sent one of his sons to Humayun as a hostage. Humayun accepted the offer because he was anxious to return to Agra. The rapid increase in the power of Bahadur Shah of Gujarat, and his activities in the areas bordering Agra, had alarmed him. He was not prepared to continue the siege of Chunar under the command of a noble since that would have meant dividing his forces.

Bahadur Shah, who was of almost the same age as Humayun, was an able and ambitious ruler. Ascending the throne in 1526, he had overrun and conquered Malwa. He then turned to Rajasthan and besieged Chittor and soon reduced the Rajput defenders to sore straits. According to some later legends, Rani Karnavati, the widow of Rana Sanga, sent a *rakhi* to Humayun seeking his help and Humayun gallantly responded. While this story cannot be fully accepted, it is true that from Agra Humayun moved to Gwalior to watch the situation. Due to the fear of Mughal intervention, Bahadur Shah patched up a treaty with the Rana, leaving the fort in his hands after extracting a large indemnity in cash and kind.

During the next year and a half, Humayun spent his time in building a new city near Delhi,

which he named Dinpanah. He organised many grand feasts and festivities during the period. Humayun has been blamed for wasting valuable time in these activities, while Sher Khan was steadily augmenting his power in the east. It has also been said that Humayun's inactivity was due to his habit of taking opium. Neither of these charges has much substance. Babur continued to use opium after he gave up wine. Humayun ate opium occasionally in place of or in addition to wine, as did many of his nobles. But neither Babur nor Humayun was an opium addict. The building of Dinpanah was meant to impress friends and foes alike. It could also serve as a second capital in case Agra was threatened by Bahadur Shah who, in the meantime, had conquered Ajmer and overrun eastern Rajasthan.

Bahadur Shah offered a still greater challenge to Humayun. Not content with harbouring the relations of Ibrahim Lodi at his court, he openly welcomed some close relations of Humayun who had escaped from prison, having been confined there after an unsuccessful rebellion. Finally, Bahadur Shah again invested Chittor. Simultaneously, he supplied arms and men to Tatar Khan, a cousin of Ibrahim Lodi, to invade Agra with a force of 40,000 while diversions were to be made in the north and the east.

Humayun easily defeated the challenge posed by Tatar Khan. The Afghan forces melted away at the approach of the Mughals. Tatar Khan's small force was defeated, and he himself was killed. Determined to end the threat from Bahadur Shah's side once for all, Humayun now invaded Malwa. He marched forward slowly and cautiously, and occupied a position midway between Chittor and Mandu. He thus cut off Bahadur Shah from Malwa.

Bahadur Shah quickly compelled Chittor

to capitulate, largely due to his fine artillery which was commanded by an Ottoman master-gunner, Rumi Khan. It has been said that Humayun refused to help Chittor due to religious considerations. However, Mewar was at that time passing through an internal crisis and, from Humayun's point of view, its military value as an ally was limited.

In the struggle which followed, Humayun showed considerable military skill, and remarkable personal valour. Bahadur Shah did not dare face the Mughals. He abandoned his fortified camp and fled to Mandu after spiking his guns, but leaving behind all his rich equipage. Humayun was hot on his heels. He scaled the fortress of Mandu with a small party, being the fifth man to enter. Bahadur Shah fled from Mandu to Champamer, then to Ahmadabad and finally to Kathiawar. Thus, the rich provinces of Malwa and Gujarat, as well as the large treasure hoarded by the Gujarat rulers at Mandu and Champamer, fell into the hands of Humayun.

Both Gujarat and Malwa were lost as quickly as they had been gained. After the victory, Humayun placed Gujarat under the command of his younger brother, Askari, and then retired to Mandu which was centrally located and enjoyed a fine climate. The major problem was the deep attachment of the people to the Gujarati rule. Askari was inexperienced, and the Mughal nobles were mutually divided. A series of popular uprisings, the military actions by Bahadur Shah's nobles, and the rapid revival of Bahadur Shah's power, unnerved Askari. He fell back upon Champamer, but received no help from the commander of the fort who doubted his intentions. Unwilling to face Humayun at Mandu, he decided to return to Agra. This immediately raised the fear that he might try to displace Humayun from Agra, or attempt to carve out

a separate empire for himself. Deciding to take no chances, Humayun abandoned Malwa and moved after Askari by forced marches. He overtook Askari in Rajasthan; the two brothers were reconciled, and returned to Agra. Meanwhile, both Gujarat and Malwa were lost.

The Gujarat campaign was not a complete failure. While it did not add to the Mughal territories, it destroyed forever the threat posed to the Mughals by Bahadur Shah: Humayun was now in a position to concentrate all his resources in the struggle against Sher Khan and the Afghans. The death of Bahadur Shah in a scuffle with the Portuguese on board one of their ships ended whatever danger remained from the side of Gujarat.

During Humayun's absence from Agra (February 1535 to February 1537), Sher Khan had further strengthened his position. He had made himself the unquestioned master of Bihar. The Afghans from far and near had rallied round him. Though he continued to profess loyalty to the Mughals, he systematically planned to expel the Mughals from India. He was in close touch with Bahadur Shah who had helped him with heavy subsidies. These resources enabled him to recruit and maintain a large and efficient army which included 1200 elephants. Shortly after Humayun's return to Agra, he had used this army to defeat the Bengal king, and compel him to pay an indemnity of 1,300,000 *dinars* (gold coins).

After equipping a new army, Humayun marched against Sher Khan and besieged Chunar towards the end of the year. Humayun felt it would be dangerous to leave such a powerful fort behind, threatening his line of communications. However, the fort was strongly defended by the Afghans. Despite the best efforts by the master-gunner, Rumi

Khan, it took six months for Humayun to capture it. In the meanwhile, Sher Khan captured by treachery the powerful fort of Rohtas where he could leave his family in safety. He then invaded Bengal for a second time, and captured Gaur, its capital.

Thus, Sher Khan completely outmanoeuvred Humayun. Humayun should have realised that he was in no position to offer a military challenge to Sher Khan without more careful preparations. However, he was unable to grasp the political and military situation facing him. After his victory over Gaur, Sher Khan made an offer to Humayun that he would surrender Bihar and pay an annual tribute of ten lakhs of *dinars* if he was allowed to retain Bengal. It is not clear how far Sher Khan was sincere in making this offer. But Humayun was not prepared to leave Bengal to Sher Khan. Bengal was the land of gold, rich in manufactures, and a centre for foreign trade. Moreover, the king of Bengal who had reached Humayun's camp in a wounded condition, urged that resistance to Sher Khan was still continuing. All these factors led Humayun to reject Sher Khan's offer and decide upon a campaign to Bengal. Soon after, the Bengal king succumbed to his wounds. Humayun had, thus, to undertake the campaign to Bengal all alone.

Humayun's march to Bengal was purposeless, and was the prelude to the disaster which overtook his army at Chausa almost a year later. Sher Khan had left Bengal and was in south Bihar. He let Humayun advance into Bengal without opposition so that he might disrupt Humayun's communications and bottle him up in Bengal. Arriving at Gaur, Humayun quickly took steps to establish law and order. But this did not solve any of his problems. His situation was made worse by the attempt of his younger

brother, Hindal, to assume the crown himself at Agra. Due to this and Sher Khan's activities, Humayun was totally cut off from all news and supplies from Agra.

After a stay of three to four months at Gaur, Humayun started back for Agra, leaving a small garrison behind. Despite the rumblings of discontent in the nobility, the rainy season, and the constant harrying attacks of the Afghans, Humayun managed to get his army back to Chausa near Buxar, without any serious loss. This was a big achievement for which Humayun deserves credit. Meanwhile, Kamran had advanced from Lahore to quell Hindal's rebellion at Agra. Though not disloyal, Kamran made no attempt to send reinforcements to Humayun. These might well have swung the military balance in favour of the Mughals.

Despite these setbacks, Humayun was still confident of success against Sher Khan. He forgot that he was facing an Afghan army which was very different from the one a year before. It had gained battle experience and confidence under the leadership of the most skillful general the Afghans ever produced. Misled by an offer of peace from Sher Khan, Humayun crossed to the eastern bank of the Karmnasa river, giving full scope to the Afghan horsemen encamped there. Humayun showed not only bad political sense, but bad generalship as well. He chose his ground badly, and allowed himself to be taken unawares.

Humayun barely escaped with his life from the battle field swimming across the river with the help of a water-carrier. Immense booty fell in Sher Khan's hands. About 7000 Mughal soldiers and many prominent nobles were killed.

After the defeat at Chausa (March 1539), only the fullest unity among the Timurid princes and the nobles could have saved the

**Mughals.** Kamran had a battle-hardened force of 10,000 Mughals under his command at Agra. But he was not prepared to loan them to Humayun as he had lost confidence in Humayun's leadership. On the other hand, Humayun was not prepared to entrust the command of the armies to Kamran, lest the latter use it to assume power himself. The suspicions between the brothers grew till Kamran decided to return to Lahore with the bulk of his army.

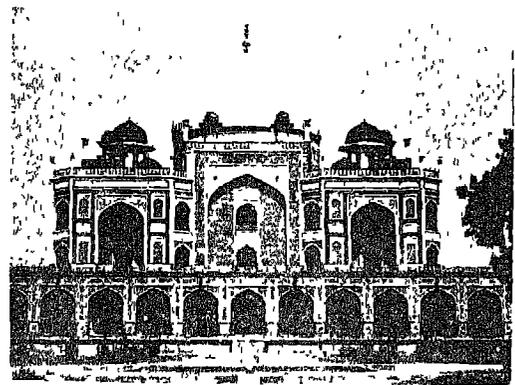
The army hastily assembled by Humayun at Agra was no match against Sher Khan. However, the battle of Kanauj (May 1540) was bitterly contested. Both the younger brothers of Humayun, Askari and Hindal, fought valiantly but to no avail.

The battle of Kanauj decided the issue between Sher Khan and the Mughals. Humayun now became a prince without a kingdom, Kabul and Qandhar remaining under Kamran. He wandered about in Sindh and its neighbouring countries for the next two and a half years, hatching various schemes to regain his kingdom. But neither the rulers of Sindh nor Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Marwar, was prepared to help him in this enterprise. Worse, his own brothers turned against him, and tried to have him killed or imprisoned. Humayun faced all these trials and tribulations with fortitude and courage. It was during this period that Humayun's character showed itself at its best. Ultimately, Humayun took shelter at the court of the Iranian king, and recaptured Qandhar and Kabul with his help in 1545.

It is clear that the major cause of Humayun's failure against Sher Khan was his inability to understand the nature of the Afghan power. Due to the existence of large numbers of Afghan tribes scattered over north India, the Afghans could always reunite under a capable leader and pose a challenge. With-

out winning over the local rulers and zamindars to their side, the Mughals were bound to remain numerically inferior. In the beginning, Humayun was, on the whole, loyally served by his brothers. Real differences among them arose only after Sher Khan's victories. Some historians have unduly exaggerated the early differences of Humayun with his brothers, and his alleged faults of character. Though not as vigorous as Babur, Humayun showed himself to be a competent general and politician, till his ill-conceived Bengal campaign. In both the battles with Sher Khan, the latter showed himself a superior general.

Humayun's life was a romantic one. He went from riches to rags and again from rags to riches. In 1555, following the break-up of the Sur empire, he was able to recover Delhi. But he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of the victory. He died from a fall from the first floor of the library building in his fort at Delhi. His favourite wife built a magnificent mausoleum for him near the fort. This building marks a new phase in the style of architecture in north India, its most remarkable feature being the magnificent dome made of marble.



*Humayun's Tomb—Delhi*

**Sher Shah and the Sur Empire (1540-55)**

Sher Shah ascended the throne of Delhi at the ripe age of 67. We do not know much about his early life. His original name was Farid and his father was a small jagirdar at Jaunpur. Farid acquired rich administrative experience by looking after the affairs of his father's jagir. Following the defeat and death of Ibrahim Lodi and the confusion in Afghan affairs, he emerged as one of the most important Afghan sardars. The title of Sher Khan was given to him by his patron for killing a tiger (*sher*). Soon, Sher Khan emerged as the right hand of the ruler of Bihar, and its master in all but name. This was before the death of Babur. The rise of Sher Khan to prominence was, thus, not sudden.

As a ruler, Sher Shah ruled the mightiest empire which had come into existence in north India since the time of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. His empire extended from Bengal to the Indus, excluding Kashmir. In the west, he conquered Malwa, and almost the entire Rajasthan. Malwa was then in a weak and distracted condition and in no position to offer any resistance. But the situation in Rajasthan was different. Maldeo, the ruler of Marwar who had ascended the *gaddi* in 1532, had rapidly brought the whole of western and northern Rajasthan under his control. He further expanded his territories during Humayun's conflict with Sher Shah. With the help of the Bhatias of Jaisalmer, he conquered Ajmer. In his career of conquest he came into conflict with the rulers of the area, including Mewar. His latest act had been the conquest of Bikaner. In the course of the conflict the ruler was killed after a gallant resistance. His sons, Kalyan Das and Bhim, sought shelter at the court of Sher Shah. Many others, including his relation, Biram Deo of Merta, whom he had dispossessed from his

jagir, also repaired to Sher Shah's court.

Thus the situation facing Rana Sanga and Babur was repeated. Maldeo's attempt to create a large centralised state in Rajasthan under his aegis was bound to be regarded as a threat by the ruler of Delhi and Agra. It was believed that Maldeo had an army of 50,000. However, there is no evidence that Maldeo coveted Delhi or Agra. Now, as before, the bone of contention between the two was the domination of the strategically important eastern Rajasthan.

The Rajput and Afghan forces clashed at Samel (1544) between Ajmer and Jodhpur. Sher Shah had adopted the greatest precautions while advancing into Rajasthan; at every stage he would throw up entrenchments to guard against a surprise attack. It is clear that the Rajputs, too, had learnt a lot about military tactics since Rana Sanga's disastrous battle with Babur. They refused to attack the strongly fortified positions of Sher Shah. After waiting for about a month, Maldeo suddenly withdrew towards Jodhpur. According to contemporary writers, this was due to a clever stratagem on the part of Sher Shah. He had dropped some letters addressed to the Rajput commanders near Maldeo's camp, in order to sow doubt in his mind about their loyalty. The ruse worked, Maldeo seeing his mistake when it was too late. Some Rajput sardars refused to retreat. With a small force of about 10,000 they vigorously attacked Sher Shah's centre and created confusion in his army. But Sher Shah kept cool. Soon, superior numbers and Afghan gun-fire halted the Rajput charge. Surrounded, the Rajputs died fighting to the last man. Many Afghan soldiers perished with them.

The battle of Samel sealed the fate of Rajasthan. Sher Shah now besieged and conquered Ajmer and Jodhpur, forcing Maldeo into the desert. He then turned towards

Mewar. The Rana was in no position to resist, and sent the keys of Chittor to Sher Shah who set up his outposts up to Mount Abu.

Thus, in a brief period of ten months, Sher Shah overran almost the entire Rajasthan. His last campaign was against Kalinjjar, a strong fort that was the key to Bundelkhand. During the siege, a gun burst and severely injured Sher Shah. He died (1545) after he heard that the fort had been captured.

Sher Shah was succeeded by his second son, Islam Shah, who ruled till 1553. Islam Shah was a capable ruler and general, but most of his energies were occupied with the rebellions raised by his brothers, and with tribal feuds among the Afghans. These and the ever-present fear of a renewed Mughal invasion prevented Islam Shah from attempting to expand his empire. His death at a young age led to a civil war among his successors. This provided Humayun the opportunity he had been seeking for recovering his empire in India. In two hotly contested battles in 1555, he defeated the Afghans, and recovered Delhi and Agra.

The Sur empire may be considered in many ways as a continuation and culmination of the Delhi Sultanat, the advent of Babur and Humayun being in the nature of an interregnum. Amongst the foremost contributions of Sher Shah was his re-establishment of law and order across the length and breadth of his empire. He dealt sternly with robbers and dacoits, and with zamindars who refused to pay land revenue or disobeyed the orders of the government. We are told by Abbas Khan Sarwani, the historian of Sher Shah, that the zamindars were so cowed that none of them dared to raise the banner of rebellion against him, or to molest the travellers passing through their territories.

Sher Shah paid great attention to the fostering of trade and commerce and the improvement of communications in his kingdom. Sher Shah restored the old imperial road called the Grand Trunk Road, from the river Indus in the west to Sonargaon in Bengal. He also built a road from Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor, evidently linking up with the road to the Gujarat seaports. He built a third road from Lahore to Multan. Multan was at that time the staging point for caravans going to West and Central Asia. For the convenience of travellers, Sher Shah built a sarai at a distance of every two kos (about eight km) on these roads. The sarai was a fortified lodging or inn where travellers could pass the night and also keep their goods in safe custody. Separate lodgings for Hindus and Muslims were provided in these sarais. Brahmanas were appointed for providing bed and food to the Hindu travellers, and grains for their horses. Abbas Khan says, "It was a rule in these sarais that whoever entered them received provision suitable to his rank, and food and litter for his cattle, from government." Efforts were made to settle villages around the sarais, and land was set apart in these villages for the expenses of the sarais. Every sarai had several watchmen under the control of a Shahna (custodian).

We are told that Sher Shah built 1700 sarais in all. Some of these are still existing, which shows how strong they were. His roads and sarais have been called "the arteries of the empire." They helped in quickening trade and commerce in the country. Many of the sarais developed into market-towns (*qasbas*) to which peasants flocked to sell their produce. The sarais were also used as stages for the news service or *dak-chowki*. The organisation of these *dak-chowkis* has been described in an earlier chapter. By means of these, Sher Shah

kept himself informed of the developments in his vast empire.

Sher Shah also introduced other reforms to promote the growth of trade and commerce. In his entire empire, goods paid customs duty only at two places: goods produced in Bengal or imported from outside paid customs duty at the border of Bengal and Bihar at Sikri-gali, and goods coming from West and Central Asia paid customs duty at the Indus. No one was allowed to levy customs at roads, ferries or towns anywhere else. The duty was paid a second time at the time of sale.

Sher Shah directed his governors and *amil*s to compel the people to treat merchants and travellers well in every way, and not to harm them at all. If a merchant died, they were not to seize his goods as if they were unowned. Sher Shah enjoined upon them the dictum of Shaikh Nizami: "If a merchant should die in your country it is a perfidy to lay hands on his property." Sher Shah made the local village headmen (*mupaddams*) and zamindars responsible for any loss that the merchant suffered on the roads. If the goods were stolen, the *mupaddams* and the zamindars had to produce them, or to point out the haunts of the thieves or highway robbers, failing which they had to undergo the punishment meant for thieves and robbers. The same law was applied in cases of murders on the roads. It was a barbarous law to make the innocent responsible for the wicked but it seems to have been effective. In the picturesque language of Abbas Sarwani, "a decrepit old woman might place a basketful of gold ornaments on her head and go on a journey, and no thief or robber would come near her for fear of the punishment which Sher Shah inflicted."

The currency reforms of Sher Shah also helped in the growth of commerce and handicrafts. He struck fine coins of gold, silver

and copper of uniform standard in place of the debased coins of mixed metal. His silver rupee was so well executed that it remained a standard coin for centuries after him. His attempt to fix standard weights and measures all over the empire were also helpful for trade and commerce.

Sher Shah did not make many changes in the administrative divisions prevailing since the Sultanat period. A number of villages comprised a *pargana*. The *pargana* was under the charge of the *shiqdar*, who looked after law and order and general administration, and the *munsif* or *amil* who looked after the collection of land revenue. Accounts were maintained both in the Persian and the local languages (Hindavi). Above the *pargana* was the *shiq* or *sarkar* under the charge of the *shiqdar-i-shiqdran* and a *munsif-i-munsifan*. It seems that only the designations of the officers were new since both *pargana* and *sarkar* were units of administration in the earlier period also.

A number of *sarkars* were grouped into provinces, but we do not know much about the pattern of provincial administration in Sher Shah's time. It seems that the provincial governors were all-powerful in some areas. In some areas such as Bengal, real power remained in the hands of tribal chiefs and the governor exercised only a loose control over them.

Sher Shah apparently continued the central machinery of administration which had been developed during the Sultanat period. However, we do not have much information about it. Sher Shah did not favour leaving too much authority in the hands of ministers. He worked exceedingly hard, devoting himself to the affairs of the state from early morning to late at night. He also toured the country constantly to know the condition of the people. But no single individual, however hard-work-

ing, could look after all the affairs of a vast country like India. Sher Shah's excessive centralisation of authority in his hands was a source of weakness, and its harmful effects became apparent when a masterful sovereign like him ceased to sit on the throne.

Sher Shah paid special attention to the land revenue system, the army and justice. Having administered his father's jagir for a number of years, and then as the virtual ruler of Bihar, Sher Shah knew the working of the land revenue system at all levels. With the help of a capable team of administrators, he toned up the entire system. The produce of land was no longer to be based on guess work, or by dividing the crops in the fields or on the threshing floor. Sher Shah insisted on measurement of the sown land. Schedule of rates (called *ray*) was drawn up, laying down the state's share of the different types of crops. This could then be converted into cash on the basis of the prevailing market rates in different areas. The share of the state was one-third of the produce. The lands were divided into good, bad and middling. Their average produce was computed, and one-third of it became the share of the state. The peasants were given the option of paying in cash or kind, though the state preferred cash.

Thus, after sowing the crops, the peasant knew how much he had to pay to the state. The area sown, the type of crops cultivated, and the amount each peasant had to pay was written down on a paper called *patta* and each peasant was informed of it. No one was allowed to charge from the peasants anything extra. Even the rates which the members of the measuring party were to get for their work were laid down. In order to guard against famine and other natural calamities, a cess at the rate of two and a half *seers* per *bigha*

was also levied.

Sher Shah was very solicitous for the welfare of the peasantry. He used to say, "The cultivators are blameless, they submit to those in power, and if I oppress them they will abandon their villages, and the country will be ruined and deserted, and it will be a long time before it again becomes prosperous". Since there was plenty of land available for cultivation in those days, the desertion of villages by the peasants in case of oppression was a real threat and helped in putting a limit on the exploitation of the peasants by the rulers.

Sher Shah set up a strong army in order to administer his vast empire. He dispensed with tribal levies under tribal chiefs, and recruited soldiers directly, after verifying their character. Every soldier had his descriptive roll (*chehra*) recorded, and his horse branded with the imperial sign so that horses of inferior quality may not be substituted. Sher Shah seems to have borrowed this system, known as the *dagh* (branding) system, from the military reforms of Alauddin Khalji. The strength of Sher Shah's personal army is put at 150,000 cavalry and 25,000 infantry armed with matchlocks or bows, 5000 elephants and a park of artillery. He set up cantonments in different parts of the empire and a strong garrison was posted in each of them.

Sher Shah placed considerable emphasis on justice. He used to say, "Justice is the most excellent of religious rites, and it is approved alike by the king of infidels and of the faithful". He did not spare oppressors whether they were high nobles, men of his own tribe or near relations. Qazis were appointed at different places for justice but, as before, the village panchayats and zamindars also dealt with civil and criminal cases at the local level.

A big step forward in the dispensation of

justice was, however, taken by Sher Shah's son and successor, Islam Shah. Islam Shah codified the laws, thus doing away with the necessity of depending on a special set of people who could interpret the Islamic law. Islam Shah also tried to curb the powers and privileges of the nobles, and to pay cash salaries to soldiers. But most of the regulations disappeared with his death.

There is no doubt that Sher Shah was a remarkable figure. He established a sound system of administration in his brief reign of five years. He was also a great builder. The tomb which he built for himself at Sasaram during his lifetime is regarded as one of the masterpieces of architecture. It is considered as a culmination of the earlier style of architecture and a starting point for the new style which developed later.

Sher Shah also built a new city on the bank of the Yamuna near Delhi. The sole survivor of this is the Old Fort (Purana Qila) and the fine mosque within it.

Sher Shah also patronised the learned men.

Some of the finest works in Hindi, such as the *Padmavat* of Malik Muhammad Jaisi, were completed during his reign.

Sher Shah was not a bigot in the religious sphere, as is evident from his social and economic policy. Neither Islam Shah nor he depended on the *ulama*, though they respected them a great deal. Religious slogans were sometimes used to justify political actions. The treacherous murder of Puran Mal and his associates after he had vacated the fort of Raisen in Malwa on the basis of a binding oath is one such example. The theologians ruled that no faith need be kept with an infidel and that Puran Mal had oppressed Muslim men and women. Sher Shah did not, however, initiate any new liberal policies. *Jizyah* continued to be collected from the Hindus, while his nobility was drawn almost exclusively from the Afghans.

Thus the state under the Surs remained an Afghan institution based on race and tribe. A fundamental change came about only with the emergence of Akbar.

## EXERCISES

1. Describe the political developments that took place in Central Asia in the period between the death of Timur and the conquest of Kabul by Babur.
2. Discuss the significance of the battle of Panipat (1526).
3. Describe the conflict between Humayun and Sher Shah and explain the reasons for Humayun's failure.
4. Describe the administrative reforms of Sher Shah. What steps did he adopt to promote the growth of trade and commerce ?

## CHAPTER XIII

# Consolidation of the Mughal Empire

## Age of Akbar

WHEN HUMAYYN was retreating from Bikaner, he was gallantly offered shelter and help by the Rana of Amarkot. It was at Amarkot, in 1542, that Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal rulers, was born. When Humayun fled to Iran, young Akbar was captured by his uncle, Kamrau. He treated the child well. Akbar was re-united with his parents after the capture of Qandhar. When Humayun died, Akbar was at Kalanaur in the Punjab, commanding operations against the Afghan rebels there. He was crowned at Kalanaur in 1556 at the young age of thirteen years and four months.

Akbar succeeded to a difficult position. The Afghans were still strong beyond Agra, and were regrouping their forces under the leadership of Hemu for a final showdown. Kabul had been attacked and besieged. Sikandar Sur, the defeated Afghan ruler, was loitering in the Siwalik Hills. However, Bairam Khan, the tutor of the prince and a loyal and favourite officer of Humayun, rose to the occasion. He became the *wakil* of the kingdom, with the title of *khan-i-khanan*, and rallied the Mughal forces. The threat from the side of Hemu was considered the most serious. The area from Chunar to the border of Bengal was under the domination of Adil Shah, a nephew of Sher Shah. Hemu, who had started life as a superintendent of the markets under Islam

Shah, had rapidly risen under Adil Shah. He had not lost a single one of the twenty-two battles in which he had fought. Adil Shah had appointed him the *wazir* with the title of Vikramajit, and entrusted him with the task of expelling the Mughals. Hemu captured Agra, and with an army of 50,000 cavalry, 500 elephants and a strong park of artillery marched upon Delhi.

In a well-contested battle, Hemu defeated the Mughals near Delhi and occupied the city. However, Bairam Khan took energetic steps to meet the situation. His bold stand put new heart into his army, and it marched on Delhi before Hemu could have time to consolidate his position. The battle between the Mughals and the Afghan forces led by Hemu, took place once again at Panipat (5 November 1556). Although Hemu's artillery had been captured earlier by a Mughal detachment, the tide of battle was in favour of Hemu when an arrow hit him in the eye and he fainted. The leaderless Afghan army was defeated; Hemu was captured and executed. Thus, Akbar had virtually to reconquer his empire.

### Early Phase—Contest with the Nobility (1556-67)

Bairam Khan remained at the helm of

affairs of the empire for almost four years. During the period, he kept the nobility fully under control. The danger to Kabul was averted, and the territories of the empire were extended from Kabul up to Jaunpur in the east and Ajmer in the west. Gwalior was captured, and vigorous efforts were made to conquer Ranthambhor and Malwa.

Meanwhile, Akbar was approaching the age of maturity. Bairam Khan had offended many powerful persons while he held supreme power. They complained that Bairam Khan was a Shia, and that he was appointing his own supporters and Shias to high offices while neglecting the old nobles. These charges were not very serious in themselves. But Bairam Khan had become arrogant, and failed to realise that Akbar was growing up. There was friction on small points which made Akbar realise that he could not leave the affairs of the state in someone else's hands for any length of time.

Akbar played his cards deftly. He left Agra on the pretext of hunting, and reached Delhi. From Delhi he issued a *farman* dismissing Bairam Khan from his office, and calling upon all the nobles to come and submit to him personally. Once Bairam Khan realised that Akbar wanted to take power in his own hands, he was prepared to submit, but his opponents were keen to ruin him. They heaped humiliation upon him till he was goaded to rebel. The rebellion distracted the empire for almost six months. Finally, Bairam Khan was forced to submit. Akbar received him cordially, and gave him the option of serving at the court or anywhere outside it, or retiring to Mecca. Bairam Khan chose to go to Mecca. However, on his way, he was assassinated at Patan near Ahmadabad by an Afghan who bore him a personal grudge. Bairam's wife and a young

child were brought to Akbar at Agra. Akbar married Bairam Khan's widow who was his cousin, and brought up the child as his own son. This child later became famous as Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan and held some of the most important offices and commands in the empire.

Akbar's confrontation with Bairam Khan and the treatment accorded to his family subsequently show some typical traits of Akbar's character. He was unrelenting once he had made up his mind about a course of action, but was prepared to go out of his way in being generous to an opponent who had submitted to him.

During Bairam Khan's rebellion, groups and individuals in the nobility had become politically active. This included Akbar's foster-mother, Maham Anaga, and her relations. Though Maham Anaga soon withdrew from politics, her son, Adham Khan, was an impetuous young man. He assumed independent airs when sent to command an expedition against Malwa. Removed from the command, he laid claim to the post of the wazir, and when this was not conceded, he stabbed the acting *wazir* in his office. Akbar was enraged and had him thrown down from the parapet of the fort so that he died (1561). However, it was many years before Akbar was to establish his authority fully. The Uzbeks formed a powerful group in the nobility. They held important positions in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Malwa. Although they had served the empire well by subduing the powerful Afghan groups in those areas, they had become arrogant and were defying the young ruler. Between 1561 and 1567 they broke out in rebellion several times, forcing Akbar to take the field against them. Each time Akbar was induced to pardon them. When they again rebelled in 1565, Akbar was

so exasperated that he vowed to make Jaunpur his capital till he had rooted them out. Meanwhile, a rebellion by the Mirzas, who were Timurids and were related to Akbar by marriage, threw the areas west of modern Uttar Pradesh into confusion. Encouraged by these rebellions, Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, who had seized control of Kabul, advanced into the Punjab, and besieged Lahore. The Uzbek rebels formally proclaimed him their ruler.

This was the most serious crisis Akbar had to face since Hemu's capture of Delhi. However, Akbar's grit and a certain amount of luck enabled him to triumph. From Jaunpur he marched to Lahore, forcing Mirza Hakim to retire. Meanwhile, the rebellion of the Mirzas was crushed, the Mirzas fleeing to Malwa and thence to Gujarat. Akbar marched back from Lahore to Jaunpur. Crossing the river Yamuna near Allahabad at the height of the rainy season, he surprised the rebels led by the Uzbek nobles and completely routed them (1567). The Uzbek leaders were killed in the battle, thus bringing their protracted rebellion to an end. All the rebellious nobles, including those among them who had been dreaming of independence, were cowed down. Akbar was now free to concentrate on the expansion of the empire.

### Early Expansion of the Empire (1556-76)

During Bairam Khan's regency, the territories of the Mughal empire had been expanded. Apart from Ajmer, the most important conquests during this period had been of Malwa and Garh-Katanga. Malwa was being ruled, at that time, by a young prince,

Baz Bahadur. His accomplishments included a mastery of music and poetry. Stories about the romance of Baz Bahadur and Rupmati, who was famous for her beauty as well as for music and poetry are well known. During his time, Mandu had become a celebrated centre for music. The army, however, had been neglected by Baz Bahadur. The expedition against Malwa was led by Adham Khan, son of Akbar's foster-mother, Maham Anaga. Baz Bahadur was badly defeated (1561) and the Mughals took valuable spoils, including Rupmati. However, she preferred to commit suicide to being dragged to Adham Khan's harem. Due to the senseless cruelties of Adham Khan and his successor, there was a reaction against the Mughals which enabled Baz Bahadur to recover Malwa.

After dealing with Bairam Khan's rebellion, Akbar sent another expedition to Malwa. Baz Bahadur had to flee, and for some time he took shelter with the Rana of Mewar. After wandering about from one area to another, he finally repaired to Akbar's court and was enrolled as a Mughal *mansabdar*.<sup>1</sup> The extensive country of Malwa thus came under Mughal rule.

At about the same time, Mughal arms overran the kingdom of Garh-Katanga. The kingdom of Garh-Katanga included the Narmada valley and the northern portions of present Madhya Pradesh. It had been welded together by one Aman Das who flourished in the second half of the fifteenth century. Aman Das had helped Bahadur Shah of Gujarat in the conquest of Raisen and had received from him the title of Sangram Shah.

The kingdom of Garh-Katanga included a

<sup>1</sup>He rose to the rank of 2000. According to tradition, he was buried near a tank at Ujjain where his favourite consort, Rupmati, was also buried.

number of Gond and Rajput principalities. It was the most powerful kingdom set up by the Gonds. It is said that the ruler commanded 20,000 cavalry, a large infantry and 1000 elephants. We do not know, however, to what extent these figures are dependable. Sangram Shah had further strengthened his position by marrying off his son to a princess of the famous Chandella rulers of Mahoba. This princess, who is famous as Durgavati, became a widow soon afterwards. But she installed her minor son on the throne and ruled the country with great vigour and courage. She was a good marksman both with guns and bow and arrow. She was fond of hunting and, according to a contemporary, "it was her custom that whenever she heard that a tiger had appeared she did not drink water till she had shot it." She fought many successful battles against her neighbours, including Baz Bahadur of Malwa. These border conflicts apparently continued even after Malwa had been conquered by the Mughals. Meanwhile, the cupidity of Asaf Khan, the Mughal governor of Allahabad, was roused by the stories of the fabulous wealth and the beauty of the Rani. Asaf Khan advanced with 10,000 cavalry from the side of Bundelkhand. Some of the semi-independent rulers of Garha found it a convenient moment to throw off the Gond yoke. The Rani was thus left with a small force. Though wounded, she fought on gallantly. Finding that the battle was lost and that she was in danger of being captured, she stabbed herself to death. Asaf Khan then stormed the capital, Chauragarh, near modern Jabalpur. "So much plunder in jewels, gold, silver and other things were taken that it is impossible to compute even a fraction of it," says Abul Fazl. "Out of all the plunder Asaf Khan sent only two hundred elephants to the

court, and retained all the rest for himself". Kamladevi, the younger sister of the Rani, was sent to the court.

When Akbar had dealt with the rebellion of the Uzbek nobles he forced Asaf Khan to disgorge his illegal gains. He restored the kingdom of Garh-Katanga to Chandra Shah, the younger son of Sangram Shah, after taking ten forts to round off the kingdom of Malwa.

During the next ten years, Akbar brought the major part of Rajasthan under his control and also conquered Gujarat and Bengal. A major step in his campaign against the Rajput states was the siege of Chittor. This redoubtable fortress, which had faced a number of sieges in its history was considered a key to central Rajasthan. It commanded the shortest route from Agra to Gujarat. But above all, it was a symbol of the Rajput spirit of resistance. Akbar realised that without conquering Chittor, he could not induce the other Rajput rulers to accept his suzerainty. Chittor fell (1568) after a gallant siege of six months. At the advice of his nobles, Rana Uday Singh had retired to the hills, leaving the famous warriors, Jaimal and Patta, in charge of the fort. Many peasants from the surrounding area had also taken shelter within the fort, and actively aided the defenders. When the Mughals stormed the fort, these peasants and many of the Rajput warriors were massacred—the first and the last time Akbar indulged in such a carnage. The Rajput warriors died after extracting as much vengeance as possible. In honour of the gallant Jaimal and Patta, Akbar ordered that two stone statues of these warriors, seated on elephants, be erected outside the chief gate of the fort of Agra.

The fall of Chittor was followed by the conquest of Ranthambhor reputed to be the most powerful fortress in Rajasthan. Jodhpur had been conquered earlier. As a result of

these victories, most of the Rajput rajas, including those of Bikaner and Jaisalmer, submitted to Akbar. Only Mewar continued to resist.

Gujarat had been in a sorry state of affairs since the death of Bahadur Shah. The fertility of its soil, its highly developed crafts and its importance as the centre of the import-export trade with the outside world had made it a prize worth fighting for. Akbar also laid claim to it because Humayun had ruled over it for some time. An additional reason was that the Mirzas who had failed in their rebellion near Delhi had taken shelter in Gujarat. Akbar was not prepared for such a rich province to become a rival centre of power. In 1572, Akbar advanced on Ahmadabad via Ajmer. Ahmadabad surrendered without a fight. Akbar then turned his attention to the Mirzas who held Broach, Baroda and Surat. At Cambay, Akbar saw the sea for the first time, and rode on it in a boat. A group of Portuguese merchants also came and met him for the first time. The Portuguese dominated the Indian seas by this time, and had the ambition of establishing an empire in India. Akbar's conquest of Gujarat frustrated these designs.

While Akbar's armies were besieging Surat, Akbar crossed the river Mahi and assailed the Mirzas with a small body of 200 men which included Man Singh and Bhagwan Das of Amber. For some time, Akbar's life was in danger. But the impetuosity of his charge routed the Mirzas. Thus, Gujarat came under Mughal control. However, as soon as Akbar had turned his back, rebellion broke out all over Gujarat. Hearing the news, Akbar marched out of Agra and traversed across Rajasthan in nine days by means of camels, horses and carts. On the eleventh day, he reached Ahmadabad. In this journey, which normally took six weeks, only 3000 soldiers were able to keep up with Akbar. With these

he defeated an enemy force of 20,000 (1573).

After this, Akbar turned his attention to Bengal. The Afghans had continued to dominate Bengal and Bihar. They had also overrun Orissa and killed its ruler. However, in order not to give offence to the Mughals, the Afghan ruler had not formally declared himself king, but read the *khuba* in Akbar's name. Internal fights among the Afghans, and the declaration of independence by the new ruler, Daud Khan, gave Akbar the opportunity he was seeking. Akbar advanced with a strong flotilla of boats accompanying him. The Afghan king was believed to possess a large army consisting of 40,000 well-mounted cavalry, an infantry of about 150,000, several thousand guns and elephants, and a strong flotilla of war boats. If Akbar had not been as careful and the Afghans had a better leader, the contest between Humayun and Sher Shah might well have been repeated. Akbar first captured Patna, thus securing Mughal communications in Bihar. He then returned to Agra, leaving Khan-i-Khanan Munaim Khan, an experienced officer, in charge of the campaign. The Mughal armies invaded Bengal and, after hard campaigning, Daud was forced to sue for peace. He rose in rebellion soon afterwards. Though the Mughal position in Bengal and Bihar was still weak, the Mughal armies were better organised and led. In a stiff battle in Bihar in 1576, Daud Khan was defeated and executed on the spot.

Thus ended the last Afghan kingdom in northern India. It also brought to an end the first phase of Akbar's expansion of the empire.

#### Administration

During the decade following his conquest of Gujarat, Akbar found time to look at the administrative problems of the empire. The

system of administration elaborated by Sher Shah had fallen into confusion after the death of Islam Shah Akbar, therefore, had to start afresh.

One of the most important problems facing Akbar was the system of land revenue administration. Sher Shah had instituted a system by which the cultivated area was measured and a central schedule (*ray*) was drawn up, fixing the dues of the peasant crop-wise on the basis of the productivity of land. This schedule was converted every year into a central schedule of prices. Akbar adopted Sher Shah's system. But it was soon found that the fixing of a central schedule of prices often led to considerable delays, and resulted in great hardships to the peasantry. Since the prices fixed were generally those prevailing at the Imperial Court, and thus were higher than in the country-side, the peasants had to part with a larger share of their produce.

Akbar, therefore, reverted to a system of annual assessment. The *qanungos*, who were hereditary holders of land as well as local officials conversant with local conditions, were ordered to report on the actual produce, state of cultivation, local prices, etc. But in every area, the *qanungos* were dishonest and often concealed the real produce. Annual assessments also resulted in great difficulty for the peasants and for the state. After returning from Gujarat (1573), Akbar paid personal attention to the land revenue system. Officials called *karoris* were appointed all over north India. They were responsible for the collection of a crore of *dams* (Rs. 250,000), and also checked the facts and figures supplied by the *qanungos*. On the basis of the information provided by them regarding the actual produce, local prices, productivity, etc., in 1580, Akbar instituted a new system called the *dahsala*. Under this system, the average produce of

different crops as well as the average prices prevailing over the last ten (*dah*) years were calculated. One-third of the average produce was the state share. The state demand was, however, stated in cash. This was done by converting the state share into money on the basis of a schedule of average prices over the past ten years. Thus, the produce of a *bigha* of land under share was given in maunds. But on the basis of average prices, the state demand was fixed in rupees per *bigha*.

Later, a further improvement was made. Not only were local prices taken into account, *parganas* having the same type of productivity were grouped into separate assessment circles. Thus, the peasant was required to pay on the basis of local produce as well as local prices.

There were a number of advantages of this system. As soon as the area sown by the peasant had been measured by means of the bamboos linked with iron rings, the peasant as well as the state knew what the dues were. The peasant was given remission in the land revenue, if crops failed on account of drought, floods, etc. The system of measurement and the assessment based upon it is called the *zabt* system. Akbar introduced this system in the area from Lahore to Allahabad, and in Malwa and Gujarat. The *dahsala* system was a further development of the *zabt* system.

A number of other systems of assessment were also followed under Akbar. The most common and, perhaps, the oldest was called *batai* or *ghalla-bakhshi*. In this system, the produce was divided between the peasants and the state in fixed proportion. The crop was divided after it had been thrashed, or when it had been cut and tied in stacks, or while it was standing in the field. This system was considered a very fair one, but it needed an army of honest officials to be present at the time of the ripening or the reaping of the crops.

The peasants were allowed to choose between *zabti* and *batai* under certain conditions. Thus, such a choice was given when the crops had been ruined. Under *batai*, the peasants were given the choice of paying in cash or in kind, though the state preferred cash. In case of crops such as cotton, indigo, oil-seeds, sugar-cane, etc., the state demand was invariably in cash. Hence, these were called cash-crops.

A third system which was widely used in Akbar's time was *nasaq*. We are a bit uncertain about this system. It seems that it meant a rough calculation of the amount payable by the peasant on the basis of what he had been paying in the past. Hence, some modern historians think that it was merely a system of computing the peasant's dues, not a different system of assessment. Others think that it meant rough appraisal both on the basis of the inspection of the crops and past experience, and thereby fixing the amount to be paid by the village as a whole. It is also called *kankut*.

Other local methods of assessment also continued in some areas.

In fixing the land revenue, continuity of cultivation was taken into account. Land which remained under cultivation almost every year was called *polaj*. When it remained uncultivated it was called *parati* (fallow). *Parati* land paid at the full (*polaj*) rate when it was cultivated. Land which had been fallow for two to three years was called *chachar*, and if longer than that, *banjar*. These were assessed at concessional rates, the revenue demand gradually rising till the full or *polaj* rate was paid in the fifth or the eighth year. In this way, the state helped in bringing virgin and uncultivated wasteland under cultivation. Land was classified further into good, middling and bad. One-third of the average produce was the state demand, but it varied according to

the productivity of the land, the method of assessment, etc.

Akbar was deeply interested in the improvement and extension of cultivation. He asked the *amil* to act like a father to the peasants. He was to advance money by way of loans (*taccavi*) to the peasants for seeds, implements, animals, etc., in times of need, and to recover them in easy instalments. He was to try and induce the peasants to plough as much land as possible and to sow superior quality crops. The zamindars of the area were also enjoined to cooperate in the task. The zamindars had a hereditary right to take a share of the produce. The peasants, too, had a hereditary right to cultivate their land and could not be ejected as long as they paid the land revenue.

The *dahsala* was not a ten-year settlement. Nor was it a permanent one, the state retaining the right to modify it. However, with some changes, Akbar's settlement remained the basis of the land revenue system of the Mughal empire till the end of the seventeenth century. The *zabti* system is associated with Raja Todar Mal, and is sometimes called Todar Mal's *bandobast*. Todar Mal was a brilliant revenue officer who first served under Sher Shah. But he was only one of a team of brilliant revenue officials who came to the forefront under Akbar.

Akbar could not have been able to expand his empire and maintain his hold over it without a strong army. For this purpose, it was necessary for him to organise the nobility as well as his army. Akbar realised both these objectives by means of the *mansabdari* system. Under this system, every officer was assigned a rank (*mansab*). The lowest rank was 10, and the highest was 5000 for the nobles; towards the end of the reign it was raised to 7000. Princes of the blood received higher *mansabs*. The ranks were divided into two: *zat* and *sawar*.

The word *zat* means personal. It fixed the personal status of a person, and also the salary due to him. The sawar rank indicated the number of cavalrymen (sawars) a person was required to maintain. A person who was required to maintain as many sawars as his *zat* rank was placed in the first category of that rank; if he maintained half or more, then in the second category and if he maintained less than half, then in the third category. Thus, there were three categories in every rank (*mansab*). To reward those who maintained a large quota of sawars for the state, an additional allowance at the rate of Rs. 2 for every sawar was added to the *zat* salary. No one could have a higher quota of sawars than his *zat* rank. Although modifications in the system were made from time to time, this remained the basic structure as long as the empire held together.

Out of his personal pay, the *mansabdar* was expected to maintain a corps of elephants, camels, mules and carts. These were necessary for the transport of the army. The Mughal *mansabdars* were paid very handsomely; in fact, their salaries were probably the highest in the world at the time. A *mansabdar* holding the rank of 100 *zat* received a monthly salary of Rs. 500. One holding the rank of 1000 *zat* received Rs. 4,400, while one holding the rank of 5000 *zat* received Rs. 30,000 a month. There was no income tax in those days. The purchasing power of the rupee in those days has been calculated to be sixty times of what it was in 1966. Even though the nobles had to spend roughly half of their personal salary in the upkeep of the animals for transport and in the administration of their jagirs they could lead lives of ostentation and luxury.

Great care was taken to ensure that the sawars recruited by the nobles were experienced and well-mounted. For this purpose, a descrip-

tive roll (*chehra*) of the soldier was maintained, and his horse was branded with the imperial marks. This was called the *dagh* system. Every noble had to bring his contingent for periodic inspection before persons appointed by the emperor for the purpose. The horses were carefully inspected and only good quality horses of Arabic and Iraqi breed were employed. For every ten cavalrymen, the *mansabdar* had to maintain twenty horses. This was so, because horses had to be rested while on march, and replacements were necessary in times of war. A sawar with only one horse was considered to be only half a sawar. The Mughal cavalry force remained an efficient one as long as the 10-20 rule was adhered to.

Provision was made that the contingents of the nobles should be mixed ones, that is, drawn from all the groups — Mughal, Pathan, Hindustani and Rajput. Thus, Akbar tried to weaken the forces of tribalism and parochialism. The Mughal and Rajput nobles were allowed to have contingents exclusively of Mughals or Rajputs, but in course of time, mixed contingents became the general rule.

Apart from cavalrymen, bowmen, musketeers (*bandukchi*), sappers and miners were also recruited in the contingents. The salaries varied; the average salary of a sawar was Rs. 20 per month. Iranis and Turanis received more. An infantryman received about Rs 3 per month. The salary due to the soldiers was added to the personal salary of the *mansabdar*, who was paid by assigning to him a jagir. Sometimes, the *mansabdars* were paid in cash. Akbar did not like the jagir system but could not do away with it, as it was too deeply entrenched. As a jagir did not confer any hereditary rights on the holder, or disturb any of the existing rights in the area, it only meant that the land revenue due to the state was to be paid to the jagirdar.

Akbar kept a large body of cavalymen as his bodyguards. He kept a big stable of horses. He also maintained a body of gentleman troopers. These were persons of noble lineage who did not have the means of raising a contingent or were persons who had impressed the emperor. They were allowed to keep eight to ten horses, and received a high salary of about Rs 800 a month. They were answerable only to the emperor, and had a separate muster-master. These people could be compared to the knights of medieval Europe. Akbar was very fond of horses and elephants. He also maintained a strong park of artillery. Akbar was specially interested in guns. He devised detachable guns which could be carried on an elephant or a camel. There were also heavy siege guns for breaching forts; some of these were so heavy that a 100 or 200 oxen and several elephants were needed to pull them. A strong park of artillery accompanied the emperor whenever he moved out of the capital.

We do not know whether Akbar ever had any plans of building a navy. The lack of a strong navy remained a key weakness of the Mughal empire. If Akbar had the time, he might have paid attention to it. He did build an efficient flotilla of war boats which he used in his eastern campaigns. Some of the boats were over 30 metres long and displaced over 350 tons.

### Organisation of Government

Hardly any changes were made by Akbar in the organisation of local government. The *pargana* and the *sarkar* continued as before. The chief officers of the *sarkar* were the *faujdar* and the *amalguzar*, the former being in charge of law and order, and the latter responsible for the assessment and collection of the land revenue. The territories of the empire

were divided into *jagir*, *khalisa* and *inam*. Income from *khalisa* villages went directly to the royal exchequer. The *inam* lands were those which were allotted to learned and religious men. *Jagirs* were allotted to nobles and members of the royal family including the queens. The *amalguzar* was required to exercise a general supervision over all types of holdings so that the imperial rules and regulations for the assessment and collection of land revenue were followed uniformly. Only autonomous *rajahs* were left free to continue their traditional land revenue system in their territories. Even there, Akbar encouraged them to follow the imperial system.

Akbar paid great attention to the organisation of the central and provincial governments. His system of central government was based on the structure of government which had evolved under the Delhi Sultanat, but the functions of the various departments were carefully reorganised, and meticulous rules and regulations were laid down for the conduct of affairs. Thus, he gave a new shape to the system and breathed new life into it.

The Central Asian and Timurid tradition was of having an all-powerful *wazir* under whom various heads of departments functioned. He was the principal link between the ruler and the administration. In course of time, a separate department, the military department, had come into being. The judiciary had always been separate. Thus, in practice, the concept of an all-powerful *wazir* had been given up. However, in his capacity as *wakil*, Bairam Khan had exercised the power of an all-powerful *wazir*.

Akbar reorganised the central machinery of administration on the basis of the division of power between various departments, and of checks and balances. While the post of *wakil* was not abolished, it was

stripped of all power and became largely decorative. The post was given to important nobles from time to time, but they played little part in administration. The head of the revenue department continued to be the *wazir*. He was not generally a person who held a high position in the nobility. Many nobles held *mansabs* which were higher than his. Thus, he was no longer the principal adviser to the ruler, but an expert in revenue affairs. To emphasise this point, Akbar generally used the title of *diwan* or *diwan-i-ala* in preference to the word *wazir*. Sometimes, several persons were asked to discharge the duties of *diwan* jointly. The *diwan* was responsible for all income and expenditure, and held control over *khalisa*, *jagir* and *inam* lands.

The head of the military department was called the *mir bakhshi*. It was the *mir bakhshi* and not the *diwan* who was considered the head of the nobility. Therefore, only the leading grandees were appointed to this post. Recommendations for appointment to *mansabs* or for promotions, etc., were made to the emperor through the *mir bakhshi*. Once the emperor had accepted a recommendation, it was sent to the *diwan* for confirmation and for assigning a *jagir* to the appointee. The same procedure was followed in case of promotions.

The *mir bakhshi* was also the head of the intelligence and information agencies of the empire. Intelligence officers (*barids*) and news reporters (*waqia-navis*) were posted to all parts of the empire. Their reports were presented to the emperor at the court through the *mir bakhshi*.

It will thus be seen that the *diwan* and the *mir bakhshi* were almost on a par with, and supported and checked, each other.

The third important officer was the *mir saman*. He was in charge of the imperial

household, including the supply of all the provisions and articles for the use of the inmates of the harem or the female apartments. Many of these articles were manufactured under supervision in royal workshops called *karkhanas*. Only nobles who enjoyed the complete confidence of the emperor were appointed to this office. The maintenance of etiquette at the court, the control of the royal bodyguard, etc., were all under the overall supervision of this officer.

The fourth important department was the judicial department headed by the chief *qazi*. This post was sometimes combined with that of the chief *sadr* who was responsible for all charitable and religious endowments. Thus it was a post which carried considerable power and patronage. It fell into bad odour due to the corruption and venality of Akbar's chief *qazi*, Abdun Nabi.

After instituting a careful scrutiny of the grants held by various persons, Akbar separated the *inam* lands from the *jagir* and *khalisa* lands, and divided the empire into six circles for purposes of grant of *inam* lands and their administration. Two features of the *inam* grants are noteworthy. First, Akbar made it a deliberate part of his policy to grant *inam* lands to all persons, irrespective of their religious faith and beliefs. *Sanads* of grant to various Hindu *maths* made by Akbar are still preserved. Second, Akbar made it a rule that half of the *inam* land should consist of cultivable wasteland. Thus, the *inam*-holders were encouraged to extend cultivation.

In order to make himself accessible to the people as well as to the ministers, Akbar carefully divided his time. The day started with the emperor's appearance at the *jharoka* of the palace. Large numbers of people assembled daily to have a glimpse of the ruler, and to present petitions to him if necessary. These

petitions were attended to immediately, or in the open darbar (*diwan-i-am*) which followed, and lasted till midday. The emperor then retired to his apartments for meals and rest.

Separate time was allotted to the ministers. For confidential consultations, the ministers were generally called to a chamber which was situated near Akbar's bathing apartment (*ghusal khana*). In course of time, this private consultation chamber came to be called *ghusal khana*.

Akbar divided the empire into twelve subas in 1580. These were Bengal, Bihar, Allahabad, Awadh, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Kabul, Ajmer, Malwa and Gujarat. A governor (*subadar*), a *diwan*, a *bakhshi*, a *sadr*, a *qazi*, and a *waqia-navis* were appointed to each of the provinces. Thus, orderly government based on the principle of checks and balances was extended to the provinces.

### Relations with the Rajputs

Akbar's relations with the Rajputs have to be seen against the wider background of Mughal policy towards the powerful rajas and zamindars of the country. When Humayun came back to India, he embarked upon a deliberate policy of trying to win over these elements. Abul Fazl says that in order "to soothe the minds of the zamindars, he entered into matrimonial relations with them". Thus when Jamal Khan Mewati, who was "one of the great zamindars of India", submitted to Humayun, he married one of his beautiful daughters himself and married the younger sister to Bairam Khan. In course of time, Akbar expanded and elaborated this policy.

Bhara Mal, the ruler of Amber, had come to Akbar's court at Agra immediately after his accession. He had made a favourable impression on the young king, for when people were running helter-skelter from a maddened

elephant, the Rajputs under Bhara Mal had stood firm. In 1562, when Akbar was going to Ajmer, he learnt that Bhara Mal was being harassed by the local Mughal governor. Bhara Mal paid personal homage to Akbar, and cemented the alliance by marrying his younger daughter, Harka Bai, to Akbar.

Marriages between Muslim rulers and the daughters of Hindu potentates were not unusual. Many cases of such alliances in various parts of the country during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have been cited earlier. Maldeo, the powerful ruler of Jodhpur, had married his daughter, Bai Kanaka, to Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat and another, Lal Bai, to the Sur ruler, probably Islam Shah Sur. Most of these marriages had not led to the establishment of any stable personal relations between the concerned families. The girls were generally lost to their families and never came back after marriage. Akbar followed a different policy. He gave complete religious freedom to his Hindu wives, and gave an honoured place to their parents and relations in the nobility. Bhara Mal was made a high grandee. His son, Bhagwan Das, rose to the rank of 5000 and his grandson, Man Singh, to the rank of 7000. This rank was accorded by Akbar to only one other noble, Aziz Khan Kuka, his foster-brother. Akbar emphasised his special relationship with the Kachhawaha ruler in other ways as well. The infant prince, Danyal, was sent to Amber to be brought up by Bhara Mal's wives. In 1572, when Akbar dashed to Gujarat, Bhara Mal was placed in charge of Agra where all the royal ladies were residing, a signal honour given only to nobles who were either relations or close confidants of the emperor.

But Akbar did not insist upon matrimonial relations as a precondition. No matrimonial

relations were entered into with the Hadas of Ranthambhor, and yet they remained high in Akbar's favour. Rao Surjan Hada was placed in charge of Garh-Katanga, and rose to the rank of 2000. Similarly, no matrimonial relations were entered into with the rulers of Sirohi and Banswara who submitted to Akbar later on.

Akbar's Rajput policy was combined with a policy of broad religious toleration. In 1564, he abolished the *jizyah* which was sometimes used by the *ulama* to humiliate non-Muslims. He had earlier abolished the pilgrim-tax, and the practice of forcible conversion of prisoners of war.

Following the conquest of Chittor, most of the leading Rajput rulers had accepted Akbar's suzerainty and paid personal homage to him. The rulers of Jaisalmer and Bikaner had also entered into matrimonial relations with Akbar. The only state which had stubbornly refused to accept Mughal suzerainty was Mewar.

Although Chittor and the plain area around it had come under Mughal domination, Udaipur and the hilly area which formed the larger part of Mewar had remained under the control of the Rana. In 1572, Rana Pratap succeeded Rana Uday Singh to the *gaddi*. A series of embassies were sent by Akbar to Rana Pratap to persuade him to accept Mughal suzerainty and to do personal homage. These embassies, including the one led by Man Singh, were courteously received by the Rana. The story that he insulted Man Singh is not a historical fact, and is uncharacteristic of the Rana who always behaved in a chivalrous and courteous manner even towards his opponents. Man Singh's embassy was followed by one under Bhagwan Das, and another under Raja Todar Mal. At one time, it seems that the Rana was prepared for a

compromise. He put on the imperial robe sent by Akbar, and sent his son, Amar Singh, to the court with Bhagwan Das to do homage to Akbar and accept his service. But no final agreement could be reached as the proud Rana was not prepared to accept Akbar's demand for tendering personal homage. Also, it seems that the Mughals wanted to keep hold of Chittor which was not acceptable to the Rana.

Early in 1576, Akbar moved to Ajmer, and deputed Raja Man Singh with a force of 5000 to lead a campaign against the Rana. In anticipation of this move, the Rana had devastated the entire territory up to Chittor so that the Mughal forces might get no food or fodder. He had also fortified all the passes in the hills. A furious battle between the two sides was waged at Haldighati, a narrow defile leading to Kumbhalgarh, which was then the Rana's capital. Apart from selected Rajput forces, the Rana's van was led by Hakim Khan Sur with his Afghan contingent. Thus the battle of Haldighati was not a struggle between the Hindus and the Muslims, or between the Indians and the foreigners. A small force of the Bhils whom the Rana had befriended was also present. The Rana's forces are put at 3000. The onslaught by the Rajputs and the Afghans threw the Mughal force into disarray. But the rumours that Akbar had arrived in person rallied them. With fresh Mughal reinforcements, the tide of battle began to turn against the Rajputs. Seeing this, the Rana escaped. The Mughal forces were too tired to pursue him but, after sometime, they advanced through the pass and occupied Gogunda, a strong point which had been evacuated by the Rana earlier.

This was the last time the Rana engaged in a pitched battle with the Mughals. Henceforth he resorted to methods of guerilla warfare.

The defeat at Haldighati did not weaken Rana Pratap's resolve to fight on for independence. However, the cause for which he stood had already been lost; most of the Rajput states had accepted Mughal suzerainty. By his policy of inducting the Rajput rajas into Mughal service and treating them on a par with the Mughal grandes, according broad religious toleration to his subjects, and his courteous behaviour to his former opponents, Akbar succeeded in cementing his alliance with the Rajput rulers. Therefore, Rana Pratap's refusal to bow before the Mughals had little effect on most of the other Rajput states which realised that in the existing situation, it was impossible for small states to stand out for long in favour of complete independence. Moreover, by allowing a large measure of autonomy to the Rajput rajas, Akbar established an empire which those Rajput rajas did not consider harmful to their best interests.

Rana Pratap's defiance of the mighty Mughal empire, almost alone and unaided by the other Rajput states, constitutes a glorious saga of Rajput valour and the spirit of sacrifice for cherished principles. Rana Pratap also experimented successfully with the methods of guerilla warfare which were later to be elaborated further by Malik Ambar, the Deccani general, and by Shivaji.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail the struggle between Akbar and Rana Pratap. For some time, Akbar exerted relentless pressure on the Rana. The Mughals overran the states of Dungarpur, Banswara, Sirohi, etc., which were dependent allies of Mewar and had supported Rana Pratap. Akbar concluded separate treaties with these states, thus further isolating Mewar. The Rana was hunted from forest to forest and from valley to valley. Both Kumbhalgarh and Udaipur were occupied by the Mughals. The Rana under-

went great hardships, but thanks to the support of the Bhil chiefs, he could continue his defiance. The Mughal pressure relaxed after 1579 due to a serious revolt in Bihar and Bengal, in protest against some reforms effected by Akbar. Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, made an incursion into the Punjab in order to fish in troubled waters. Thus, Akbar had to face a most serious internal crisis. In 1585, Akbar moved to Lahore to watch the situation in the north-west which had become dangerous. He remained there for the next 12 years. No Mughal expedition was sent against Rana Pratap after 1585.

Taking advantage of the situation, Rana Pratap recovered many of his territories, including Kumbhalgarh and the areas near Chittor. But he could not recover Chittor itself. During this period, he built a new capital, Chavand, near modern Dungarpur. He died in 1597 at the young age of 51, due to an internal injury incurred by him while trying to draw a stiff bow.

Apart from Mewar, Akbar had to face opposition in Marwar as well. Following the death of Maldeo (1562), there was a dispute for succession between his sons. The younger son of Maldeo, Chandrasen, who was the son of the favourite queen of Maldeo, succeeded to the *gaddi*. Due to the pressure of the Mughals, he had to give parts of his country in jagir to his elder brothers. But Chandrasen did not like this arrangement and after some time, rose in rebellion. Akbar now took Marwar under direct Mughal administration, one reason being his desire to safeguard the Mughal supply route to Gujarat which passed through Jodhpur. After its conquest, Akbar appointed Rai Singh Bikaneri to look after Jodhpur. Chandrasen resisted valiantly and waged a guerilla warfare. But after some time he had to seek refuge in Mewar.

Even there he was hunted from place to place by the Mughals. He died in 1581. A couple of years later, Akbar conferred Jodhpur upon Uday Singh, the elder brother of Chandrasen. To strengthen his position, Uday Singh married his daughter, Jagat Gosain or Jodha Bai as she came to be called, to Akbar's eldest son Salim. Unlike the *dola* form of earlier marriages, the bridegroom's party went to the raja's house, and a number of Hindu practices were followed. This happened when Akbar was residing at Lahore.

Akbar also had close personal relations with the rulers of Bikaner and Bundi who served in various campaigns with distinction. In 1593, when the son-in-law of Rai Singh of Bikaner died due to a fall from his *palki*, Akbar went personally to the raja's house to console him, and dissuaded his daughter from performing sati as her children were young.

The Rajput policy of Akbar proved beneficial to the Mughal state as well as to the Rajputs. The alliance secured to the Mughal empire the services of the bravest warriors in India. The steadfast loyalty of the Rajputs became an important factor in the consolidation and expansion of the empire. The alliance ensured peace in Rajasthan, and enabled the Rajputs to serve in far-flung parts of the empire without worrying about the safety of their homelands. By being enrolled into the imperial service, important positions in the empire were open to the Rajput rajas. Thus, Bhagwan Das of Amber was appointed joint governor of Lahore, while his son, Man Singh, was placed in charge of Kabul. Later, Man Singh was appointed the governor of Bihar and Bengal. Other Rajput rajas were placed in charge of strategic provinces, such as Agra, Ajmer and Gujarat, at various times. As high *grandees* of the empire, they were granted

jagirs in addition to their hereditary kingdoms, thus augmenting their resources.

Akbar's Rajput policy was continued by his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Jahangir, whose mother was a Rajput princess, had himself married a Kachhawaha princess as well as a Jodhpur princess. Princesses of the houses of Jaisalmer and Bikaner were also married to him. Jahangir gave the highest honour to the rulers of all these houses.

The main achievement of Jahangir, however, was the settlement of the outstanding dispute with Mewar. Rana Pratap had been succeeded by his son, Amar Singh. Akbar had sent a series of expeditions against Amar Singh in order to force him to accept his conditions. Jahangir himself was sent against him twice, but could achieve little. After his accession in 1605, Jahangir took up the matter energetically. Three successive campaigns were launched, but they could not break the Rana's will. In 1613, Jahangir himself reached Ajmer to direct the campaign. Prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan) was deputed with a large army to invade the mountainous parts of Mewar. The heavy pressure of the Mughal army, the depopulation of the country, and ruin of agriculture, at last produced their effect. Many sardars defected to the Mughals, the others pressed the Rana for peace. The Rana's son, Karan Singh, who was deputed to proceed to Jahangir's court was graciously received. Jahangir got up from the throne, embraced him in *darbar* and loaded him with gifts. To save the Rana's prestige, Jahangir did not insist upon the Rana's paying personal homage to him, and entering the royal service. Prince Karan was accorded the rank of 5000, which had been earlier accorded to the rulers of Jodhpur, Bikaner and Amber. He was to serve the Mughal emperor with a contingent

of 1500 sawars. All the territories of Mewar, including Chittor, were restored. But in view of the strategic importance of Chittor, it was stipulated that its fortifications would not be repaired.

Thus, Jahangir completed the task begun by Akbar, and further strengthened the alliance with the Rajputs

### Rebellions and Further Expansion of the Mughal Empire

The new system of administration introduced by Akbar, as described above, implied tightening of the administrative machinery, greater control over the nobles and more regard to the interests of the common people. It was, therefore, not to the liking of many nobles. Sentiments of regional independence were still strong, particularly in areas such as Gujarat, Bengal and Bihar, all of which had a long tradition of forming separate kingdoms. In Rajasthan, Rana Pratap's struggle for freedom was continuing apace. In this situation, Akbar had to deal with a series of rebellions. Gujarat remained in a state of unrest for two years due to a bid for freedom by a representative of the old ruling dynasty. The most serious rebellion during the period was in Bengal and Bihar which extended to Jaunpur. The main cause of the rebellion was the strict enforcement of the *dagh* system or branding of the horses of the jagirdars, and strict accounting of their income. The discontent was fanned by some religious divines who were unhappy at Akbar's liberal views, and at his policy of resuming the large revenue-free grants of land which had been obtained by them, sometimes illegally. Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, the ruler of Kabul, also abetted the rebellion and held out the hope of invading the Punjab at the suitable time in order to help. A large number of Afghans in

the eastern parts were sullen at the loss of the Afghan power and were ever ready to join a rebellion.

The rebellion kept the empire distracted for almost two years (1580-81), and Akbar was faced with a very difficult and delicate situation. Due to the mishandling of the situation by local officials, Bengal and almost the whole of Bihar passed into the hands of the rebels who proclaimed Mirza Hakim as their ruler. They even got a religious divine to issue a *fatwa*, calling on the faithful to take the field against Akbar.

Akbar did not lose his nerve. He despatched a force under Todar Mal against Bihar and Bengal, and another under Raja Man Singh to check the expected attack by Mirza Hakim. Todar Mal proceeded with great vigour and tact, and brought the situation in the east under control before Mirza Hakim's invasion took place. Mirza Hakim advanced on Lahore with 15,000 horses, but could not take the city due to the stout defence by Raja Man Singh and Bhagwan Das. His hopes that large numbers of nobles in the Punjab would rebel and join him were also belied. Meanwhile, Akbar marched on Lahore with a well-disciplined force of 50,000 horses. Mirza Hakim had no option but to beat a hasty retreat.

Akbar crowned his success by marching to Kabul (1581), the first time an Indian ruler had entered this historic town. Since Mirza Hakim refused to accept Akbar's suzerainty, or to come to pay personal allegiance to him, and the Indian nobles and soldiers were becoming restive, Akbar handed over Kabul to his sister, before returning to India. The handing over of the kingdom to a woman was symbolic of Akbar's broad-mindedness and liberalism.

Akbar's triumph over his opponents was not only a personal success, but also showed

that the new system was beginning to strike roots. Akbar was now free to think of the further expansion of his empire. He was drawn to the Deccan in which he had long been interested. But before he could do anything, the situation in the north-west claimed his attention again. Abdullah Khan Uzbek, the hereditary enemy of the Mughals, had been gradually gathering strength in Central Asia. In 1584, he overran Badakhshan which had been ruled by the Timurids. Kabul appeared to be next on the list. Both Mirza Hakim and the Timurid princes ousted from Badakhshan now appealed to Akbar for help. But before he could do anything, Mirza Hakim died due to excessive drinking, leaving Kabul in a state of disturbance.

Akbar now ordered Man Singh to march to Kabul, and himself moved to attack on the river Indus. In order to block all roads to the Uzbeks, he sent expeditions against Kashmir (1586), and against Baluchistan. The whole of Kashmir, including Ladakh and Baltistan (called Tibet Khurd and Tibet Buzurg), came under Mughal domination, a daughter of the chief of Baltistan being married to the young Salim. Expeditions were also sent to clear the Khyber Pass which had been blocked by rebellious tribesmen. In an expedition against them, Raja Birbal, the favourite of Akbar, lost his life. But the Afghan tribesmen were gradually forced to submit.

The consolidation of the north-west and fixing a scientific frontier of the empire were two of the major contributions of Akbar. His conquest of Sindh (1590) also opened the Punjab for trade down the river Indus. Akbar stayed at Lahore till 1598 when the death of Abdullah Uzbek finally removed the threat from the side of the Uzbeks.

After settling the affairs of the north-west, Akbar turned his attention towards the affairs

of eastern and western India and the Deccan. Orissa, which was at the time under the domination of Afghan chiefs, was conquered by Raja Man Singh who was the Mughal governor of Bengal. Man Singh also conquered Cooch-Bihar and parts of east Bengal, including Dacca. Mirza Aziz Koka, the foster-brother of Akbar, conquered Kathiawar in the west. Khan-i-Khanan Munim Khan was deputed to the Deccan along with prince Murad. The developments in the Deccan would be dealt with in a separate chapter. Suffice it to say here that by the turn of the century, Mughal control had been extended up to Ahmadnagar, bringing the Mughals into direct contact with the Marathas for the first time.

Thus the political integration of north India had been achieved by the turn of the century, and the Mughals had started the penetration of the Deccan. But what was even more important, the cultural and emotional integration of the people within this vast empire had developed apace.

### Towards Integration

We have seen how, during the fifteenth century, a number of rulers in different parts of the country had tried to promote greater understanding between the Hindus and the Muslims by having secular and religious literature in Sanskrit translated into Persian, by giving patronage to local languages and literature, by adopting a more liberal policy of religious toleration and, in some cases, by giving important jobs, including service at the court and in the army, to the Hindus. We have also seen how a remarkable series of popular saints, such as Chaitanya, Kabir and Nanak, in different parts of the country emphasised the essential unity of Islam and Hinduism, and laid stress on a religion based on love and devotion rather than one based on works or a

literal interpretation of revealed books. They thus created the atmosphere in which liberal sentiments and views could grow and religious narrowness was looked down upon. This was the atmosphere in which Akbar was born and reared.

One of the first actions which Akbar took, after he had taken power in his own hands, was to abolish the poll tax or *jizyah* which the non-Muslims were required to pay in a Muslim state. Although it was not a heavy tax, it was disliked because it made a distinction between subject and subject. At the same time, Akbar abolished the pilgrim-tax on bathing at holy places such as Prayag, Banaras, etc. He also abolished the practice of forcibly converting prisoners of war to Islam. This laid the essential foundation of an empire based on equal rights to all citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs.

The liberal principles of the empire were strengthened by bringing able Hindus into the nobility. While most of these were Rajput rajas, many of whom entered into matrimonial relations with Akbar, and with whom he had established a personal relationship, *mansabs* were given to others also on the basis of their competence. Among the latter, the ablest and the most well-known were Todar Mal, an expert in revenue affairs, who rose to the post of *diwan*, and Birbal, who was a favourite of the emperor.

Akbar's attitude towards his Hindu subjects is closely linked with his views of how a sovereign should behave towards his subjects. These views which have been carefully explained by Akbar's biographer, Abul Fazl, were an amalgam of Timurid, Persian and Indian ideas of sovereignty. According to Abul Fazl, the office of a true ruler was a very responsible one which depended on divine illumination (*Farr-i-izadi*). Hence, no one could stand

between God and a true ruler. A true ruler was distinguished by a paternal love towards his subjects without distinction of sect or creed, a large heart so that the wishes of great and small are attended to, prayer and devotion and a daily increasing trust in God who is considered as the real ruler. It was also the duty of the ruler to maintain equilibrium in society by not allowing people of one rank or profession to interfere in the duties and obligations of another. All these together constituted what has been called the policy of *sulh-kul* or peace to all.

From the beginning, Akbar was deeply interested in religion and philosophy. At the outset, Akbar was an orthodox Muslim. He paid great deference to the leading *qazi* of the state, Abdun Nabi Khan, who held the post of *sadr-us-sadr* and, on one occasion, even carried his slippers for him. But by the time Akbar reached adulthood, mysticism which was being preached in the length and breadth of the country, began to influence him. We are told that he spent whole nights in thoughts of God, continually pronounced His name, and for a feeling of thankfulness for his success, he would sit many a morning alone in prayer and contemplation on a large flat stone of an old building near his palace in Agra. Gradually, he turned away from the path of narrow orthodoxy. He had already abolished the *jizyah* and pilgrim-tax, as we have seen. He gathered at the court a band of talented people with liberal ideas. The most noted among these were Abul Fazl and his brother Faizi who, along with their father who was a noted scholar had been persecuted by the *mullahs* for having sympathy with Mahdawi ideas. Another was a brahmana, Mahesh Das, who was given the title of Raja Birbal, and was a constant companion of Akbar.

In 1575, Akbar built a hall called *Ibadat*

Khana or the Hall of Prayer at his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri. To this he called selected theologians, mystics and those of his courtiers and nobles who were known for their scholarship and intellectual attainments. Akbar discussed religious and spiritual topics with them. He frequently said, "My sole object, oh wise mullahs, is to ascertain truth, to find out and disclose the principles of genuine religion." The proceedings, at first, were confined to the Muslims. They were hardly orderly. The mullahs wrangled, shouted, and abused each other even in the presence of the emperor. The behaviour of the mullahs, their pride and conceit in their learning disgusted Akbar, and further alienated him from the mullahs.

At this stage, Akbar opened the Ibadat Khana to people of all religions—Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Jains, even atheists. This broadened the discussions, and even issues on which all Muslims were agreed, such as whether the *Quran* was the last revealed book and Muhammad its prophet, resurrection, nature of God, began to be debated. This horrified the theologians, and all kinds of rumours began to circulate about Akbar's desire to forsake Islam. As a modern writer says, "The patience and open-mindedness of Akbar was construed in a variety of ways by persons of different faiths. Instead of bringing credit, the Ibadat Khana brought growing discredit."

At this time, an enquiry was conducted into the affairs of the Chief *Sadr*, Abdun Nabi, who was found to be extremely corrupt and tyrannical in his dealings in the distribution of charitable lands (*madad-i-mash*). He had amassed wealth in other corrupt and mean ways as well. He was a bigot and had inflicted the punishment of death on the Shias, and on a brahmana of Mathura for their beliefs. At first, Abdun Nabi was shorn of his power, and *sadrs* were appointed in every province for distributing

charitable lands. Soon he was dismissed and ordered to proceed to Mecca for *haj*. At about the same time, in 1579-80, a rebellion broke out in the east. A number of *fatwas* were given by the *qazis*, declaring Akbar to be a heretic. Akbar suppressed the rebellion and gave drastic punishment to the *qazis*.

To further strengthen his position in dealing with the mullahs, Akbar also issued a Declaration or *mahzar* which asserted that if there were conflicting views among those (*muytahids*) who were considered fit to interpret the *Quran*, Akbar, by virtue of being "a most just and wise king", and his rank being higher in the eyes of God than of the *muytahids*, was entitled to choose any one of the interpretations, which would be of "benefit to the nation and in the interests of good order." Further, if Akbar issued a new order "in conformity with the *Quran* and calculated to benefit the nation", all should be bound by it.

The Declaration which was signed by the leading *ulamas* has been wrongly called a "Decree of Infallibility". Akbar claimed the right to choose only when there was a difference of opinion among those qualified to interpret the *Quran*. At a time when there were bloody conflicts between the Shias, the Sunnis and the Mahdawis in different parts of the country, Akbar wanted the widest religious toleration. There is little doubt that the *mahzar* had a salutary effect in stabilising the religious situation in the Empire.

But Akbar was less successful in his effort to find a meeting place between the votaries of different religions in the country. The debates in the Ibadat Khana had not led to a better understanding between different religions, but to greater bitterness, as the representatives of each religion denounced the other and tried to prove that their religion was superior to others. Hence, in 1582, Akbar discontinued the

debates in the Ibadat Khana. But he did not give up his quest for truth. Even his bitter critic, Badayuni, says: "Night and day people did nothing but inquire and investigate" Akbar invited Purushottam and Devi to expound the doctrines of Hinduism, and Maharji Rana to explain the doctrines of Zoroastrianism. He met some Portuguese priests and in order to understand the Christian doctrines better, he sent an embassy to Goa, requesting them to send two learned missionaries to his court. The Portuguese sent Aquaviva and Monserrate who remained at Akbar's court for almost three years and have left a valuable account of it. But their hope of converting Akbar to Christianity never had any basis. Akbar came into touch with the Jains also and, at his instance, the leading Jain saint of Kathiawar, Hira Vijaya Suri spent a couple of years at Akbar's court.

Contacts with leaders of various religions, reading of their learned works, meetings with the Sufi saints and yogis gradually convinced Akbar that while there were differences of sect and creed, all religions had a number of good points which were obscured in the heat of controversy. He felt that if the good points of various religions were emphasised, an atmosphere of harmony and amity would prevail which would be for the good of the country. Further, he felt that behind all the multiplicity of names and forms, there was but one God. As Badayuni observed, as a result of all the influences which were brought to bear on His Majesty, "there grew gradually as the outline of a stone, the conviction in his heart that there were some sensible men in all religions. If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion?"

Badayuni asserts that as a result of this, Akbar gradually turned away from Islam and set up a new religion which was compounded

of many existing religions—Hinduism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, etc. However, modern historians are not inclined to accept this view, and think that Badayuni has exaggerated. There is little evidence to prove that Akbar intended or actually promulgated a new religion. The word used by Abul Fazl and Badayuni for the so-called new path was *tauhid-i Ilahi* which literally means "Divine Monotheism". The word *Din* or faith was not applied to it till 80 years later. The *tauhid-i-Ilahi* was really an order of the Sufistic type. Those who were willing to join and those whom the emperor approved were allowed to become members. Sunday was fixed as the day for initiation. The novice placed his head at the feet of the emperor who raised him up, and gave him the formula, called *shast* in the Sufi language, which he was to repeat and concentrate upon. This contained Akbar's favourite motto "Allah-o-Akbar" or God is great. The initiates were to abstain from meat as far as possible, at least in the month of their birth, give a sumptuous feast and give alms on their birthday. There were no sacred books or scriptures, no priestly class, no place of worship or rituals and ceremonies, except the initiation. Badayuni says that the members had four grades of devotion, viz., sacrifice of property, life, honour and religion. These, again, were like the grades a Sufi passed. Giving up religion, apparently meant giving up attachment to the narrow concepts and observances which, again, was in keeping with Sufi ideas. Akbar did not use force nor was money used for making disciples. In fact, many leading nobles, including all the great Hindu nobles except Birbal, declined to join.

The number of persons who actually joined the order was small, many of them consisting of personal favourites of Akbar. Thus the

order was not expected to play an important political role. In any case, by the time the order was instituted, Akbar had consolidated his internal position, and such an artificial prop was hardly necessary. What, then, were Akbar's motives? Historians have different views in the matter. Badayuni ascribed it to Akbar's head being turned by many unworthy flatterers and panegyrists who suggested to him that he was the *insan-i-kamil* or the "Perfect Man" of the age. It was at their instance that Akbar initiated the ceremony of *pabos* or kissing the floor before the sovereign, a ceremony which was previously reserved for God. There were many precedents of rulers combining temporal and spiritual powers in their person and Abul Fazl says that it was natural for people to turn to their ruler for spiritual guidance and that Akbar was well qualified to lead the people to spiritual bliss and to establish harmony among warring creeds.

Whatever may have been Akbar's motives, the *tauhid-i-Ilahi* virtually died with him. The practice of giving a *shast* to the initiates was continued for some time by Jahangir also. But soon it was discontinued. However, the habit of looking upon the king as someone having miraculous powers, so that people could be cured by the king's touch, or by his breathing upon a pot of water, continued, and even a strict ruler such as Aurangzeb could not shake off this belief.

Akbar tried to emphasise the concept of *sulh-kul* or peace and harmony among religions in other ways as well. He set up a big translation department for translating works in Sanskrit, Arabic, Greek, etc., into Persian.

Thus the *Singhan Battisi*, the *Atharva-Veda* and the *Bible* were taken up first for translation. These were followed by the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*. Many others, including the *Pancha tantra* and works of geography, were also translated. The *Quran* was also translated, perhaps for the first time.

Akbar also introduced a number of social and educational reforms. He stopped *sati*, the burning of a widow, unless she herself, of her own free will, persistently desired it. Widows of tender age who had not shared the bed with their husbands were not to be burnt at all. Widow remarriage was also legalised. Akbar was against anyone having more than one wife unless the first wife was barren. The age of marriage was raised to 14 for girls and 16 for boys. The sale of wines and spirits was restricted. Not all these steps were, however, successful. As we know, the success of social legislation depends largely on the willing cooperation of the people. Akbar was living in an age of superstition and it seems that his social reforms had only limited success.

Akbar also revised the educational syllabus, laying more emphasis on moral education and mathematics, and on secular subjects such as agriculture, geometry, astronomy, rules of government, logic, history, etc. He also gave patronage to artists, poets, painters and musicians so much so, that his court became famous for the galaxy of famous people there or the *navaratna*.

Thus, under Akbar, the state became essentially secular, liberal and enlightened in social matters, and a promoter of cultural integration.

### EXERCISES

1. Discuss the problems faced by Akbar during the early years of his reign. What steps did he take to overcome those problems?

2. Describe the land revenue administration of the Mughal empire during Akbar's reign.
3. What is meant by the *mansabdari* system ? Describe its main features.
4. How was the organization of nobility under Akbar different from that under the sultans of Delhi ?
5. How were the central and provincial governments organised during Akbar's reign ? Who were the chief officers of the government at the local, provincial and central levels ?
6. What were the main features of Akbar's policy towards the Rajput kingdoms ? How far did it succeed ? Discuss.
7. Discuss the contribution of Akbar to the political unification of north India.
8. Describe the evolution of Akbar's religious ideas. Explain the concept of *sulh-kul* and its significance.

## CHAPTER XIV

# The Deccan and South India (up to 1656)

WE HAVE mentioned in an earlier chapter that following the break-up of the Bahmani kingdom, three powerful states, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda emerged on the scene, and that they combined to crush Vijayanagara at the battle of Bannihatti, near Talikota, in 1565. After the victory, the Deccani states resumed their old ways. Both Ahmadnagar and Bijapur claimed Sholapur which was a rich and fertile tract. Neither wars nor marriage alliances between the two could resolve the issue. Both the states had the ambition of conquering Bidar. Ahmadnagar also wanted to annex Berar in the north. In fact, as the descendants of the old Bahmani rulers, the Nizam Shahs claimed a superior, if not a hegemonistic position in the Deccan. Their claim was contested not only by Bijapur, but also by the rulers of Gujarat who had their eyes on the rich Konkan area, in addition to Berar. The Gujarat rulers actively aided Berar against Ahmadnagar, and even engaged in war against Ahmadnagar in order that the existing balance of power in the Deccan was not upset. Bijapur and Golconda clashed over the possession of Naldurg.

The Mughal conquest of Gujarat in 1572 created a new situation. The conquest of

Gujarat could have been a prelude to the Mughal conquest of the Deccan. But Akbar was busy elsewhere and did not want, at that stage, to interfere in the Deccan affairs. Ahmadnagar took advantage of the situation to annex Berar. In fact, Ahmadnagar and Bijapur came to an agreement whereby Bijapur was left free to expand its dominions in the south at the expense of Vijayanagara, while Ahmadnagar overran Berar. Golconda, too, was interested in extending its territories at the cost of Vijayanagara.

All the Deccani states were, thus, expansionists

Another feature of the situation was the growing importance of the Marathas in the affairs of the Deccan. As we have seen, the Maratha troops had always been employed as loose auxiliaries or *bargis* (usually called *bargis*) in the Bahmani kingdom. The revenue affairs at the local level were in the hands of the Deccani brahmanas. Some of the old Maratha families which rose in the service of the Bahmani rulers and held *mansabs* and jagirs from them were the More, Nimbalkar, Ghatge, etc. Most of them were powerful zamindars or *deshmukhs* as they were

called in the Deccan. However, unlike the Rajputs, none of them was an independent ruler, or ruled over a large kingdom. Secondly, they were not the leaders of clans on whose backing and support they could depend. Hence, many of the Maratha sardars appear to have been military adventurers who were prepared to shift their loyalty according to the prevailing wind. Nevertheless, the Marathas formed the backbone of the landed aristocracy of the Deccan and had a position similar to the one held by the Rajputs in large parts of north India. During the middle of the sixteenth century, the rulers of the Deccan states embarked upon a definite policy of winning over the Marathas to their side. The Maratha chiefs were accorded service and positions in all the three leading states of the Deccan. Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur who ascended the throne in 1555 was the leading advocate of this policy. It is said that he entertained 30,000 Maratha auxiliaries (*bargis*) in his army, and showed great favour to the Marathas in the revenue system. He is supposed to have introduced Marathi in revenue accounts at all levels. Apart from increasing his favours to old families, a few other families such as the Bhonsales who had the family name of Ghorpade, the Daffles (or Chavans), etc., also rose to prominence in Bijapur as a result of this policy. Maharashtrian brahmanas were regularly used for diplomatic negotiations as well. Thus the title of Peshwa was accorded to a brahmana, Kankoji Narsi, by the rulers of Ahmadnagar. Marathas played an important role in the states of Ahmadnagar and Golconda as well.

It will thus be seen that the policy of allying with local landed and military classes had been initiated by the Deccan rulers even before such a policy was implemented by the Mughals under Akbar.

### Mughal Advance Towards the Deccan

It was logical to expect a Mughal advance towards the Deccan after the consolidation of the empire in north India. Although the Vindhya divided the north and the south, it was not an insurmountable barrier. Travellers, merchandise, pilgrims and wandering saints had always passed between the north and the south, making the two culturally one, though each had its own distinctive cultural features. The conquest of the Deccan by the Tughlaqs and the improved communications between the north and the south had led to a strengthening of the commercial and cultural relations between the two. After the decline of the Delhi Sultanat, many Sufi saints and persons in search of employment had migrated to the court of the Bahmani rulers. Politically also, the north and south were not isolated. As we have seen, the rulers of Gujarat and Malwa in the west, and Orissa in the east had been continually involved in the politics of south India. Hence, after the conquest of Malwa and Gujarat in the 60's and early 70's, the Mughals could hardly have kept themselves aloof from Deccan politics. In 1576, a Mughal army invaded Khandesh, and compelled the rulers of Khandesh to submit. However, urgent matters called Akbar elsewhere. For twelve years, between 1586 and 1598, Akbar lived at Lahore, watching the north-western situation. In the interval, affairs in the Deccan deteriorated.

The Deccan was a seething cauldron of politics. War between the various Deccan states was a frequent occurrence. The death of a ruler often led to factional fights among the nobles, with each party trying to act as king-maker. In this, hostility between the Deccanis and the Newcomers (*afaqis* or *gharibs*) found free play. Among the Deccanis, too, the Habshis (Abyssinians or Africans) and Afghans formed separate groups. These

groups and factions had little contact with the life and culture of the people of the region. The process of the assimilation of the Marathas into the military and political system of the Deccani states which had started earlier did not make much headway. The rulers and the nobles, therefore, commanded little loyalty from the people.

The situation was worsened by sectarian conflicts and controversies. Towards the beginning of the century, Shiism became the state religion of Iran under a new dynasty called the Safavid dynasty. Shiism had been a suppressed sect for a long time, and in the first flush of enthusiasm, the votaries of the new sect indulged in a good deal of persecution of their erstwhile opponents. As a result, members of many eminent families fled to India and sought shelter at the court of Akbar who made no distinction between Shias and Sunnis. Some of the Deccani states, notably Golconda, adopted Shiism as a state religion. At the courts of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, too, the Shiite party was strong, but was able to prevail only from time to time. This resulted in heightened party strife.

Mahdawi ideas had also spread widely in the Deccan. The Muslims believed that in every epoch a man from the family of the Prophet will make an appearance and will strengthen the religion, and make justice triumph. Such a person was called the Mahdi. Although many Mahdis had appeared in different countries at different times, the end of the first millennium of Islam which was due towards the end of the sixteenth century had raised expectations throughout the Islamic world. In India, one Saiyid Muhammad, who was born at Jaunpur in the first half of the fifteenth century, proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi. Saiyid Muhammad travelled widely all over India and in the Islamic world, and created great enthu-

siasm. He established his *dairas* (circles) in different parts of the country, including the Deccan where his ideas found a fertile soil. The orthodox elements were as bitterly opposed to Mahdawism as to Shiism, though there was no love lost between the two. It was in this context that Akbar had put forward the concept of *sulh-kul*. He was afraid that the bitter sectarian rivalries prevailing in the Deccani states would spill over into the Mughal empire.

Akbar was also apprehensive of the growing power of the Portuguese. The Portuguese had been interfering in pilgrim traffic to Mecca, not sparing the royal ladies. In their territories, they were carrying on proselytizing activities which Akbar disliked. They were constantly trying to expand their positions on the mainland, and had even tried to lay their hand on Surat which was saved by the timely arrival of a Mughal commander. Akbar apparently felt that the coordination and pooling of the resources of the Deccani states under Mughal supervision would check, if not eliminate, the Portuguese danger.

These were some of the factors which impelled Akbar to involve himself in the Deccani affairs.

#### **Conquest of Berar, Ahmadnagar and Khandesh**

Akbar claimed suzerainty over the entire country. He was, therefore, keen that like the Rajputs, the rulers of the Deccani states should acknowledge his suzerainty. Embassies sent by him earlier suggesting that the Deccani states recognise his power and be friends with him, did not, however, produce any positive results. It was obvious that the Deccani states would not accept Mughal suzerainty till the Mughals were in a position to exert military pressure on them.

In 1591, Akbar launched a diplomatic

offensive. He sent embassies to all the Deccani states inviting them to accept Mughal suzerainty. As might have been expected, none of the states accepted this offer, the only exception being Khandesh which was too near and exposed to the Mughals to resist. Burhan, the ruler of Ahmadnagar, was rude to the Mughal envoy; the others only made promises of friendship. It seemed that Akbar was on the verge of making a definite move in the Deccan. The necessary opportunity was provided to him when factional fighting broke out among the Nizam Shahi nobles following the death of Burhan in 1595. There were four candidates for the throne, backed by different parties. The strongest claim was that of Bahadur, son of the deceased ruler. Ibrahim Adil Shah II, the ruler of Bijapur was inclined to support his claim. Chand Bibi who was the sister of Burhan, was the widow of the former ruler of Bijapur who was Ibrahim's uncle. She was a remarkable woman and had virtually ruled the state for almost ten years when Ibrahim Adil Shah was a minor. She had gone to Ahmadnagar to condole, and took up with vigour the cause of her nephew. It was against this background that the leader of the rival party, the Deccanis, invited the Mughals to intervene. The struggle which now began was really a struggle between Bijapur and the Mughals for the domination of Ahmadnagar state.

The Mughal invasion was led by prince Murad, who was the governor of Gujarat, and by Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan. The ruler of Khandesh was asked to cooperate. Due to factional fights among the Ahmadnagar nobles, the Mughals encountered little opposition till they reached the capital, Ahmadnagar. Chand Bibi shut herself up in the fort with the boy-king, Bahadur. After a close siege of four months in which Chand Bibi played a valiant

role, the two sides came to an agreement. It was agreed to cede Berar to the Mughals in return for their recognition of the claim of Bahadur. Mughal suzerainty was also recognised. This was in 1596.

The Mughal annexation of Berar alarmed the Deccani states. They felt, not without reason, that Berar would give the Mughals a permanent foothold in the Deccan which could be enlarged upon at any time. Hence, they sided with Ahmadnagar and created obstacles in the Mughals taking possession of Berar. Soon, a combined force of Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar led by a Bijapur commander invaded Berar in strength. In a hard-fought battle in 1597, the Mughals defeated a Deccani force three times their number. The Bijapuri and Golconda forces now withdrew, leaving Chand Bibi alone to meet the situation. Although Chand Bibi was in favour of observing the treaty of 1596, she could not stop harassing attacks on the Mughals in Berar by her nobles. This resulted in a second Mughal siege of Ahmadnagar. In the absence of any help from any quarter, Chand Bibi opened negotiations with the Mughals. She was, however, accused of treachery by a hostile faction and murdered. Thus ended the life of one of the most romantic figures in Deccani politics. The Mughals now assaulted and captured Ahmadnagar. The boy-king, Bahadur, was sent to the fortress of Gwalior. Balaghat, too, was added to the empire and a Mughal garrison was stationed at Ahmadnagar. This was in 1600.

The fall of Ahmadnagar and the capture of Bahadur Nizam Shah did not solve Akbar's problems in the Deccan. There was now no Nizam Shahi prince or noble with sufficient standing to negotiate with. At the same time, the Mughals were not inclined to advance

beyond Ahmadnagar, or try to seize all the remaining territories of the state. The situation became further confused due to constant wrangling among the Mughal commanders.

To study the situation on the spot, Akbar advanced into Malwa and then into Khandesh. There he learnt that the new ruler of Khandesh had not shown due respect to prince Daniyal when he had passed through his territory on his way to Ahmadnagar. Akbar was also keen to secure the fort of Asirgarh in Khandesh which was reputed to be the strongest fort in the Deccan. After a tight siege, and when a pestilence had broken out, the ruler came out and surrendered (1601). Khandesh was incorporated in the Mughal empire.

After the capture of Asirgarh, Akbar returned to the north to deal with the rebellion of his son, Salim. Although the conquest of Khandesh, Berar and Balaghat, and Mughal control over the fort of Ahmadnagar were substantial achievements, the Mughals had yet to consolidate their position. Akbar was conscious that no lasting solution to the Deccan problem could be arrived at without an agreement with Bijapur. He, therefore, sent messages of assurances to Ibrahim Adil Shah II, who offered to marry off his daughter to prince Daniyal, the youngest son of Akbar. But soon after the marriage (1602), the prince died of excessive drinking. Thus the situation in the Deccan remained nebulous, and had to be tackled by Akbar's successor, Jahangir.

#### **Rise of Malik Ambar and Frustration of Mughal Attempt at Consolidation**

After the fall of Ahmadnagar and capture of Bahadur Nizam Shah by the Mughals, the state of Ahmadnagar would have disintegrated and different parts of it would have, in all probability, been swallowed up by the neighbouring states but for the rise of a remarkable

man, Malik Ambar. Malik Ambar was an Abyssinian, born in Ethiopia. We do not know much about his early life and career. It seems that his poor parents sold him at the slave market of Baghdad. In course of time, he was purchased by a merchant who treated him well and brought him to the Deccan which was a land of promise. Malik Ambar rose in the service of Changez Khan, one of the famous and influential nobles of Murtaza Nizam Shah. When the Mughals invaded Ahmadnagar, Ambar at first went to Bijapur to try his luck there. But he soon came back and enrolled himself in the powerful Habshi (Abyssinian) party which was opposed to Chand Bibi. After the fall of Ahmadnagar, Malik Ambar found a Nizam Shahi prince and with the tacit support of the ruler of Bijapur, set him up as Murtaza Nizam Shah II, with himself as the Peshwa—a title which had been common in Ahmadnagar much earlier. Malik Ambar gathered around him a large band of Maratha troopers or *bargis*. The Marathas were adept in rapid movements, and in plundering and cutting off the supplies of the enemy troops. Although this guerilla mode of warfare was traditional with the Marathas in the Deccan, the Mughals were not used to it. With the help of the Marathas, Ambar made it difficult for the Mughals to consolidate their position in Berar, Ahmadnagar and Balaghat.

The Mughal commander in the Deccan at the time was Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, a shrewd and wily politician and an able soldier. He inflicted a crushing defeat on Ambar in 1601 in Telingana at a place called Nander. However, he decided to make friends with Ambar since he considered it desirable that there should be some stability in the remaining Nizam Shahi kingdom. In his turn, Ambar also found it useful to cultivate the friendship of the Khan-i-Khanan since it enabled him to

deal with his internal rivals. However, after the death of Akbar, when the position of the Mughals in the Deccan became weak due to differences among the Mughal commanders, Ambar unleashed a fierce campaign to expel the Mughals from Berar, Balaghat and Ahmadnagar. In this enterprise he was helped by Ibrahim Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, who considered it necessary that the Nizam Shahi state should continue as a buffer between Bijapur and the Mughals. He gave Ambar the powerful fort of Qandhar in Telingana for the residence of his family and for storing treasures, provisions, etc. He also sent him 10,000 horsemen for whose support a definite tract of territory was to be set apart. The treaty was cemented by a marriage alliance between the daughter of one of the leading Ethiopian nobles of Bijapur with Malik Ambar. The marriage was celebrated in 1609 with great rejoicing, the Adil Shah giving a handsome dowry to the bride and spending about Rs. 80,000 on fireworks alone.

Fortified with the support of Bijapur, and with the active aid of the Marathas, Ambar soon forced Khan-i-Khanan to retreat to Burhanpur. Thus, by 1610, all the gains in the Deccan made by Akbar were lost. Although Jahangir sent prince Parvez to the Deccan with a large army, he could not meet the challenge posed by Malik Ambar. Even Ahmadnagar was lost, and Parvez had to conclude a disgraceful peace with Ambar.

The affairs of Malik Ambar continued to prosper and the Mughals were not able to reassert themselves as long as he had the solid support of the Marathas and other elements in the Deccan. But in course of time, Malik Ambar became arrogant and alienated his allies. The Khan-i-Khanan, who had again been posted as the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan, took advantage of the situation and

won over to his side a number of Habshis and Maratha nobles such as Jagdev Rai, Babaji Kate, Udaji Ram, etc. Jahangir himself was well aware of the value of the Marathas, for he observed in his *Memoirs* that the Marathas "are a hardy lot and (who) are the centre of resistance in that country". With the help of the Maratha sardars, the Khan-i-Khanan inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined forces of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda in 1616. The Mughals occupied the new Nizam Shahi capital, Khirki, and burnt all its buildings before they left. This defeat shook the Deccani alliance against the Mughals. However, Ambar did not relax his efforts. To complete the Khan-i-Khanan's victory, Jahangir sent a grand army under his son, prince Khurram (later Shah Jahan) and himself moved to Mandu to support the prince (1618). Faced with this threat, Ambar had no option but to submit. It is significant, however, that in the treaty Jahangir did not try to enlarge the conquest made by Akbar in the Deccan. This was not due to any military weakness on the part of Jahangir, as has been sometimes imagined, but due to deliberate policy. Apparently, Jahangir did not want to extend Mughal commitments in the Deccan, or become too deeply embroiled in its affairs. Moreover, he was till hopeful that his moderation would enable the Deccani states to settle down, and live in peace with the Mughals. As a part of his policy, Jahangir tried to win over Bijapur to his side, and sent a gracious *farman* to Adil Shah calling him 'son'.

Despite these reverses, Ambar continued to lead the Deccani resistance against the Mughals and there was no peace in the Deccan. However, two years later, the combined Deccani forces again suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Mughals. Ambar had to restore

all the Mughal territories, and another 14 kos of adjoining territory. The Deccani states had to pay an indemnity of Rs. 5,000,000. The credit for these victories was given to prince Shah Jahan.

This second defeat, coming so soon after the first, finally shattered the united front of the Deccani states against the Mughals. The old rivalries among the Deccani states were now resumed. Ambar conducted a series of campaigns against Bijapur for the recovery of Sholapur which was a bone of contention between the two states. By a rapid movement Ambar reached the Bijapur capital, burnt the new capital of Naurasapur built by Ibrahim Adil Shah, and forced him to flee for shelter to the fort. This might be regarded the climax of Ambar's power.

Although Ambar showed a remarkable military skill, energy and determination, his achievements were short-lived due to his inability or unwillingness to come to terms with the Mughals. The chief significance of the rise of Ambar, however, is that it represented a clear recognition of the importance of the Marathas in Deccani affairs. The success of the Marathas under the leadership of Malik Ambar gave them confidence which enabled them to play an independent role later on.

Malik Ambar tried to improve the administration of the Nizam Shahi state by introducing Todarmal's system of land revenue. He abolished the old system of giving land on contract (*ijara*) which was ruinous for the peasants, and adopted the *zabti* system.

After 1622, when the Deccan was in turmoil due to the rebellion of prince Shah Jahan against Jahangir, Malik Ambar was able to recover once again many of the old territories which had been ceded to the Mughals. Jahangir's attempt at consolidating the Mughal

position in the Deccan was, thus, frustrated. However, the long-range benefits to Ahmadnagar for reopening the dispute with the Mughals may be considered doubtful. It led to the situation in which Shah Jahan decided that he had no alternative but to extinguish Ahmadnagar as an independent state. Malik Ambar breathed his last in 1626 at the ripe age of 80. But the bitter fruits of his legacy had to be reaped by his successors.

#### Extinction of Ahmadnagar, and Acceptance of Mughal Suzerainty by Bijapur and Golconda

Shah Jahan ascended the throne in 1627. Having commanded two expeditions to the Deccan as a prince and spent a considerable period in the Deccan during his rebellion against his father, Shah Jahan had much experience and personal knowledge of the Deccan and its politics.

Shah Jahan's first concern as a ruler was to recover the territories in the Deccan which had been lost to the Nizam Shahi ruler. For the purpose, he deputed an old and experienced noble, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi. However, Khan-i-Jahan Lodi failed in the enterprise, and was recalled to the court. Shortly afterwards, he rebelled and joined the Nizam Shah who deputed him to expel the Mughals from the remaining portions of Berar and Balaghat. Giving asylum to a leading Mughal noble in this manner was a challenge which Shah Jahan could not ignore. It was clear that even after Malik Ambar's death, his policy of refusing to recognise the Mughal position in Berar and Balaghat was being continued by the Nizam Shahi ruler. Shah Jahan, therefore, came to the conclusion that there could be no peace for the Mughals in the Deccan as long as Ahmadnagar continued as an independent state. This was a major departure from the policy which had been followed by Akbar and Jahangir. How-

ever, Shah Jahan was not keen to extend Mughal territories in the Deccan beyond what was absolutely necessary. He, therefore, wrote to the Bijapur ruler offering to cede to him roughly one-third of the Ahmadnagar state if he would cooperate with the Mughals in the projected campaign against Ahmadnagar. This was a shrewd move on the part of Shah Jahan to isolate Ahmadnagar diplomatically and militarily. He also sent feelers to the various Maratha sardars to join Mughal service.

At first, Shah Jahan was successful in his overtures. Malik Ambar had defeated and killed some prominent Bijapur nobles during his campaigns. The Adil Shah also was smarting at the humiliation of the burning of Nauraspur and the annexation of Sholapur by Malik Ambar. He, therefore, accepted Shah Jahan's proposal, and posted an army at the Nizam Shahi border to cooperate with the Mughals. Around this time, Jadhav Rao, a prominent Maratha noble who had defected to the side of the Mughals during the reign of Jahangir but had gone back to the service of the Nizam Shah, was treacherously murdered on a charge of conspiring with the Mughals. As a result, Shahji Bhonsale, who was his son-in-law (and the father of Shivaji) defected to the Mughal side along with his relations. Shah Jahan accorded him a *mansab* of 5000, and gave him jagirs in the Poona region. A number of other prominent Maratha sardars also joined Shah Jahan.

In 1629, Shah Jahan deputed large armies against Ahmadnagar, one of them to operate in the west in the Balaghat region, and the other in the east in the Telingana region. The emperor himself moved to Burhanpur to coordinate their movements. Under relentless pressure, large parts of the Ahmadnagar state were brought under Mughal occupation. Pargana, one of the last outposts of

the kingdom, was besieged. The Nizam Shah now sent a piteous appeal to the Adil Shah, stating that most of the kingdom was under Mughal occupation, and if Pargana fell it would mean the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty, after which, he warned, would come the turn of Bijapur. A strong group at the Bijapur court had been uneasy at the steady Mughal advance in Ahmadnagar. In fact, the Bijapuri forces at the border had merely watched the situation, taking no active part in the Mughal operations. The Mughals, on their part, had refused to hand over to the Adil Shah the areas allotted to him under the agreement. As a result, the Adil Shah made a somersault and decided to help the Nizam Shah who agreed to surrender Sholapur to him. This turn in the political situation compelled the Mughals to raise the siege of Pargana, and to retreat. However, the internal situation in Ahmadnagar now turned in favour of the Mughals. Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar, had recently been appointed Peshwa by the Nizam Shah in the hope that he would be able to induce Shah Jahan to make peace. Instead, Fath Khan opened secret negotiations with Shah Jahan and at his instance, murdered the Nizam Shah, and put a puppet on the throne. He also read the *khutba*, and struck the *siaka* in the name of the Mughal emperor. As a reward, Fath Khan was taken in Mughal service, and the jagir around Poona previously allotted to Shahji was transferred to him. As a result, Shahji defected from the Mughal side. These events took place in 1631.

After the surrender of Fath Khan, Shah Jahan appointed Mahabat Khan as Mughal viceroy of the Deccan and himself returned to Agra. Mahabat Khan faced with the combined opposition of Bijapur and the local Nizam Shah nobles including Shahji, found himself in a very difficult situation. Pargana

surrendered to Bijapur which made a strong bid for the fort of Daulatabad as well by offering a large sum of money to Fath Khan for surrendering the fort. Elsewhere also, the Mughals found it difficult to hold on to their positions.

It will thus be seen that the Mughals and Bijapur were, in reality, engaged in a contest for dividing the prostrate body of Ahmadnagar between themselves. The Adil Shah sent a large army under Randaula Khan and Murari Pandit for the surrender of Daulatabad and for provisioning its garrison. Shahji also was enrolled in Bijapur's service to harass the Mughals and cut off their supplies. But the combined operations of the Bijapuri forces and Shahji were of no avail. Mahabat Khan closely invested Daulatabad, and forced the garrison to surrender (1633). The Nizam Shah was sent to prison in Gwalior. This marked the end of the Nizam Shahi dynasty. However, even this did not solve the problems facing the Mughals. Following the example of Malik Ambar, Shahji found a Nizam Shahi prince, and raised him up as ruler. The Adil Shah sent a force of seven to eight thousand horsemen to aid Shahji, and induced many of the Nizam Shahi nobles to surrender their forts to Shahji. Many disbanded Nizam Shahi soldiers joined Shahji whose force swelled to 20,000 horse. With these he harassed the Mughals and took control of large portions of the Ahmadnagar state.

Shah Jahan now decided to give personal attention to the problems of the Deccan. He realised that the crux of the situation was the attitude of Bijapur. He, therefore, deputed a large army to invade Bijapur, and also sent feelers to the Adil Shah, offering to revive the earlier accord of dividing the territory of Ahmadnagar between Bijapur and the Mughals.

The policy of carrot and stick and the advance of Shah Jahan to the Deccan brought about another change in Bijapur politics. The leaders of the anti-Mughal group including Murari Pandit were displaced and killed and a new treaty or *ahdnam* was entered into with Shah Jahan. According to this treaty, the Adil Shah agreed to recognise Mughal suzerainty, to pay an indemnity of twenty lakhs of rupees, and not to interfere in the affairs of Golconda which was brought under Mughal protection. Any quarrel between Bijapur and Golconda was, in the future, to be referred to the Mughal emperor for his arbitration. The Adil Shah agreed to operate with the Mughals for reducing Shahji to submission, and if he agreed to join Bijapuri service, to depute him in the south, away from the Mughal frontier. In return for these, territory worth about 20 lakh *huns* (about eighty lakh rupees) annually belonging to Ahmadnagar was ceded to Bijapur. Shah Jahan also sent to Adil Shah a solemn *farman* impressed with the mark of the emperor's palm that the terms of this treaty would never be violated.

Shah Jahan completed the settlement of the Deccan by entering into a treaty with Golconda as well. The ruler agreed to include the name of Shah Jahan in the *khutba* and to exclude the name of the Iranian emperor from it. The Qutb Shah was to be loyal to the emperor. The annual tribute of four lakh *huns* which Golconda was previously paying to Bijapur was remitted. Instead, it was required to pay two lakh *huns* annually to the Mughal emperor in return for his protection.

The treaties of 1636 with Bijapur and Golconda were statesmanlike. In effect, they enabled Shah Jahan to realise the ultimate objectives of Akbar: the suzerainty of the Mughal emperor was now accepted over the length and breadth of the country. Peace with

the Mughals enabled the Deccani states to expand their territories towards the south and to attain a climax of their power and prosperity during the next two decades.

In the decade following the treaties of 1636, Bijapur and Golconda overran the rich and fertile Karnataka area from the river Krishna to Tanjore and beyond. This area was ruled over by a number of petty Hindu principalities, many of them, such as the Nayaks of Tanjore, Jinji and Madurai, owing nominal allegiance to the Royal, the former ruler of Vijayanagara. A series of campaigns were conducted by Bijapur and Golconda against these states. With the help of Shah Jahan, they agreed to divide the territories and the spoils gained by their armies in the proportion of 2/3 to Bijapur and 1/3 to Golconda. Despite frequent quarrels between the two, the task of conquest went ahead. Thus, in a short span of time, the territories of these two states more than doubled and they reached the climax of their power and prosperity. If the rulers had been able to consolidate their hold over the areas they had conquered, the Deccan would have seen a long era of peace. Unfortunately, rapid expansion weakened whatever internal cohesion these states had. Ambitious nobles such as Shahji, and his son Shivaji in Bijapur, and Mir Jumla, the leading noble in Golconda, started carving out spheres of influence for themselves. The Mughals, too, found that the balance of power in the Deccan had been upset and demanded a price for their benevolent neutrality during the expansionist activities of these states. These developments came to a head in 1656 following the death of Muhammad Adil Shah, and the arrival of Aurangzeb as the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan. These developments would be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

#### Cultural Contribution of the Deccan States

The Deccani states had a number of cultural

contributions to their credit. Ali Adil Shah (d. 1580) loved to hold discussions with Hindu and Muslim saints and was called a Sufi. He invited Catholic missionaries to his court, ever before Akbar had done so. He had an excellent library to which he appointed the well-known Sanskrit scholar, Waman pandit. Patronage of Sanskrit and Marathi was continued by his successors.

The successor of Ali Adil Shah, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627) ascended the throne at the age of nine. He was very solicitous of the poor, and had the title of "*abla baba*", or "Friend of the Poor". He was deeply interested in music, and composed a book called *Kitab-i-Nawas* in which songs were set to various musical modes or *ragas*. He built a new capital, Nauraspur, in which a large number of musicians were invited to settle. In his songs, he freely invoked the goddess of music and learning, Saraswati. Due to his broad approach he came to be called "*Jagat Guru*". He accorded patronage to all, including Hindu saints and temples. This included grants to Pandharpur, the centre of the worship of Vithoba, which became the centre of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.

The broad, tolerant policy followed by Ibrahim Adil Shah II was continued under his successors. The important role played by Maratha families in the service of the Ahmadnagar state has already been mentioned. The Qutb Shahs, too, utilised the services of both Hindus and Muslims for military, administrative and diplomatic purposes. Under Ibrahim Qutb Shah (d. 1580), Murahari Rao rose to the position of Peshwa in the kingdom, a position which was second only to that of Mir Jumla or *Wazir*. The Nayakwaris who formed the military-cum-landed elements, had been a power in the kingdom ever since the foundation of the dynasty. From 1672 till its absorp-

tion by the Mughals in 1587, the administrative and military affairs of the state were dominated by the brothers, Madanna and Akkanna.

Golconda was the intellectual resort of literary men. Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, who was a contemporary of Akbar, was very fond of literature and architecture. The sultan was not only a great patron of art and literature but was a poet of no mean order. He wrote in Dakhini Urdu, Persian and Telugu and left an extensive *diwan* or collection. He was the first to introduce a secular note in poetry. Apart from the praise of God and the Prophet, he wrote about nature, love, and the social life of his day. The growth of Urdu in its Dakhini form was a significant development during the period. The successors of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and many other poets and writers of the time adopted Urdu as a literary language. In addition to Persian, these writers drew on Hindi and Telugu for forms, idioms and themes as well as vocabulary. Urdu was patronised at the Bijapuri court also. The poet laureate Nusrati who flourished during the middle of the seventeenth century wrote a romantic tale about Prince Manohar, ruler of Kanak Nagar. From the Deccan, Urdu

came to north India in the eighteenth century.

In the field of architecture, Quli Qutb Shah constructed many buildings, the most famous of which is the Char Minar. Completed in 1591-92, it stood at the centre of the new city of Hyderabad founded by Quli Qutb Shah. It has four lofty arches, facing the four directions. Its chief beauty are the four minarets which are four-storeyed and are 48 metre high. The double screen of arches has fine carvings. The rulers of Bijapur consistently maintained a high standard and an impeccable taste in architecture. The most famous Bijapuri buildings of the period are the Ibrahim Rauza and the Gol Gumbaz. The former was a mausoleum for Ibrahim Adil Shah and shows the style at its best. The Gol Gumbaz which was built in 1660 has the largest single dome ever constructed. All its proportions are harmonious, the large dome being balanced by tall, tapering minarets at the corner. It is said that a whisper at one side of the huge main room can be heard clearly at the other end.

It will thus be seen that the Deccani states were able to maintain fine standards of communal harmony, and also contributed in the fields of music, literature and architecture.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the main features of the political conditions in the Deccan after the fall of the Vijayanagara kingdom.
2. Assess the successes of the Mughals in the Deccan during the reign of Akbar.
3. Describe the role played by Malik Ambar in the political affairs of the Deccan.
4. Describe the expansion of the Mughal empire in the Deccan during the reign of Shah Jahan.
5. Describe the achievements of the Deccan kingdoms in the field of culture.

## India in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century

### Political and Administrative Developments in India.

THE FIRST half of the seventeenth century in India was, on the whole, an era of progress and growth. During the period, the Mughal empire was ruled by two capable rulers, Jahangir (1605-27), and Shah Jahan (1628-1658). In southern India, too, as we have seen, the states of Bijapur and Golconda were able to provide conditions of internal peace and cultural growth. The Mughal rulers consolidated the administrative system which had developed under Akbar. They maintained the alliance with the Rajputs, and tried to further broaden the political base of the empire by allying with powerful sections such as the Afghans and the Marathas. They embellished their capitals with beautiful buildings, many of them in marble, and tried to make the Mughal court the centre of the cultural life in the country. The Mughals played a positive role in stabilising India's relations with neighbouring Asian powers such as Iran, the Uzbeks, and the Ottoman Turks, thereby opening up greater avenues for India's foreign trade. Trade concessions given to various European trading companies were also aimed at promoting India's foreign trade. But a number of negative features came to the surface during the period. The growing prosperity of the ruling classes did not filter down to peasants and workers. The Mughal ruling class remained oblivious

of the growth of science and technology in the West. The problem of succession to the throne created instability, thus posing a threat to the political system as well as to the economic and cultural development.

Jahangir, the eldest son of Akbar, succeeded to the throne without any difficulty, his younger brothers having died during the lifetime of Akbar due to excessive drinking. However, shortly after Jahangir's succession his eldest son, Khusrau, broke out into rebellion. Tussle between father and son for the throne was not unusual in those times. Jahangir himself had rebelled against his father, and kept the empire disturbed for some time. However, Khusrau's rebellion proved to be short-lived. Jahangir defeated him at a battle near Lahore and soon afterwards he was captured and imprisoned.

We have already seen how Jahangir brought to an end the conflict with Mewar which had continued for four decades, and the struggle in the Deccan with Malik Ambar who was not prepared to accept the settlement made by Akbar. There was conflict in the east, too. Although Akbar had broken the back of the power of the Afghans in this region, Afghan chiefs were still powerful in various parts of east Bengal. They had the support of many Hindu rajas of the region, such as the rajas of Jessore, Kamrup (western Assam), Kachar, etc. Towards the end of his reign, Akbar had recal-

led Raja Man Singh, the governor of Bengal, to the court, and during his absence the Afghan chief Usman Khan and others found an opportunity to raise a rebellion. Jahangir sent back Man Singh for some time but the situation continued to worsen. In 1608, Jahangir posted to Bengal, Islam Khan, the grandson of Shaikh Salim Chishti, the famous Sufi saint who was the patron saint of the Mughals. Islam Khan handled the situation with great energy and foresight. He won over many of the zamindars including the raja of Jessore to his side and fixed his headquarters at Dacca, which was strategically located, to deal with the rebels. He first directed his efforts to the conquest of Sonargaon which was under the control of Musa Khan and his confederates who were called the Barah (twelve) Bhuiyan. After three years of campaigning, Sonargaon was captured. Soon afterwards, Musa Khan surrendered and he was sent to the court as a prisoner. The turn of Usman Khan came next, and he was defeated in a fierce battle. The back of the Afghan resistance was now broken and the other rebels soon surrendered. The principalities of Jessore and Kamrup were annexed. Thus Mughal power was firmly entrenched in east Bengal. To keep the area under full control, the provincial capital was transferred from Rajmahal to Dacca which began to develop rapidly.

Like Akbar, Jahangir realised that conquest could be lasting on the basis not of force but of securing the goodwill of the people. He, therefore, treated the defeated Afghan chiefs and their followers with consideration and sympathy. After some time, many of the princes and zamindars of Bengal detained at the court were released and allowed to return to Bengal. Even Musa Khan was released and his estates were restored. Thus after a long spell, peace and prosperity returned to Bengal. To cap

the process, the Afghans also now began to be inducted into the Mughal nobility. The leading Afghan noble under Jahangir was Khan-i-Jahan Lodi who rendered distinguished service in the Deccan.

By 1622, Jahangir brought Malik Ambar to heel, patched up the long drawn out tussle with Mewar, and pacified Bengal. Jahangir was still fairly young (51), and a long era of peace seemed to be ahead. But the situation was changed radically by two developments—the Persian conquest of Qandhar which was a blow to Mughal prestige, and the growing failure of Jahangir's health which unleashed the latent struggle for succession among the princes, and jockeying for power by the nobles. These developments pitch-forked Nur Jahan into the political arena.

#### Nur Jahan

The story of Nur Jahan's life, her first marriage with an Iranian, Sher Afghan, and his death in a clash with the Mughal governor of Bengal, Nur Jahan's stay in Agra with an elderly relation of Jahangir, and her marriage with Jahangir four years later (1611) are too well known to be repeated in detail here. Sober historians do not believe that Jahangir was responsible for the death of her first husband. Jahangir's chance meeting with her in the Meena Bazar and marrying her was not so unusual. Her family was a respectable one and her father, Itimaduddaula, had been made joint *diwan* by Jahangir in the first year of his reign. After a brief eclipse due to the involvement of one of his sons with Khusrau's rebellion, he had been restored to his position. Having been tested in this office, and following Nur Jahan's marriage with Jahangir, he was raised to the office of the chief *diwan*. Other members of the family also benefited from this alliance, their *mansabs* being augmented, Itimad-

uddaula proved to be able, competent and loyal, and wielded considerable influence in the affairs of the state till his death ten years later. Nur Jahan's brother, Asaf Khan, was also a learned and able man. He was appointed the *khan-i-saman*, a post reserved for nobles in whom the emperor had full confidence. A year later, he married his daughter to Khurram (Shah Jahan) who was his father's favourite following the rebellion and imprisonment of Khusrau.

Some modern historians are of the opinion that along with her father and brother, and in alliance with Khurram, Nur Jahan formed a group or "junta" which "managed" Jahangir so that without its backing and support no one could advance in his career, and that this led to the division of the court into two factions—the Nur Jahan "junta" and its opponents. It is further argued that Nur Jahan's political ambitions ultimately resulted in a breach between her and Shah Jahan, and that this drove Shah Jahan into rebellion against his father in 1622, since he felt that Jahangir was completely under Nur Jahan's influence. However, some other historians do not agree with this view. They point out that till 1622 when Jahangir's health broke down, all the important political decisions were taken by Jahangir himself as is clear from his autobiography. The precise political role of Nur Jahan during the period is not clear. She dominated the royal household and set new fashions based on Persian traditions. On account of her position, Persian art and culture acquired great prestige at the court. Nur Jahan was the constant companion of Jahangir, and even joined him in his hunting expeditions since she was a good rider and a sure shot. As such, she could influence Jahangir and many people approached her to intercede with the king on their behalf. But Jahangir was not dependent on the "junta" or on

Nur Jahan, as is also borne out by the fact that nobles who were not favourites of the "junta" continued to get their normal promotions. The rise of Shah Jahan was due to his personal qualities and achievements rather than the backing of Nur Jahan. Shah Jahan had his own ambitions of which Jahangir was not unaware. In any case, in those times, no ruler could afford to allow a noble or a prince to become too powerful lest he challenge his authority. This was the basic reason for the conflict between Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

#### SHAH JAHAN'S REBELLION

As long as Khusrau was alive, he was a potential rival to Shah Jahan. But in 1621, Shah Jahan killed Khusrau who had been kept in his custody and spread the news that he had died due to colic. A little earlier, feeling that Shah Jahan was becoming too powerful, efforts had been made to put forward his younger brother, Shahriyar. Shahriyar was married to Nur Jahan's daughter from her former husband, and given an important command. It was these complicated manoeuvres which led to Shah Jahan's rebellion. The immediate cause of the rebellion was Shah Jahan's refusal to proceed to Qandhar which had been besieged by the Persians. Shah Jahan was afraid that the campaign would be a long and difficult one and that intrigues would be hatched against him during his absence from the court. Hence, he put forward a number of demands such as full command of the army which included the veterans of the Deccan, complete sway over the Punjab, control over a number of important forts, etc. Jahangir was enraged by this attitude. Convinced that the prince was meditating rebellion, he wrote harsh letters and took punitive steps which only made the situation worse and resulted in an

open breach. From Mandu, where he was stationed, Shah Jahan made a sudden dash on Agra in order to capture the treasures lodged there. Shah Jahan had the full backing of the Deccan army and all the nobles posted there. Gujarat and Malwa had declared for him, and he had the support of his father-in-law, Asaf Khan, and a number of important nobles at the court. However, the Mughal commander at Agra was vigilant and foiled Shah Jahan who then moved on to Delhi. However, by this time Jahangir had assembled a large army under the command of Mahabat Khan. In the battle that followed, Shah Jahan was worsted and saved from a complete defeat by the valiant stand of the Mewar contingent. Mahabat Khan was then ordered to move on to Mandu (Malwa), Prince Parvez being appointed the nominal commander of the army. Another army was sent to wrest Gujarat from Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan was hounded out of the Mughal territories and compelled to take shelter with his erstwhile enemies, the Deccani rulers. However, he crossed the Deccan into Orissa, took the governor by surprise, and soon Bengal and Bihar were under his control. Mahabat Khan was again pressed into service. He was asked to leave the Deccan and proceed to the east where Allahabad was being threatened by Shah Jahan. He took energetic steps, and hence, Shah Jahan had to retreat to the Deccan again. This time he made an alliance with Malik Ambar who was once again at war with the Mughals. Shah Jahan was assigned the task of capturing Burhanpur from the Mughals. But Shah Jahan failed in the enterprise. He wrote abject letters to Jahangir who felt that it was time to pardon and conciliate his ablest and most energetic son. As part of the agreement, two of Shah Jahan's sons, Dara and Aurangzeb,

were sent to the court as hostages, and a tract in the Deccan was assigned for Shah Jahan's expenses. This was in 1626.

#### MAHABAT KHAN

Shah Jahan's rebellion kept the empire distracted for four years, resulted in the loss of Qandhar, and emboldened the Deccanis to recover all the territories surrendered to the Mughals during Akbar's time and in subsequent campaigns. It also pointed to a basic weakness of the system—a successful prince tended to become a rival focus of power, particularly when it was felt that the monarch was not able or willing to wield the supreme power himself. Shah Jahan's constant charge was that following Jahangir's failing health, all effective power had slipped into the hands of Nur Jahan Begum—a charge which is difficult to accept since Shah Jahan's father-in-law, Asaf Khan, was the imperial *diwan*, and though in poor health, Jahangir was still mentally alert and no decisions could be taken without his concurrence. Jahangir's illness created the further danger that an ambitious noble might try to use the situation to gather supreme power in his hands. An unexpected episode brought this to the fore. Mahabat Khan who had played a leading role in dealing with Shah Jahan's rebellion, had been feeling disgruntled because certain elements at the court were eager to clip his wings following the end of the prince's rebellion. It was felt that his alliance with Prince Parvez might be dangerous. Summoned to the court to render accounts, Mahabat Khan came with a trusted body of Rajputs and seized the emperor at an appropriate moment when the royal camp was crossing the river Jhelum on its way to Kabul. Nur Jahan, who had not been apprehended, escaped across the river, but an assault made

in conjunction with Asaf Khan failed ignominiously. Nur Jahan now tried other ways. She surrendered herself to Mahabat Khan in order to be close to Jahangir, and tried to lull the suspicions of Mahabat Khan while secretly trying her best to undermine his position. Within six months, taking advantage of the mistakes committed by Mahabat Khan, who was a soldier but not a diplomat or an administrator, and due to the growing unpopularity of his Rajput soldiers, Nur Jahan was able to wean away most of the nobles from Mahabat Khan's side. Realising his precarious position, Mahabat Khan abandoned Jahangir and fled from the court. Some time later, he joined Shah Jahan who was biding his time.

The defeat of Mahabat Khan was the greatest victory attained by Nur Jahan and it was due, in no small measure, to her cool courage and sagacity. However, Nur Jahan's triumph was short-lived, for in less than a year's time, Jahangir breathed his last, not far from Lahore (1627). The wily and shrewd Asaf Khan who had been appointed *wakil* by Jahangir, and who had been carefully preparing the ground for the succession of his son-in-law, Shah Jahan, now came into the open. Supported by the *diwan*, the chief nobles and the army, he made Nur Jahan a virtual prisoner and sent an urgent summons to Shah Jahan in the Deccan. Meanwhile, he put a son of Khusrau on the vacant throne as a puppet. Shah Jahan's younger brother, Parvez, had already died due to excessive drinking. His second brother, Shahriyar, made a feeble effort for the throne, but he was easily defeated and thrown into prison after having been blinded. Soon afterwards, Shah Jahan reached Agra and was enthroned amidst great rejoicing. Earlier, at his instance, all his rivals including his imprisoned brother,

cousins, etc., were done to death. This precedent and the earlier precedent of a son rebelling against his father, which was begun by Jahangir and was followed by Shah Jahan, was to lead to growing bitter consequences for the Mughal dynasty. Shah Jahan himself was to reap the bitter fruits he had sown. As for Nur Jahan, after attaining the throne, Shah Jahan fixed a settlement upon her. She lived a retired life till her death 18 years later.

Shah Jahan's reign (1628-58) was full of many-sided activity. We have already studied his Deccan policy. We shall now turn to the foreign policy of the Mughals which reached a high watermark under Shah Jahan.

#### Foreign Policy of the Mughals

We have seen how following the break-up of the Timurid empire in the second half of the fifteenth century, three powerful empires—the Uzbek, the Safavid and the Ottoman—established themselves in Trans-Oxiana (Central Asia), Iran and Turkey. The Uzbeks were the natural enemies of the Mughals, having been responsible for the expulsion of Babur and the other Timurid princes from Samarqand and the adjoining area, including Khorasan. At the same time, the Uzbeks clashed with the rising power of the Safavids who claimed Khorasan. The Khorasanian plateau linked Iran with Central Asia, and the trade routes to China and India passed across it. It was natural for the Safavids and the Mughals to ally against the Uzbek danger especially as there were no frontier disputes between them with the exception of Qandhar. The Uzbeks tried to exploit the sectarian differences with the Safavid rulers of Iran who had ruthlessly persecuted the Sunnis. Both, the Uzbek and the Mughal rulers, were Sunnis. But the Mughals were too broad-minded

to be swayed by sectarian differences. Annoyed at the alliance of the Mughals with a Shia power, Iran, the Uzbeks occasionally stirred up the fanatic Afghan and Baluchi tribesmen living in the north-west frontier tracts between Peshawar and Kabul.

Perhaps the most powerful empire in West Asia at the time was that of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman or the Usmanli Turks, so called after the name of their first ruler, Usman (d.1326), had overrun Asia Minor and eastern Europe, and also conquered Syria, and Egypt and Arabia by 1529. They had received the title "Sultan of Rum" from the shadowy Caliph living at Cairo. Later, they also assumed the title of *Padshah-i-Islam*

The rise of a Shiite power in Iran made the Ottoman Sultans conscious of the danger to their eastern flank, that it would encourage Shiism in their own territories. In 1512, the Turkish sultan defeated the Shah of Iran in a famous battle. They clashed with Iran for the control of Baghdad and also for the areas in north Iran, around Erivan. They gradually extended their control on the coastal areas around Arabia and made a bid to oust the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf and the Indian waters.

The Ottoman threat from the west made the Persians keen to befriend the Mughals, particularly when they had to face an aggressive Uzbek power in the east. The Mughals refused to be drawn into a tripartite Ottoman, Mughal, Uzbek alliance against the Persians as it would have upset the Asian balance of power and left them alone to face the might of the Uzbeks. Alliance with Iran was also helpful in promoting trade with Central Asia. If the Mughals had a stronger navy, they might, perhaps, have sought a closer alliance with Turkey which was also anaval power and was engaged in a struggle against the navies of the European powers

in the Mediterranean. As it was, the Mughals were chary of a closer relationship with Turkey since they were not prepared to countenance the claim to superiority made by the Turkish sultan as successor to the Caliph. These were some of the factors which shaped the foreign policy of the Mughals.

#### **Akbar and the Uzbeks**

In 1511, following the defeat of the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, by the Safavids, Babur had briefly regained Samarqand. Although Babur had to leave the city after the Uzbeks had inflicted a sharp defeat on the Persians, the help extended to him by the Persian monarch established a tradition of friendship between the Mughals and the Safavids. Later, Humayun, too, received help from the Safavid monarch, Shah Tahmasp, when he had sought refuge at his court after being ousted from India by Sher Shah.

The territorial power of the Uzbeks grew rapidly in the seventies under Abdullah Khan Uzbek. In 1572-73, Abdullah Khan Uzbek seized Balkh which, along with Badakhshan, had served as a kind of buffer between the Mughals and the Uzbeks. In 1577, Abdullah Khan sent an embassy to Akbar, proposing to partition Iran. After the death of Shah Tahmasp (1576), Iran was passing through a phase of anarchy and disorder. Abdullah Uzbek urged that Akbar "should lead an expedition from India to Iran in order that they may with united efforts release Iraq, Khorasan and Fars from the innovators (Shias)". Akbar was not moved by this appeal to sectarian narrowness. A strong Iran was essential to keep the restless Uzbeks in their place. At the same time, Akbar had no desire to get embroiled with the Uzbeks, unless they directly threatened Kabul or the Indian possessions. This was the key to Akbar's foreign

policy. Abdullah Uzbek also approached the Ottoman sultan and proposed a tripartite alliance of Sunni powers against Iran. As if in reply to this, Akbar sent a return embassy to Abdullah Uzbek in which it was pointed out that differences in law and religion could not be regarded as sufficient ground for conquest. Regarding difficulties faced by pilgrims to Mecca, he pointed out that with the conquest of Gujarat, a new route had been opened. He emphasised the old friendship with Iran and admonished Abdullah Khan Uzbek for making insulting references to the Safavids and said they were Saiyids and sovereigns.

Akbar's growing interest in Central Asian affairs was reflected in his giving refuge at his court to the Timurid prince, Mirza Sulaiman, who had been ousted from Badakhshan by his grandson. Abul Fazl says that the Khyber pass was made fit for wheeled traffic, and that due to fear of the Mughals, the gates of Balkh were usually kept closed. In order to forestall an invasion of Badakhshan, Abdullah Uzbek fomented trouble among the tribesmen of the north-west frontier through his agent, Jalala, who was a religious fanatic. The situation became so serious that Akbar had to move to Attock. It was during these operations that Akbar lost one of his best friends, Raja Birbal.

In 1585, Abdullah Uzbek suddenly conquered Badakhshan. Both Mirza Sulaiman and his grandson sought refuge at Akbar's court and were given suitable *mansabs*. Meanwhile, with the death of his half-brother, Mirza Hakim (1585), Akbar annexed Kabul to his dominions. Thus, the Mughal and the Uzbek frontiers ran side by side.

Abdullah Khan Uzbek now sent another embassy which Akbar received while he was at Attock on the river Indus. Akbar's continued presence so near the frontier had made Abdullah Uzbek uneasy. But the real motive

of Abdullah Uzbek's embassy, it appears, was to obtain Akbar's neutrality in his projected campaign in Khorasan against the Safavids. He, therefore, revived the earlier proposal for a joint campaign against the Safavid power, and for opening the way for pilgrims to Mecca.

Meanwhile taking advantage of the situation, the Ottoman sultan had invaded northern Iran, while the Uzbeks were threatening Herat in Khorasan. Akbar sent a long letter in reply to Abdullah Uzbek's proposal. He disapproved the Turkish action, and proposed to despatch an army to Iran under one of the royal princes to help. This was a thinly veiled threat of intervention to Abdullah Uzbek, although he was asked to cooperate in the work and hope was expressed of their meeting in Iran. However, Akbar made no serious preparations to back up his threat of a campaign in Iran. Also, Abdullah Uzbek had invaded Khorasan even before Akbar's letter reached him and captured most of the areas he claimed. In this situation, it appeared best to Akbar to come to terms with the Uzbek chief. Hence, one of his agents, Hakim Human was sent to Abdullah Khan Uzbek with a letter and a verbal message. It seems that an agreement was made defining the Hindukush as the boundary between the two. It implied the Mughals giving up their interest in Badakhshan and Balkh which had been ruled by Timurid princes till 1585. But it also implied the Uzbeks not claiming Kabul and Qandhar. Though neither party gave up its claims completely, the agreement gave the Mughals a defensible frontier on the Hindukush. Akbar completed his objective of establishing a scientific defensible frontier by acquiring Qandhar in 1595. In addition to this, from 1586 Akbar

stayed at Lahore in order to watch the situation. He left for Agra only after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. After the death of Abdullah, the Uzbeks broke up into warring principalities, and ceased to be a threat to the Mughals for a considerable time.

#### **The Question of Qandhar and Relations with Iran**

The dread of Uzbek power was the most potent factor which brought the Safavids and the Mughals together, despite the Uzbek attempt to raise anti-Shia sentiments against Iran and the Mughal dislike of the intolerant policies adopted by the Safavid rulers. The only trouble spot between the two was Qandhar the possession of which was claimed by both on strategic and economic grounds, as well as for considerations of sentiment and prestige. Qandhar had been a part of the Timurid empire and had been ruled over by Babur's cousins, the rulers of Herat, till they were ousted by the Uzbeks in 1507. Babur held Qandhar briefly in 1507, but when the Safavids defeated the Uzbek chief, Shaibani Khan, and captured Herat and the rest of Khorasan, they laid claim to Qandhar also. For the next decade and a half, however, Qandhar remained in the hands of semi-independent governors who tendered their allegiance to the Mughals or to the Safavids as it suited their convenience.

Strategically, Qandhar was vital for the defence of Kabul. The fort of Qandhar was considered to be one of the strongest forts in the region, and was well provided with water. Situated at the junction of roads leading to Kabul and Herat, Qandhar dominated the whole southern Afghanistan, and occupied a position of immense strategic importance. A modern writer has observed, "The Kabul-Ghazni-Qandhar line represented a strategic and logical frontier; beyond Kabul and

Khaibar, there was no natural line of defence. Moreover, the possession of Qandhar made it easier to control the Afghan and Baluch tribes."

After the conquest of Sindh and Baluchistan by Akbar, the strategic and economic importance of Qandhar for the Mughals increased. Qandhar was a rich and fertile province and was the hub of the movement of men and goods between India and Central Asia. The trade from Central Asia to Multan via Qandhar, and thence down the river Indus to the sea steadily gained in importance, because the roads across Iran were frequently disturbed due to wars and internal commotions. Akbar wanted to promote trade on this route, and pointed out to Abdullah Uzbek that it was an alternative route for pilgrims and the goods traffic to Mecca. Taking all these factors into account, it would appear that Qandhar was not as important to the Persians as to the Mughals. For Iran, Qandhar was "more of an outpost, an important one no doubt, rather than a vital bastion in a defence system".

In the early phase, however, the dispute over Qandhar was not allowed to affect good relations between the two countries. Qandhar came under Babur's control in 1522 when the Uzbeks were threatening Khorasan once again. No serious objection to the Mughal conquest of Qandhar was raised by the Persians in view of this situation. However, when Humayun sought shelter at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the Iranian monarch agreed to help him provided he transferred Qandhar to Iran after its conquest from his half-brother, Kamran. Humayun had little choice but to agree. But after its conquest Humayun found excuses to keep it under his control. In fact, Qandhar was his base of operations against Kamran in Kabul.

Shah Tahmasp captured Qandhar taking

advantage of the confusion following Humayun's death. Akbar made no effort to regain it till the Uzbeks under Abdullah Uzbek posed renewed threat to Iran and to the Mughals. The Mughal conquest of Qandhar (1595) was not a part of an agreement between Akbar and the Uzbeks to partition the Persian empire as some modern historians have argued. It was more to establish a viable defensive line in the north-west against a possible Uzbek invasion, since Khorasan had passed under Uzbek control by that time, and Qandhar was cut off from Persia.

Relations between Iran and the Mughals continued to be cordial, despite the Mughal conquest of Qandhar. After Akbar's death, the Persians made an abortive attempt on Qandhar. But Shah Abbas I (ruled 1588-1629), who was perhaps the greatest of the Safavid rulers, was keen to maintain good relations with Jahangir. He repudiated the attack on Qandhar, and there was a regular exchange of embassies and costly gifts, including rarities, between the two. Shah Abbas also established close diplomatic and commercial relations with the Deccani states but this was not objected to by Jahangir. Neither side felt threatened, and there is an imaginary portrait by a court artist showing Jahangir and Shah Abbas embracing each other, with a globe of the world beneath their feet. Culturally, too, the two countries came even closer to each other during the period. Nur Jahan, whose father had come from Persia, played a role in this. But the alliance proved to be more useful to Shah Abbas than to Jahangir, for it led the latter to neglect cultivating friendship with the Uzbek chiefs, as he felt secure in the friendship of his "brother", Shah Abbas. In 1620, Shah Abbas sent a polite request for the restoration of Qandhar, and made preparations for attacking it. Jahangir was taken by surprise, for he was

diplomatically isolated and militarily unprepared for it. Hasty preparations for the relief of Qandhar were undertaken, but prince Shah Jahan put forward impossible demands before he would march. As a result, Qandhar passed into the hands of the Persians (1622). Although Shah Abbas tried to erase the bitterness over the loss of Qandhar by sending a lavish embassy to Jahangir, and offered facile explanations which were accepted by Jahangir formally, the cordiality which had marked the Mughal relations with Iran came to an end, and an era of diplomatic preparations aimed at Iran now began.

Far-reaching changes had taken place in Central Asian politics after the death of Abdullah Khan Uzbek in 1598. The Uzbek empire had disintegrated due to internecine tribal feuds, and Persia had taken advantage of the situation to recover Khorasan. But it suffered a defeat near Balkh when it tried to advance further. The Uzbek power was still considerable, and not to be trifled with. After some time, Imam Quli emerged as the independent ruler of Bokhara and Balkh. Although the Uzbeks were no longer in a position to challenge Shah Abbas for the control of Khorasan, they were not averse to making marauding raids into Afghanistan and on Kabul. The Persian capture of Qandhar made the Uzbeks uneasy. Shortly after the capture of Qandhar, Shah Abbas turned towards the west and recaptured Baghdad from the Turks. Hence, the earlier idea of an alliance of the three Sunni powers—the Uzbeks, the Mughals and the Ottomans—against Iran was revived and a series of embassies were exchanged between Jahangir and the Uzbeks for finalizing an accord. These efforts continued under Shah Jahan after the death of Jahangir. In 1627, the Uzbek leader, Imam Quli grandiloquently thanked Jahangir for the help given by Akbar to Abdullah Khan Uzbek in Khorasan. But for fear of Shah Abbas, he had

also kept the Persian ruler informed of the Mughal intrigues against Persia. There were also a series of Uzbek attacks on Kabul, both before and after the accession of Shah Jahan.

It was, thus, apparent that the Uzbeks could not be counted upon for any help against Persia. The Ottomans were too far away to be effective. Moreover, they took a superior attitude which was not acceptable to the Mughals. Hence, Shah Jahan took recourse to diplomacy. After the death of Shah Abbas (1629), there were disturbances in Iran. Taking advantage of this, and after being free of Deccan affairs, Shah Jahan induced Ali Mardan Khan, the Persian governor of Qandhar, to defect to the side of the Mughals (1638)

#### Shah Jahan's Balkh Campaign

But the conquest of Qandhar was only the means to an end. Shah Jahan was more concerned with the serious danger of recurrent Uzbek attacks on Kabul, and their intrigues with the Baluch and Afghan tribes. At the time, both Bokhara and Balkh had come under the control of Nazr Muhammad, younger brother of Imam Quli. Nazr Muhammad and his son, Abdul Aziz, were ambitious and had intrigued with Afghan tribesmen for gaining control of Kabul and Ghazni. However, soon Abdul Aziz headed a rebellion against his father, and only Balkh remained under the control of Nazr Muhammad who appealed to Shah Jahan for help. Secure from the side of the Persians, Shah Jahan accepted the appeal with alacrity. He moved from Lahore to Kabul, and deputed a large army under prince Murad to help Nazr Muhammad. The army which consisted of 50,000 horse and 10,000 footmen including musketeers, rockteers and gunners, and a contingent of Rajputs, left Kabul in the middle of 1646. Shah Jahan had carefully in-

structed prince Murad to treat Nazr Muhammad with great consideration and to restore Balkh to him if he behaved with modesty and submission. Further, if Nazr Muhammad expressed a desire to regain Samarqand and Bokhara, the prince was to do everything to help him. Obviously, Shah Jahan wanted a friendly ruler at Bokhara who looked to the Mughals for help and support. But Murad's impetuosity ruined the plan. He marched on Balkh without waiting for instructions from Nazr Muhammad, ordered his men to enter the fort of Balkh in which Nazr Muhammad was residing, and curtly asked him to wait on him personally. Uncertain of the prince's intentions, Nazr Muhammad fled. The Mughals were forced to occupy Balkh, and hold it in the face of a sullen and hostile population. Nor was an alternative to Nazr Muhammad easily available. Abdul Aziz, son of Nazr Muhammad, raised the Uzbek tribes against the Mughals in Trans-Oxiana, and mustered an army of 120,000 men across the river Oxus. Meanwhile, prince Murad, who had been pining for home, was replaced by prince Aurangzeb. The Mughals made no effort to defend the Oxus, since it was easily fordable. Instead, they placed pickets at strategic places, and kept the main force together so that it could march easily to any threatened point. The Mughals were well positioned. Abdul Aziz crossed the Oxus, but soon found himself face to face with a large Mughal army. In a running battle, the Mughals routed the Uzbeks outside the gates of Balkh (1647).

The victory of the Mughals at Balkh paved the way for negotiations with the Uzbeks. The Uzbek supporters of Abdul Aziz melted away and he now made overtures to the Mughals. Nazr Muhammad who had taken refuge in Persia also approached the Mughals for the restoration of his empire. After care-

ful consideration, Shah Jahan decided in favour of Nazr Muhammad. But Nazr Muhammad was first asked to make an apology and humble submission to prince Aurangzeb. This was a mistake since the proud Uzbek ruler was unlikely to demean himself in this way, particularly when he knew that it was impossible for the Mughals to hold on to Balkh for any length of time. After waiting vainly for Nazr Muhammad to appear personally, the Mughals left Balkh in October 1647 since winter was fast approaching and there were no supplies in Balkh. The retreat nearly turned into a rout with hostile bands of Uzbeks hovering around. Though the Mughals suffered grievous losses, the firmness of Aurangzeb prevented a disaster.

The Balkh campaign of Shah Jahan has led to considerable controversy among modern historians. From the foregoing account, it should be clear that Shah Jahan was not attempting to fix the Mughal frontier on the so-called "scientific line", the Amu Darya (the Oxus). The Amu Darya, as we have seen, was hardly a defensible line. Nor was Shah Jahan motivated by the desire to conquer Samarqand and Farghana, the Mughal "homelands", though the Mughal emperors frequently talked about it. Shah Jahan's objective, it seems, was to secure a friendly ruler in Balkh and Badakhshan, the areas which bordered Kabul, and which had been ruled over by Timurid princes till 1585. This, he believed, would also help in controlling the disaffection of the Afghan tribes living around Ghazni and in the Khyber pass. The campaign was a success in the military sense—the Mughals conquered Balkh, and defeated Uzbek attempts to oust them. This was the first significant victory of Indian arms in the region, and Shah Jahan had reason to celebrate it. However, it was beyond the strength of the

Mughals to maintain their influence at Balkh for any length of time. Politically also, it was difficult to do so in the face of sullen Persian hostility and an unfriendly local population. All in all, while the Balkh campaign raised the prestige of Mughal arms for a time, it gained them little political advantage. Perhaps, it would have been more advantageous to the Mughals, and would have saved considerable expenditure of men and money, if Shah Jahan had firmly adhered to the Kabul-Ghazni-Qandhar line so laboriously established by Akbar. Anyhow, Nazr Muhammad remained friendly to the Mughals as long as he was alive and there was a constant exchange of envoys between the two.

#### **Mughal-Persian Relations—the Last Phase**

The setback in Balkh led to a revival of Uzbek hostility in the Kabul region and Afghan tribal unrest in the Khyber-Ghazni area and emboldened the Persians to attack and conquer Qandhar (1649). This was a big blow to Shah Jahan's pride and he launched three major campaigns, one by one, under princes of blood to try and recover Qandhar. The first attack was launched by Aurangzeb, the hero of Balkh, with an army of 50,000. Though the Mughals defeated the Persians outside the fort, they could not conquer it in the face of determined Persian opposition.

A second attempt led by Aurangzeb three years later also failed. The most grandiloquent effort was made the following year (1653) under Dara, the favourite son of Shah Jahan. Dara had made many boastful claims, but he was unable to starve the fort into surrender with the help of his large army, and an attempt at capturing it with the help of two of the biggest guns in the empire which had been towed to Qandhar was also of no avail.

The failure of the Mughals at Qandhar did

not so much reflect the weakness of Mughal artillery, as has been asserted by some historians. It rather showed the inherent strength of Qandhar fort if held by a determined commander, and the ineffectiveness of medieval artillery against strong forts. (This was also the Mughal experience in the Deccan.) It may, however, be argued that Shah Jahan's attachment to Qandhar was more sentimental than realistic. With the growing enfeeblement of both the Uzbeks and the Safavids, Qandhar no longer had the same strategic importance as it had earlier. It was not so much the loss of Qandhar as the failure of the repeated Mughal efforts which affected the Mughal prestige. But even this should not be unduly exaggerated for the Mughal empire remained outwardly at the height of its power and prestige during Aurangzeb's reign. Even the proud Ottoman sultan sent an embassy to Aurangzeb in 1680 to seek his support.

Aurangzeb decided not to continue the futile contest over Qandhar, and quietly resumed diplomatic relations with Iran. However, in 1668, Shah Abbas II, the ruler of Iran, insulted the Mughal envoy, made disparaging remarks against Aurangzeb, and even threatened an invasion. The causes of this are not clear. It seems that Shah Abbas II was of an unstable character. There was a flurry of Mughal activity in the Punjab and Kabul. But before any action could take place, Shah Abbas II died. His successors were non-entities, and all Persian danger to the Indian frontier disappeared till a new ruler, Nadir Shah, came to power more than fifty years later.

It will thus be seen that on the whole, the Mughals succeeded in maintaining a scientific frontier in the north-west, based on the Hindukush, on the one side, and the Kabul-Ghazni line, on the other, with Qandhar as

its outer bastion. Thus, their basic foreign policy was based on the defence of India. The defence of this frontier-line was further buttressed by diplomatic means. Friendship with Persia was its keynote, despite temporary setbacks over the question of Qandhar. The oft-proclaimed desire of recovering the Mughal homelands was really used as a diplomatic ploy, for it was never seriously pursued. These military and diplomatic means adopted by the Mughals were remarkably successful in giving India security from foreign invasions for a long time.

Secondly, the Mughals insisted on relations of equality with leading Asian nations of the time, both with the Safavids, who claimed a special position by virtue of their relationship with the Prophet, and with the Ottoman sultans who had assumed the title of *Padshah-i-Islam* and claimed to be the successors of the Caliph of Baghdad.

Thirdly, the Mughals used their foreign policy to promote India's commercial interests. Kabul and Qandhar were the twin gateways of India's trade with Central Asia. The economic importance of this trade for the Mughal empire has yet to be fully assessed.

#### Growth of Administration : Mansabdari System and The Mughal Army

The administrative machinery and revenue system developed by Akbar were maintained under Jahangir and Shah Jahan with minor modifications. Important changes were, however, effected in the functioning of the *mansabdari* system. The *mansabdari* system, as it developed under the Mughals, was a distinctive and unique system which did not have any exact parallel outside India. The origins of the *mansabdari* system can, perhaps, be traced back to Changez Khan who organised his army on a decimal basis, the lowest unit of com-

mand being ten, and the highest ten thousand (*toman*) whose commander was called *khan*. The Mongol system influenced, to some extent, the military system of the Delhi Sultanat, for we hear of commanders of hundred and one thousands (*sadis* and *hazaras*)<sup>1</sup>. But we do not quite know the system which was prevalent under Babur and Humayun.

There is a good deal of controversy as to when the *mansabdari* system was started. From the available evidence, it seems to have been initiated by Akbar in the 19th year of his reign (1577), at the same time that he reformed the revenue system and introduced what are called *zat* and *sawar*<sup>2</sup>. Although many historians are of the opinion that the *sawar* rank was introduced later by Akbar, recent studies show that both the ranks were introduced at the same time. The *zat* rank signified the personal status of an individual in the imperial hierarchy, and also fixed his salary. There were sixty-six grades or *mansabs* from ten to ten thousand. But ranks above five thousand were reserved for princes. Persons holding ranks below 500 *zat* were called *mansabdars*, those from 500 and below 2500 *amirs*, and those holding ranks of 2500 and above were called *amir-i-umda* or *amir-i-azam*. However, the word *mansabdar* is sometimes used for all the three categories. Apart from status, this classification had a significance: an *amir* or an *amir-i-umda* could have another *amir* or *mansabdar* serve under him, but not so a *mansabdar*. Thus, a person with a rank of 5000 could have under him a

*mansabdar* up to a rank of 500 *zat* and one with a rank of 4000 could have a *mansabdar* up to a rank of 400 *zat*, and so on. The categories were not rigid. Persons were generally appointed at a low *mansab* and gradually promoted, depending upon their merits and the favour of the emperor. A person could also be demoted as a mark of punishment. Thus, there was only one service including both *armymen* and *civilians*. People entered service at the lowest rung of the ladder, and could hope to rise to the position of an *amir* or even *amir-i-umda*. To that extent, careers were thrown open to talent.

In addition to meeting his personal expenses, the *mansabdar* had to maintain out of his salary a stipulated quota of horses, elephants, beasts of burden (camels and mules) and carts. Thus a *mansabdar* holding a *zat* rank of 5000 had to maintain 340 horses, 100 elephants, 400 camels, 100 mules and 160 carts! Later, these were maintained centrally, but the *mansabdar* had to pay for them out of his salary. The horses were classified into six categories, and the elephants into five according to quality, the number and quality of horses and elephants being carefully prescribed. This was so because horses and elephants of high breed were greatly prized and were considered indispensable for an efficient military machine. Cavalry and elephants, in fact, formed the main basis of the army in those days, though the artillery was rapidly becoming more important. The transport corps was vital for making the army

1. The terms *sadi*, *hazara*, and *toman* quickly began to be used for persons who either controlled that number of villages or collected revenue of that account. The Mughal term *Karori*, i.e., a person who collected a *kror* of *dams*, was one such term.
2. The word *sawar* included bowmen, musketeers, etc.

more mobile.

For meeting these expenses, the Mughal *mansabdars* were paid handsomely. A *mansabdar* with a rank of 5000 could get a salary of Rs. 30,000 per month, a *mansabdar* of 3000, Rs. 17,000, and of 1000, Rs. 8,200 per month. Even a humble *sadi* holding a rank of 100, could get Rs. 7,000 per year. Roughly a quarter of these salaries were spent on meeting the cost of the transport corps. Even then, the Mughal *mansabdars* formed the highest paid service in the world.

The sawar rank indicated the number of cavalrymen a *mansabdar* was expected to maintain for the service of the state. For the maintenance of this contingent, the *mansabdar* was paid at the average rate of Rs. 240 per annum per sawar to begin with. Later, in the time of Jahangir it was reduced to Rs. 200 per annum. Individual sawars were paid according to their nationality—a Mughal got more than an Indian Muslim or a Rajput—and the quality of their mount. The *mansabdar* was allowed to retain 5% of the total salary bill of the *sawars* in order to meet various contingent expenses. In addition, he got an increase of two rupees in his *zat* salary for every *sawar* he maintained. This was to compensate him for his efforts and the larger responsibility it implied.

Two features of the sawar system may be noted. For every contingent of ten men, the *mansabdar* was supposed to maintain twenty-two or twenty horses. Since the cavalry was the main arm, replacement of horses during a march or during battle was considered vital, so much so, that a sawar with one horse only was considered a *nim-sawar*, i.e., half a sawar or one who had one leg on the ground! Secondly, the Mughals favoured mixed contingents, with men drawn in fixed proportions from Irani and Turani Mughals, Indian Afghans and Rajputs. This was to break the

spirit of tribal or ethnic exclusiveness. However, in special circumstances, a Mughal or a Rajput *mansabdar* was allowed to have a contingent drawn exclusively from Mughals or Rajputs.

Towards the end of Akbar's reign, the highest rank a noble could attain was raised from 5000 to 7000, and two premier nobles of the empire, Mirza Aziz Koka and Raja Man Singh, were honoured with the rank of 7000 each. This limit was maintained till the end of Aurangzeb's reign. A number of other modifications were, however, carried out during the period. There was a tendency to reduce *zat* salaries. The average salary paid to a sawar was reduced by Jahangir, as we have noted above. Jahangir also introduced a system whereby selected nobles could be allowed to maintain a larger quota of troopers, without raising their *zat* rank. This was the *du-aspah sih-aspah* system (literally, trooper with 2 or 3 horses) which implied that a *mansabdar* holding this rank had to maintain and was paid for double the quota of troopers indicated by his *sawar* rank. Thus, a *mansabdar* holding a *zat* rank of 3000, and 3000 *sawars du-aspah sih-aspah* would be required to maintain 6000 troopers. Normally, no *mansabdar* was given a *sawar* rank which was higher than his *zat* rank.

A further modification, which comes to our notice during Shah Jahan's reign, was aimed at drastically reducing the number of sawars a noble was required to maintain. Thus, a noble was expected to maintain a quota of only one-third of his *sawar* rank, and in some circumstances, one-fourth or even one-fifth. The noble of Jahangir's reign who had the rank of 3000 *zat*, 3000 *sawar*, would maintain not more than 1000 troopers. But this would be doubled, i.e., he would maintain 2000 troopers, if his rank was 3000 *sawar du-aspah sih-aspah*.

Although the salaries of the *mansabdars*

were stated in rupees, they were generally not paid in cash, but by assigning them a jagir. The working of the jagirdari system under Akbar has been already discussed. *Mansabdars* preferred a jagir because cash payments were likely to be delayed and sometimes entailed a lot of harassment. Also, control over land was a mark of social prestige. By devising a careful scale of gradations and laying down meticulous rules of business, the Mughals bureaucratized the nobility. But they could not take away their feudal attachment to land. This, as we shall see, was one of the dilemmas facing the Mughal nobility.

For purposes of assigning jagirs the revenue department had to maintain a register indicating the assessed income (*jama*) of various areas. The account, however, was not indicated in rupees but in *dams* which was calculated at the rate of 40 *dams* to a rupee. This document was called the *jama-dami* or assessed income based on *dams*.

As the number of *mansabdars* kept growing even the above modifications were not found adequate. Drastic cuts in salaries all round would have created disaffection among the nobles which the rulers could ill-afford. Hence, the quota of troopers and horses a noble had to maintain out of his sawar rank was further reduced by a new scaling device. The salaries of the *mansabdars* were put on a month-scale—10 months, 8 months, 6 months or even less than that—and their obligations for the maintenance of a quota of sawars were brought down accordingly. Thus, a *mansabdar* who had a rank of 3000 *zat*, 3000 sawar and maintained 1000 sawars under the rule of one-third mentioned above, would normally have had to maintain 2200 horses under the rule introduced by Akbar. But if he was put on a 10 months scale, he would maintain only 1800 horses, if for 6 months only 1100 horses. It

was rare for any one to get allowances for less than 5 months or for more than 10 months.

The month-scale had little to do with a decline in the income of the jagir. During Shah Jahan's reign, the *jama-dami*, that is, the value of the jagir, increased, but the increase kept pace broadly with the price rise during the period. Also, the month-scale was applied not only to jagirs, but also to those who were paid in cash. It may be noted that most of the Marathas who were inducted into the Mughal service, were assigned *mansabs* on a 5 monthly basis or even less. In this way, while they were given a high rank in the hierarchy, the actual number of horses and effective sawars was much less than was indicated by their rank. The availability of remounts was, as we have seen, vital for an efficient cavalry force. The drastic reduction of remounts during Shah Jahan's reign must, therefore, have adversely affected the efficiency of the Mughal cavalry as a whole.

The *mansabdari* system of the Mughals was a complex system. Its efficient functioning depended upon a number of factors, including the proper functioning of the *dagh* (branding) system and of the jagirdari system. If the *dagh* system worked badly, the state would be cheated. If the *jama-dami* was inflated, or the jagirdar was not able to get the salary due to him, he would be disaffected or he would not maintain his due contingent. On balance the *mansabdari* system worked properly under Shah Jahan, on account of his meticulous attention to administration and men including the appointment of highly competent persons as *wazirs*. Careful attention to the choice of right persons for the service, strict discipline and a definite system of promotion and rewards made the Mughal nobility a loyal and, on the whole, a highly dependable body which was able to discharge the due duties of adminis-

tration and to defend and expand the empire.

### The Mughal Army

The cavalry, as we have noted, was the principal arm of the Mughal army and the *mansabdars* provided the overwhelming proportion of it. In addition to the *nansabdars* the Mughal emperors used to entertain individual troopers, called *ahadis*. The *ahadis* have been called gentlemen-troopers and received much higher salaries than other troopers. They were a highly trusted corps, being recruited directly by the emperors and having their own muster-master. An *ahadi* mustered up to five horses, though sometimes two of them shared a horse. The duties of *ahadis* were of a miscellaneous character. Most clerks of the imperial offices, the painters of the court, the foremen in the royal *karkhanas* belonged to this corps. Many were appointed as adjutants and carriers of imperial orders. In Shah Jahan's reign, they numbered 7000 and were often sent into the fighting line, where they were well distributed over the different parts of the army. Many of them worked as skilled musketeers (*baraq-andaz*) and bowmen (*tir-andaz*).

In addition to the *ahadis*, the emperors maintained a corp of royal bodyguards (*wala-shuhis*) and armed palace guards. They were cavalrymen but served on foot in the citadel and the palace.

The footmen (*piyadgan*) formed a numerous but miscellaneous body. Many of them consisted of matchlock-bearers (*banduqchi*) and received salaries ranging between three and seven rupees a month. This was the infantry proper. But the foot-soldiers also included porters, servants, news-runners, swordsmen, wrestlers and slaves. The slaves, though not as numerous as during the Sultanat period, were clothed and fed by the

emperor or by a prince. Sometimes a slave could become a gentleman-trooper. But generally foot-soldiers had a low status.

The Mughal emperors had a large stable of war elephants, and also a well-organised park of artillery. The artillery consisted of two sections—heavy guns which were used for defending or assaulting forts; these were often clumsy and difficult to move. The second was the light artillery which was highly mobile and moved with the emperor whenever he wanted. The Mughals were solicitous of improving their artillery and, at first, many Ottomans and Portuguese were employed in the department. By the time of Aurangzeb, Mughal artillery had improved considerably, and foreigners found employment in the artillery department with difficulty.

The big guns were sometimes extravagantly large in size, but as a modern writer says, "These huge guns made more noise than they did harm; they could not be fired many times in a day, and were very liable to burst and destroy the men in charge." However, the Frenchman Bernier, who accompanied Shah Jahan to Lahore and Kashmir, found the light artillery, called "artillery of the stirrup", to be extremely well appointed. He says: "It consisted of fifty small field pieces, all of brass; each piece mounted on a well-made and handsomely painted carriage, containing two ammunition boxes, and drawn by two fine horses, with a third horse in reserve". Artillery or swivel-guns were also mounted on elephants and camels.

It is difficult to estimate the strength of the Mughal army. It consisted, under Shah Jahan, of about 200,000 cavalry, excluding the men working in the districts and with *fauj-dars*. It rose to 240,000 under Aurangzeb. The infantry under Shah Jahan excluding the non-fighting people, are placed at 40,000 and may

have been maintained at a similar figure under Aurangzeb.

How efficient was the Mughal army as compared to the neighbouring West and Central Asian states and the European states of the time? It is difficult to answer this question, though a number of European travellers, such as Bernier, have made adverse remarks about the efficiency of the Mughal army. A careful analysis shows that his remarks were really directed towards the Mughal infantry, which had no drill or discipline, was ill-organised and ill-led, and resembled a rabble. The development of the infantry had taken a different road in Europe. With the development of the flint-gun, the infantry became a formidable fighting force during the seventeenth century, and could even outclass the cavalry, as the Indian powers were to

realise to their cost during the eighteenth century. The success of the Mughals against the Uzbeks who could match themselves with the Persians at the time of the Balkh campaigns suggests that the Mughal army was not far inferior to the Central Asian and Persian armies in an open contest. Its major weakness was in the naval sphere, particularly in the field of sea-warfare. Though somewhat deficient in the field of artillery, it had apparently caught up with the Asian powers—though not with the European sea-going powers, by the time of Aurangzeb. But the army as a whole, particularly the cavalry, was closely linked with the jagirdari system which, in turn, was based on the feudal system of land relations prevalent in the country. In the ultimate resort, the strength and efficiency of one depended on the other.

### EXERCISES

1. Discuss the contribution of Jahangir and Shah Jahan to the expansion of the Mughal empire.
2. Describe the relations between the Mughals and the Uzbeks in the sixteenth century.
3. How did the question of Qandhar affect the relations between the Mughal empire and Iran? Describe these relations up to the reign of Aurangzeb.
4. What were the main aims of the Mughal policy in Central Asia?
5. Describe the organization of the *mansabdari* system. Mention the changes which took place in the *mansabdari* system after Akbar.
6. What were the main arms of the Mughal army? Make an estimate of the effectiveness of the Mughal army. Point out its main weaknesses.

## CHAPTER XVI

# Economic and Social Life and Cultural Developments Under the Mughals

### Economic and Social Conditions

#### STANDARD OF LIVING : THE MASSES

THE MUGHAL empire reached the zenith of its economic, social and cultural development during the first half of the seventeenth century. However, in reviewing the economic and social conditions, we shall review the developments from the advent of Akbar to the middle of the seventeenth century, since no basic changes in economic and social spheres took place during the period.

A striking feature of the economic and social situations during the time was the glaring disparity between the highly ostentatious life-style of the ruling classes, on the one hand, and acute poverty and want of the people—the peasants, the artisans and the labourers, on the other. Scanty clothing was conventional in south India, as we have noted in an earlier chapter. The climate had a great deal to do with this. However, clothing is necessary for some part of the year in north India. Babur was struck by the scanty clothes worn by the common people. He observed that "peasants and people of low standing go about naked." He then goes on to describe the *lungota* or *deccan cloth* worn by men, and the *sari* worn by women. His impression has been corroborated by later travellers. Ralph Fitch, who came to India towards the end of the sixteenth

century, says that at Banaras "the people go naked save a little cloth bound about their middle." Writing about the people between Lahore and Agra, Salbancke says, "The plebeian is so poor that the greatest part of them go naked." De Laet wrote that the labourers had insufficient clothing to keep themselves warm and cosy during winter. However, Fitch observed, "In the winter which is our May, the men wear quilted gowns of cotton, and quilted caps."

The remarks of the foreign travellers need to be treated with some caution. Coming from a colder climate and not familiar with the climate and traditions of India, the impression of nakedness which they gained was natural. The over-all impression remains one of insufficiency of clothing rather than nakedness. It should be remembered that in those days though cotton and cotton cloth production was more widely distributed over the countryside than at present, cloth was comparatively more expensive than it is now in terms of food.

Nakedness extended to shoes. Nikitin observed that the people of the Deccan went bare-footed. A modern author, Moreland, says that he did not find a shoe mentioned anywhere north of the Narmada river, except Bengal, and ascribes it to the high cost of leather. However, the contemporary English traveller, Ralph Fitch, speaking of Patna says,

"Here the women be so bedecked with silver and-copper that it is strange to see, they use no shoes by reason of the rings of silver and copper they wear on their toes"

As far as housing and furniture was concerned, little need be said. The mud houses in which the villagers lived were not different from those at present. They had hardly any furniture except cots and bamboo mats, and earthen utensils which were made by the village potter. Copper and bell-metal plates and utensils were expensive and were generally not used by the poor.

Regarding food, rice, millets and pulses (what Pelsaert and De Laet call "*khicheri*") formed the staple diet, with fish in Bengal and on the coasts, and meat in the south of the peninsula. In north India, *chapatis* made of wheat or coarse grains, with pulses and green vegetables were common. The common people, it is said, ate their main meal in the evening, and chewed pulse or other parched grain in the day. Ghee and oil were much cheaper relative to foodgrains then and seem to have been a staple part of the poor man's food. But salt and sugar were more expensive.

Thus, while people had less clothes to wear and shoes were costly, on balance they ate better. With more grazing land, they could keep more cattle, so that more milk and milk products must have been available. But the position was reversed in times of famine. It was costly to move grain by land, and there are many references to devastating famines in which parents sold their children, and there are even reports of men eating their own kind. Though the state organised relief kitchens and sometimes nobles and rich people also helped, these were never sufficient.

The standard of living ultimately depends upon income and wages. It is difficult to determine the income of the large mass of the

peasants in real terms, for money hardly entered into transaction in the villages. The village artisans were paid for their services by means of commodities which were fixed by custom. It is difficult to compute the average size of the holding of the peasant. The information available to us shows that there was a great deal of inequality in the villages. The peasant who did not have his own ploughs and bullocks often tilled the land of the zamindars or the upper castes, and could eke out a bare existence. Peasants of this type were called *pahis*. The sixteenth century Hindi poet, Tulsidas, has said that this type of cultivation was a source of misery. Whenever there was a famine—and famines were frequent—it was this class of peasants and the village artisans who suffered the most. The peasants who owned the land they tilled are called *khudkasht*. They paid land revenue at customary rates. Some of them had many ploughs and bullocks which they let out to their poorer brethren. It has been estimated that the population in India at the beginning of the seventeenth century was about 125 million. Hence, there was an abundance of cultivable land available and it may be surmised that peasant proprietors were more numerous than the *pahis* and the village artisans. All classes of peasants probably had more fuel at their disposal because forests were much more plentiful. Wood and charcoal were supplemented by droppings from their cattle which were more numerous than now.

The poorer sections in the village often migrated to towns for employment. This was partly due to the natural growth of population, and partly due to their abandoning cultivation due to famine or other unfavourable circumstances such as over-assessment. These people found employment as porters in the army, or as servants or as unskilled labourers in the towns.

According to recent studies, it seems that the productivity of the land was better in medieval times. With more surplus land available for cultivation, the average size of the holding may also have been larger. In medieval times, a peasant was not dispossessed from his land as long as he paid the land revenue. He could also sell his land. His children inherited his land as a matter of right after his death. Although the state dues were heavy, sometimes amounting to half of his produce, there is no reason to believe that the average peasant was left only with enough to keep body and soul together. Although the life of the peasant was hard, he had enough to eat and to meet his simple requirements. The pattern of his life was fixed partly by the seasons and partly by custom and tradition in which fairs, pilgrimages, ceremonies, etc., had their due place.

As far as the cities were concerned, the largest class consisted of the poor—the artisans, the servants and slaves, the soldiers, petty shopkeepers, etc.

The salary of the lowest grade of servant, according to European travellers, was less than two rupees a month. The bulk of the menials and foot soldiers began at less than three rupees a month. It has been calculated that a man could feed his family on two rupees a month. Moreland, who wrote in the early part of the twentieth century, observed that there was little change in the real wages of workers—they had a more balanced diet but less to spend on clothes, sugar, etc. Moreland concluded from this that the conditions of the Indian people had not worsened under the British rule. But the matter has to be seen in a wider context. While there was a vast increase in wealth and rise in real wages in Europe during the period, there was overall stagnation, if not decline, of living standards in India under the British rule. But this is a

matter which will be studied in greater detail in the volume on modern India.

#### THE RULING CLASSES : THE NOBLES AND ZAMINDARS

The nobility, along with the landed gentry, the *zamindars*, formed what may be called the ruling class in medieval India. Socially and economically, the Mughal nobility formed a privileged class. Theoretically, the doors of the Mughal nobility were open to everyone. In practice, persons belonging to aristocratic families, whatever they were, Indians or foreigners, had a decided advantage. To begin with, the bulk of the Mughal nobles were drawn from the homeland of the Mughals, Turan, and from its neighbouring areas Tajikistan, Khorasan, Iran, etc. Although Babur was a Turk, the Mughal rulers never followed a narrow, racialist policy. Babur tried to win the leading Afghan nobles to his side, but they proved to be restless and untrustworthy and soon defected. The tussle between the Mughals and the Afghans continued in Bihar and Bengal even under Akbar. But from the time of Jahangir, Afghans also began to be recruited in the nobility. Indian Muslims who were called Shaikhzadas or Hindustanis were also given service.

From the time of Akbar, Hindus also began to be recruited into the nobility on a regular basis. The largest section among them was that of the Rajputs. Among the Rajputs also, the Kachhwahas predominated. According to a modern calculation, the proportion of Hindus in the nobility under Akbar in 1594 was about 16 percent only. But these figures do not give an adequate idea of the position and influence of the Hindus. Both Raja Man Singh and Raja Birbal were the personal friends and boon companions of Akbar, while in the sphere of revenue administration, Raja Todar Mal had a

place of great influence and honour. The Rajputs who were recruited to the nobility were either hereditary rajas or belonged to aristocratic families related to or allied to the raja. Thus their incorporation into the nobility strengthened its aristocratic character. Despite this, the nobility did provide an avenue of promotion and distinction to many persons of humble origin.

The nobility attained a considerable measure of stability under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Both these monarchs paid careful attention to the organisation of the nobility (the *mansabdari* system), orderly promotions, discipline and the recruitment of competent people into the imperial service.

The Mughal nobles, as we have seen, received salaries which were extremely high by any standards. This, as well as the liberal policy of the Mughal emperors in matters of faith, and the stable political conditions in India attracted many talented persons from foreign lands to the Mughal court. Thus there was a brain drain in reverse. On account of the influx into India of Iranis, Turanis and many others in search of service at the Mughal court, a French traveller, Bernier, has stated that the Mughal nobility consisted of "foreigners who enticed each other to the court". Modern research has shown this statement to be fallacious. While talented people continued to come to India, and many of them rose to prominence in the service of the Mughals, all of them settled down in India and made it their permanent home. Thus during medieval times as during earlier times, India continued to provide a home to many people who came from outside. But these immigrants rapidly assimilated into the Indian society and culture, while at the same time, retaining some of their special traits. This accounts for the richness and diversity which has been a special feature of

Indian culture. Under Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the bulk of the nobles already consisted of those who had been born in India. Simultaneously, the proportion of Afghans, Indian Muslims (Hindustanis), and Hindus in the nobility continued to rise. A new section among the Hindus which entered the nobility during the period consisted of Marathas. Jahangir was the first monarch who realised that the Marathas were "the hub of affairs" in the Deccan, and tried to win them over to his side. The policy was continued by Shah Jahan. Among the Maratha sardars who served Shah Jahan was Shahji, the father of Shivaji, though he soon defected. Aurangzeb also gave service to many Marathas and Deccani Muslims. We shall discuss Mughal relations with the Marathas in a later section. However, it may be noted that while the Hindus formed roughly 24 percent of the nobility under Shah Jahan, they accounted for about 33 percent of the nobles during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign, while their total number doubled. Of the Hindu nobles, the Marathas formed more than half.

Although the Mughal nobles received extremely high salaries, their expenses were also very high. Each noble maintained a large train of servants and attendants, and a large stable of horses, elephants, etc., and transport of all types. Many of them maintained a large harem of women, which was considered normal for a man of status in those times. The nobles aped the Mughal emperors in leading a very ostentatious life. They lived in fine houses containing gardens with fruit trees and running water. They wore the finest clothes and spent a lot on their table expenses. According to an account, 40 dishes used to be prepared for each meal for Akbar. A lot of money was spent on fruits, the choicest being imported from Samarkand and Bokhara. Ice, which was an item of luxury,

was used the year round by the privileged classes. Jewels and ornaments which were worn both by men and women was another costly item. Jahangir introduced the fashion of men wearing costly jewels in their ears after piercing them. To some extent, jewellery was also meant to be a reserve to be used in any emergency. Another item of expenditure was presents to the emperor which had to be made twice a year. However, it should be remembered that the value of presents to be given was fixed according to the status of the individual. Also, the nobles received presents from the emperor in return.

It has been argued that the Mughal nobles had little interest in saving because after their death, all their properties reverted to the emperor because, in theory, everything flowed from him. But this is not true. The Mughal emperors *did not* claim the property of their nobles. However, when a noble died, a careful inventory of his property and estate was made because, generally, the noble owed considerable sums of money to the central treasury. These debts had to be adjusted before the property could be handed over to his heirs. Secondly, the emperor reserved the right of distributing the property of a noble between his surviving sons according to his choice, and not on the basis as laid down by Islamic law. Amongst other things it means that daughters did not receive a share of their father's properties. The procedure sometimes led to considerable delays and harassment to the dependents of the deceased noble. Aurangzeb made a rule that the properties of a noble who did not owe money to the state were not to be attached and that, in any case, a certain part of the property of a deceased noble should be made available immediately to his dependents.

Nevertheless, spending, not hoarding, was the dominant characteristic of the ruling class

of the time. Although we do hear of a few nobles who left large sums in cash and jewellery at the time of their death, most of the nobles were deeply in debt due to the extravagant style of their living. One reason for this was that there were no adequate outlets for profitable investments. In a remarkable passage, Abul Fazl advises the nobles "to invest a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings". These included sale and purchase of goods. Abul Fazl also invited the nobles to invest money on interest. From the remarks of contemporary European travellers, it appears that many nobles took an interest in trade and commerce. The English factor at Surat remarked in 1614 that "large and small are merchants." Members of the royal family, including princes and queen mothers, took keen interest in foreign trade. Akbar's widow, the mother of Jahangir, owned ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. Mir Jumla, a leading nobleman during the reign of Aurangzeb, owned a fleet of ships which carried on extensive commerce with Persia, Arabia and countries of South-East Asia. Even the chief *qazi* of Aurangzeb had commercial undertakings which he tried to conceal from the emperor. Thus, individual nobles were not at all averse to taking part in trade, and often tried to misuse their positions to earn additional money for their expenses. However, the role of the nobility as a class in promoting and expanding commerce is uncertain. Generally speaking, income from land rather than commerce remained the chief occupation and concern of the nobles. The merchants had more to fear from them than to expect their favours.

The pattern of living of the nobles was aped by other classes in society to the extent possible. This led to a demand for all kinds of luxury goods, or goods of superior quality

and workmanship. Although both the emperors and the nobles were fond of rarities from foreign countries, or "toys" as they were called by the European traders, the bulk of their requirements were produced within the country. That is why, as Babur had observed, artisans of every kind were to be found in abundance in India. Some of the nobles purchased lands which were converted into markets or orchards. The introduction of new varieties of fruits in India and their popularisation must be considered one of the achievements of the Mughal emperors and the nobility. The nobles also provided patronage to artists of various types. Many of them maintained musicians in their households. Patronage was also given to painters, poets and scholars. Thus a cultural climate was generated. Patronage and support were extended to artisans who could produce works of superior quality.

Rapid growth in the number of the nobility during the seventeenth century, tensions between different groups, individuals and sections, and a crisis in the working of the jagirdari system had a serious effect on the discipline and proper functioning of the nobility under Aurangzeb and during the reign of his successors. Some of these aspects are dealt with in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

#### ZAMINDARS

From the writings of Abul Fazl and other contemporary authors, it is clear that personal ownership of land was very old in India. The right of ownership in land depended mainly on succession. But new rights of ownership in land were being created all the time. The tradition was that any one who first brought land under cultivation was considered its owner. There was plenty of cultivable wasteland (*banjar*) available in medieval times. It was not difficult for an enterprising group of

people to settle a new village or to bring under cultivation the wastelands belonging to a village and become the owners of these lands. In addition to owning the lands they cultivated, a considerable section of the zamindars had the hereditary right of collecting land revenue from a number of villages. This was called his *talluqa* or his *zamindari*. For collecting the land revenue, the zamindars received a share of the land revenue which could go up to 25 per cent in some areas. The zamindar was *not* the "owner" of all the lands comprising his *zamindari*. The peasants who actually cultivated the land could not be dispossessed as long as they paid the land revenue. Thus the zamindars and the peasants had their own hereditary rights in land.

Above the zamindars were the rajas who dominated larger or smaller tracts and enjoyed varied degrees of internal autonomy. These rajas are also called zamindars by the Persian writers to emphasise their subordinate status, but their position was superior to that of the zamindars who collected land revenue. Thus, medieval society, including rural society, was highly segmented or hierarchical.

The zamindars had their own armed forces, and generally lived in forts or *garhis* which was both a place of refuge and a status symbol. The combined forces of the zamindars were considerable. According to the *Ain*, in Akbar's reign they had 384,558 sawars, 4,277,057 foot soldiers, 1863 elephants, and 4260 cannons. But the zamindars were dispersed and could never field such large forces any time at one place. The figures, perhaps, also include the strength of the subordinate rajas.

The zamindars generally had close connections on a caste, clan or tribal basis with the peasants settled in their *zamindaris*. They had considerable local information also about the productivity of land. The zamindars formed

a very numerous and powerful class which was to be found all over the country under different names such as *deshmukh*, *patil*, *nayak*, etc. Thus it was not easy for any central authority to ignore or alienate them.

It is difficult to say anything about the living standards of the zamindars. Compared to the nobles, their income was limited: the smaller ones may have lived more or less like the peasants. However, the living standards of the larger zamindars might have approached those of petty rajas or nobles. Most of the zamindars apparently lived in the countryside and formed a kind of loose, dispersed local gentry.

In addition to the zamindars, there was a large class of religious divines and learned men who in return for their services, were granted tracts of land for their maintenance. Such grants were called *milk* or *madad-i-maash* in Mughal terminology, and *shasan* in Rajasthan. Although these grants were to be renewed by every ruler, they often became hereditary in practice. Many of the grantees held official positions such as that of the *qazi*, etc. Hence, they had both a rural and an urban base. Writers, historians, *hakims*, etc., were also often drawn from this section. We have little idea, again, of the living standards of this section. In course of time, some of them began to be regarded a part of the rural gentry. It is possible that along with the rich peasants this local gentry provided a limited market for products of the city, and also for the products of the superior type of rural artisans.

### Trade and Commerce

#### THE MIDDLE CLASSES—NATURE AND STANDARD OF LIVING

The middle classes in medieval India consisted, in the main, of merchants, professional classes such as *vaidyas* and *hakims* and

officials. We have already referred to the standards of living of some of the professional classes. The professional and official classes were numerous in medieval India.

There was high degree of professionalism among the Indian merchants. Some specialised in wholesale trade, and others in retail trade, the former being called *seth* or *bohra* and the latter *beoparis* or *banik*. In south India, the *chettis* formed the trading community. There was a special class, *banjaras*, who specialised in the carrying trade. The *banjaras* used to move from place to place, sometimes with thousands of oxen, laden with foodgrains, salt, *ghee*, etc. The *sarrafs* (shroff) specialised in changing money, keeping money in deposit or lending it, or transmitting it from one part of the country to the other by means of *hundi*. The *hundi* was a letter of credit payable after a certain period. The use of *hundis* made it easier to move goods or to transmit money from one part of the country to another. The *hundis* were cashed at a discount which sometimes included insurance so that the cost of goods lost or destroyed in transit could be recovered. By these means, the Indian merchants could easily ship goods to countries of West Asia as well where there were Indian banking houses. English and Dutch traders who came to Gujarat during the seventeenth century found the Indian financial system to be highly developed, and the Indian merchants to be active and alert. There was keen competition for inside information and whenever there was a shortage of some goods in some part of the country, it was made good quickly by the merchants. But this applied to goods of high quality. Food grains and bulk articles were costly to move overland, but not so costly if moved by rivers. Hence, the major rivers carried much more goods in medieval times than now. However, the total trade was limited

since the villages, while not completely self-sufficient, bought only a limited number of things from outside such as salt, iron and a few consumer goods. Long-distance trade generally catered to the needs of the affluent sections in the cities.

The trading community in India was fairly large in number and included some of the richest merchants in the world. The names of Virji Vohra who dominated the Surat trade for several decades and who had a large fleet of ships, Malaya Chetti on the Coromandal coast, and Abdul Ghaffoor Bohra who left 85 lakhs of rupees in cash and goods at the time of his death in 1718 are some of the noteworthy cases. There were many wealthy merchants in Agra, Delhi, Balasore (Orissa) and Bengal also. The wealthy merchants in the coastal ports of Gujarat lived in an ostentatious manner and aped the manners of the nobles. They lived in lofty houses with coloured tiles, wore fine clothes, rode well-caparisoned horses and had people carrying flags and banners before them when they moved out in public. European travellers mention the commodious and well-built houses in which the wealthy merchants of Agra and Delhi lived. But the ordinary sorts lived in houses above their shops. The French traveller, Bernier, says that the merchants tried to look poor because they were afraid that they would be used like "fill'd sponges", i.e., squeezed of their wealth. This appears to be wrong because the emperors from the time of Sher Shah passed many laws for protecting the property of the merchants. The laws of Sher Shah are well known. Jahangir's ordinances included a provision that "if anyone, whether unbeliever or Musalman should die, his property and effects should be left for his heirs, and no one should interfere with them. If he should have no heirs, they should appoint inspectors and separate guardians to guard the

property, so that its value might be expended in a lawful expenditure, such as the building of mosques and sarais, repair of broken bridges and the digging of tanks and wells."

Thus, the concept of protection of private property, including the property of merchants, had clearly emerged. Nevertheless, force of habit and insecurity in the cities where thefts were common made many merchants live like ordinary people or in a miserly manner.

#### ORGANIZATION OF TRADE AND COMMERCE— ROLE OF EUROPEAN TRADING COMPANIES

Trade and commerce expanded in India during the first half of the seventeenth century due to a number of factors. Perhaps the most important factor was the political integration of the country under Mughal rule and establishment of conditions of law and order over extensive areas. The Mughals paid attention to roads and sarais which made communication easier. A uniform tax was levied on goods at the point of their entry into the empire. Road cesses or *rahdari* was declared illegal, though it continued to be collected by some of the local rajas. The Mughals minted silver rupees of high purity which became a standard coin in India and abroad and thus helped India's trade.

Some of the Mughal policies also helped the commercialisation of the economy or the growth of a money economy. Salaries to the standing army as well as to many of the administrative personnel (but not to the nobles) were paid in cash. Under the *zabti* system, the land revenue was assessed and required to be paid in cash. Even when the peasant was given the option of choosing other methods of assessment, such as crop-sharing, the share of the state was generally sold in the villages with the help of grain-dealers. It has been estimated that about 20 percent of the rural produce was marketed, which was a high proportion.

The growth of the rural grain markets led to the rise of small townships or *qasbas*. The demand for all types of luxury goods by the nobles led to the expansion of handicraft production and to the growth of towns. According to Ralph Fitch who came to India during Akbar's reign, Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were each larger than London. Monserrate says that Lahore was second to none of the cities in Europe or Asia. Bernier says that Delhi was not much less than Paris and that Agra was larger than Delhi. Ahmadabad was also a large town, being as large as London and its suburbs. Dacca, Rajmahal, Multan and Burhanpur were large towns, while Patna in Bihar had a population of 2 lakhs. The growth of towns and town life is one of the significant features of seventeenth century India. A study of Agra shows that it doubled in area during the seventeenth century.

Another factor which helped India's trade was the arrival of the Dutch and English traders towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Indian traders welcomed these traders for they helped to break the Portuguese monopoly of sea trade, and in course of time, helped to establish a direct link between India and the European markets. However, like the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English traders also desired to establish a monopoly and to establish fortified establishments so that they could defy the local rulers. The Mughals, therefore, watched their activities closely.

The Portuguese power had begun to decline during the second half of the sixteenth century, as was demonstrated by the defeat of the Spanish Armada by England in 1588. The union of Portugal with Spain which involved it in Spain's European rivalries and the declining population of Portugal also hastened its decline. Also, unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch

and the English were organised on commercial lines, though the merchants were influential enough to get the military backing of their governments whenever necessary.

Despite vehement Portuguese opposition, the Dutch established themselves at Masulipatam, obtaining a *farman* from the ruler of Golconda in 1606. They also established themselves in the Spice Islands (Java and Sumatra) so that by 1610 they predominated in the spice trade. The Dutch had originally come to the coast for the sake of the spice trade. But they quickly realized that spices could be obtained most easily against Indian textiles. The cloth produced on the Coromandal coast was most acceptable and also cheapest to carry. Hence, they spread south from Masulipatam to the Coromandal coast, obtaining Pulicat from the local ruler and making it a base of their operations.

Like the Dutch, the English also had come to the coast for the spice trade, but the hostility of the Dutch who had more resources and had already established themselves in the Spice Islands forced the English to concentrate on India. After defeating a Portuguese fleet outside Surat, they were able, at last, to set up a factory there in 1612. This was confirmed in 1618 by a *farman* from Jahangir obtained with the help of Sir Thomas Roe. The Dutch followed and soon established a factory at Surat.

The English quickly realised the importance of Gujarat as a centre for India's export trade in textiles. In fact, export of textiles was the base of India's foreign trade. As an English writer observed, "From Aden to Achin (in Malaya) from head to foot, everyone was clothed in Indian textiles." This statement may be somewhat exaggerated, but it was essentially true. The English tried to break into India's trade with the Red Sea and Persian

Gulf ports. In 1622, with the help of the Persian forces, they captured Ormuz, the Portuguese base at the head of the Persian Gulf.

Thus, by the first quarter of the seventeenth century, both the Dutch and the English were well set in the Indian trade, and the Portuguese monopoly was broken for ever. The Portuguese remained at Goa and also at Daman and Dru, but their share in India's overseas trade declined continuously and was insignificant by the end of the century.

Apart from sharing in the Asian trade, the English searched for articles which could be exported from India to Europe. At first, "the prime trade" was indigo which was used to colour the woollens. The indigo found most suitable was that produced at Sarkhej in Gujarat and Bayana near Agra. Soon the English developed the export of Indian textiles, called "calicoes", to Europe. At first, the produce of Gujarat was sufficient for the purpose. As the demand grew, the English sought the cloth produced in Agra and its neighbourhood. Even this was not enough. Hence the Coromandal was developed as an alternate source of supply. By 1640, export of cloth from the Coromandal equalled that from Gujarat, and by 1660 it was three times that from Gujarat, Masulpatam and Fort St. David which later developed into Madras were the chief centres of this trade.

The Dutch joined the English in their new venture, exporting both calico and indigo from the Coromandal.

The English also explored Lehri Bandar at the mouth of the river Indus which could draw the produce of Multan and Lahore by transporting goods down the river Indus, but the trade there remained subsidiary to the Gujarat trade. More important were their efforts to develop the trade of Bengal and

Orissa. The activities of the Portuguese and the Magh pirates made the development slow. However, by 1650, the English had set themselves up at Hoogly and at Balasore in Orissa, exporting from there raw silk and sugar in addition to textiles. Another item which was developed was the export of *salt petre* which supplemented the European sources for gunpowder and which was also used as a ballast for ships going to Europe. The best quality *salt petre* was found in Bihar. Exports from the eastern areas grew rapidly, and were equal in value to the exports from the Coromandal by the end of the century.

Thus the English and the Dutch companies opened up new markets and articles of export for India. Indian textiles became a rage in England by the last quarter of the seventeenth century. As an English observer wrote, "Almost everything that used to be made of wool or silk, relating either to dress of the women or the furniture of our houses was supplied by the Indian trade". As a result of agitations, in 1701, "all calicoes painted, dyed, printed or stained" from Persia, China or the East Indies (i.e. India) were banned. But these and other laws imposing severe penalties had little effect. In place of printed cloth, the export of white Indian calicoes jumped from 2½ lakh pieces to 9½ lakh pieces in 1701 and to 20 lakhs in 1719.

It is difficult to compute the total quantum of additional trade generated by the European companies. Moreland, who made a detailed study, says that the direct benefit accruing to India from the new exports was confined to relatively small areas, but in those areas it was substantial.

The production of cash crops and increased production of textiles and other commodities further strengthened the trend towards the growth of a money economy. India was

more closely linked to the world markets, especially to the European markets where a commercial revolution was taking place. But this linkage had negative factors as well. Europe had little to supply to India in return for its goods. It was, therefore, forced to export gold and silver to India to buy the goods it wanted. While the increasing supply of gold and silver helped in commercial expansion, it led to a rapid rise in prices which roughly doubled during the first half of the seventeenth century. As usual, inflation hit the poor hardest. Secondly, the Europeans searched for alternatives to their export of gold and silver to India. They thought of many methods, but the one which appealed to them the most was the acquisition of territories or an empire in India whose revenues could pay for their imports. They could not succeed in India as long as the Mughal empire was strong. But it was not long in coming as soon as the weakness of the empire became manifest.

### Cultural Developments

There was an outburst of many-sided cultural activity in India under the Mughal rule. The traditions in the field of architecture, painting, literature and music created during this period set a norm and deeply influenced the succeeding generations. In this sense, the Mughal period can be called a second classical age following the Gupta age in northern India. In this cultural development, Indian traditions were amalgamated with the Turko-Iranian culture brought to the country by the Mughals. The Timurid court at Samarqand had developed as the cultural centre of West and Central Asia. Babur was conscious of this cultural heritage. He was critical of many of the cultural forms existing in India and was determined to set proper standards. The development of art and culture in various regions of India during the fourteenth

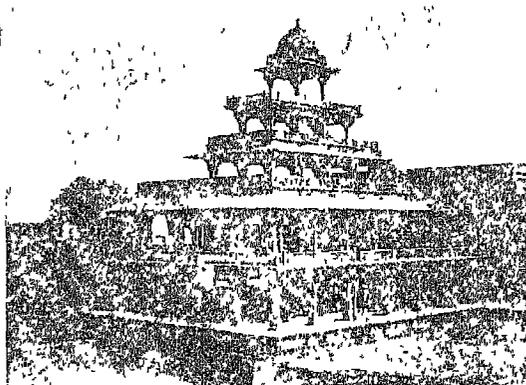
and fifteenth centuries had led to a rich and varied development from which it was possible to draw upon. But for this, the cultural efflorescence of the Mughal age would hardly have been possible. Peoples from different areas of India, as well as peoples belonging to different faiths and races contributed to this cultural development in various ways. In this sense, the culture developed during the period was tending towards a truly national culture.

### ARCHITECTURE

The Mughals built magnificent forts, palaces, gates, public buildings, mosques, *baolis* (water tank or well), etc. They also laid out many formal gardens with running water. In fact, use of running water even in their palaces and pleasure resorts was a special feature of the Mughals. Babur was very fond of gardens and laid out a few in the neighbourhood of Agra and Lahore. Some of the Mughal gardens, such as the Nishat Bagh garden in Kashmir, the Shalimar at Lahore, the Pinjore garden in the Punjab foothills, etc., have survived to this day. A new impetus to architecture was given by Sher Shah. His famous mausoleum at Sasaram (Bihar) and his mosque in the old fort at Delhi are considered architectural marvels. They form the climax of the pre-Mughal style of architecture, and the starting point for the new.

Akbar was the first Mughal ruler who had the time and means to undertake construction on a large scale. He built a series of forts, the most famous of which is the fort at Agra. Built in red sandstone, this massive fort had many magnificent gates. The climax of fort building was reached at Delhi where Shah Jahan built his famous Red Fort.

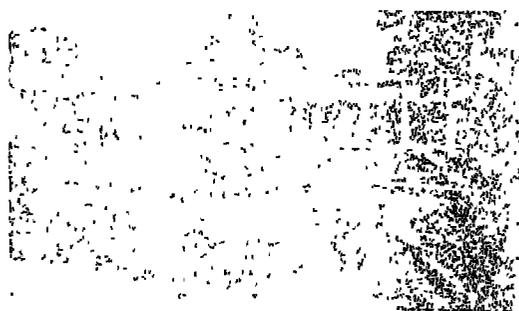
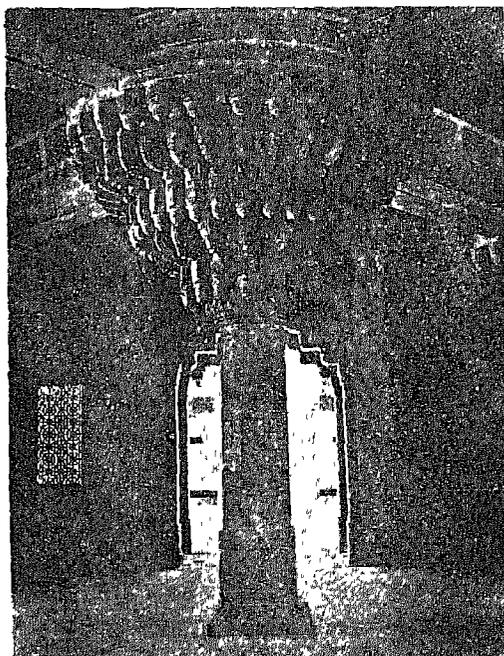
In 1572, Akbar commenced a palace-cum-fort complex at Fatehpur Sikri, 36 kilometres from Agra, which he completed in eight years. Built atop a hill, along with a large artificial



**Panch Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri**

lake, it included many buildings in the style of Gujarat and Bengal. These included deep eaves, balconies, and fanciful kiosks. In the Panch Mahal built for taking the air, all the

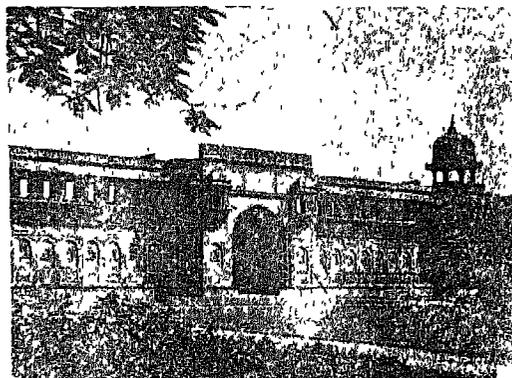
**A pillar in the Diwan-i-Khas, Fatehpur Sikri**



**Turkish Sultana's Palace, Fatehpur Sikri**

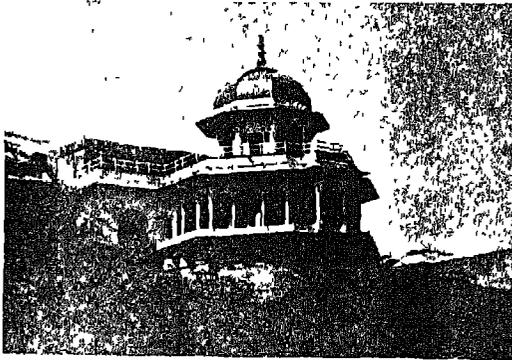
types of pillars used in various temples were employed to support flat roofs. The Gujarat style of architecture is used most widely in the palace built probably for his Rajput wife or wives. Buildings of a similar type were also built in the fort at Agra, though only a few of them have survived. Akbar took a close personal interest in the work of construction both at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri. Persian or Central Asian influence can be seen in the glazed blue tiles used for decoration in the walls or for tiling the roofs. But the most magnificent building was the mosque and the gateway to it called the Buland Darwaza or the Lofty Gate,

**Jahangiri Mahal, Agra Fort**



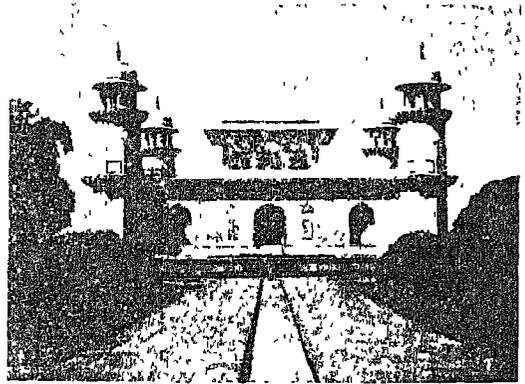
built to commemorate Akbar's victory in Gujarat. The gate is in the style of what is called a half-dome portal. What was done was to slice a dome into half. The sliced portion provided the massive outward facade of the gate, while smaller doors could be made in the rear wall where the dome and the floor meet. This devise, borrowed from Iran, became a common feature in Mughal buildings later.

With the consolidation of the empire, the Mughal architecture reached its climax. Towards the end of Jahangir's reign began the practice of putting up buildings entirely of marble and decorating the walls with floral designs made of semi-precious stones. This method of decoration, called *pietra dura*, became even more popular under Shah Jahan who used it on a large scale in the Taj Mahal, justly regarded as a jewel of the builder's art.



Masumman Burj, Agra Fort

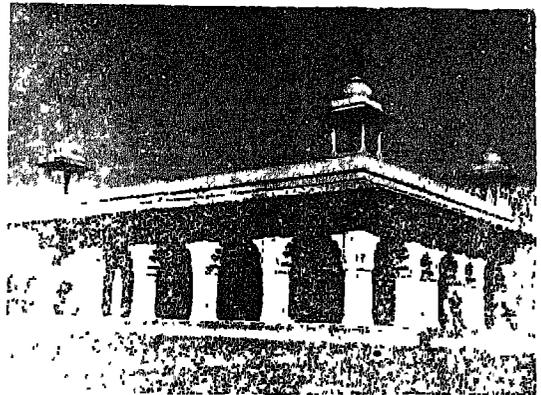
The Taj Mahal brought together in a pleasing manner all the architectural forms developed by the Mughals. Humayun's tomb built at Delhi towards the beginning of Akbar's reign, and which had a massive dome of marble, may be considered a precursor of the Taj. The double dome was another feature of this



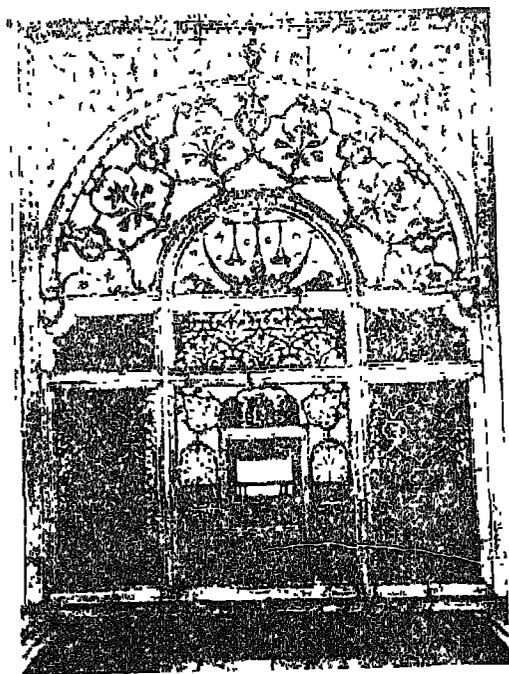
Tomb of Itimaduddaula, Agra

building. This devise enabled a bigger dome to be built with a smaller one inside. The chief glory of the Taj is the massive dome and the four slender minarets linking the platform to the main building. The decorations are kept to a minimum, delicate marble screens, *pietra dura* inlay work and kiosks (*chhatris*) adding to the effect. The building gains by being placed in the midst of a formal garden.

Mosque-building also reached its climax under Shah Jahan, the two most noteworthy ones being the Moti Masjid in the Agra fort, built like the Taj entirely in marble, and the



Diwan-i-Khas, Red Fort, Delhi



Scales of Justice, Red Fort, Delhi

other the Jama Masjid at Delhi built in red sandstone. A lofty gate, tall, slender minarets, and a series of domes are a feature of the Jama Masjid.

Although not many buildings were put up by Aurangzeb who was economy-minded, the Mughal architectural traditions based on a combination of Hindu and Turko-Iranian forms and decorative designs, continued without a break into the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus Mughal traditions influenced the palaces and forts of many provincial and local kingdoms. Even the Golden Temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar which was rebuilt several times during the period was built on the arch and dome principle and incorporated many features of the Mughal traditions of architecture.

## PAINTING

The Mughals made a distinctive contribution in the field of painting. They introduced new themes depicting the court, battle scenes and the chase, and added new colours and new forms. They created a living tradition of painting which continued to work in different parts of the country long after the glory of the Mughals had disappeared. The richness of the style, again, was due to the fact that India had an old tradition of paintings. While no palm-leaves older than the twelfth century have survived to indicate the style of painting, the wall-paintings of Ajanta are an eloquent indication of its vigour. After the eighth century, the tradition seems to have decayed, but palm-leaf manuscripts and illustrated Jain texts from the thirteenth century onwards show that the tradition had not died.

Apart from the Jains, some of the provincial kingdoms, such as Malwa and Gujarat extended their patronage to painting during the fifteenth century. But a vigorous revival began only under Akbar. While at the court of the Shah of Iran, Humayun had taken into his service two master painters who accompanied him to India. Under their leadership, during the reign of Akbar, painting was organised in one of the imperial establishments (*karkhanas*). A large number of painters from different parts of the country were invited, many of them from lowly castes. From the beginning, both Hindus and Muslims joined in the work. Thus Jaswant and Dasawan were two of the famous painters of Akbar's court. The school developed rapidly, and soon became a celebrated centre of production. Apart from illustrating Persian books of fables, the painters were soon assigned the task of illustrating the Persian text of the *Mahabharata* the historical work, *Akbar Nama*, and others. Indian themes and Indian scenes and land-

scapes, thus, came in vogue and helped to free the school from Persian influence. Indian colours, such as peacock blue, the Indian red, etc., began to be used. Above all, the somewhat flat effect of the Persian style began to be replaced by the roundedness of the Indian brush, giving the pictures a three dimensional effect.

Mughal painting reached a climax under Jahangir who had a very discriminating eye. It was a fashion in the Mughal school for the faces, bodies and feet of the people in a single picture to be painted by different artists. Jahangir claims that he could distinguish the work of each artist in a picture.

Apart from painting hunting, battle and court scenes, under Jahangir special progress



Shah Jahan in Darbar



Mughal painting showing a class in progress

was made in portrait painting and paintings of animals. Mansur was the great name in this field. Portrait painting also became fashionable.

Under Akbar, European painting was introduced at the court by the Portuguese priests. Under their influence, the principles of foreshortening, whereby near and distant people and things could be placed in perspective was quietly adopted.

While the tradition continued under Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb's lack of interest in painting led to a dispersal of the artists to different places

in the country. This helped in the development of painting in the states of Rajasthan and the Punjab hills.

The Rajasthan style of painting combined the themes and earlier traditions of western India or Jain school of painting with Mughal forms and styles. Thus in addition to hunting and court scenes, it had paintings on mythological themes, such as the dalliance of Krishna with Radha, or the *Barah-masa*, that is, the seasons, or *Ragas* (melodies). The *Pahari* school continued these traditions.

#### LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND MUSIC

The important role of Persian and Sanskrit as vehicles of thought and government at the all-India level, and the development of regional languages, largely as a result of the growth of the Bhakti movement, have already been mentioned. Regional languages also developed due to the patronage extended to them by local and regional rulers.

These trends continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the time of Akbar, knowledge of Persian had become so widespread in north India that he dispensed with the tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language (*Hindavi*) in addition to Persian. However, tradition of keeping revenue records in the local language continued in the Deccan states till their extinction in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Persian prose and poetry reached a climax under Akbar's reign. Abul Fazl who was a great scholar and a stylist, as well as the leading historian of the age, set a style of prose-writing which was emulated for many generations. The leading poet of the age was his brother Faizi who also helped in Akbar's translation department. The translation of the *Mahabharata* was carried out under his supervision. Utbi and Naziri were the two other leading Persian

poets. Though born in Persia, they were among the many poets and scholars who migrated from Iran to India during the period and made the Mughal court one of the cultural centres of the Islamic world. Hindus also contributed to the growth of Persian literature. Apart from literary and historical works a number of famous dictionaries of the Persian language were also compiled during the period.

Although not much significant and original work was done in Sanskrit during the period, the number of Sanskrit works produced during the period is quite impressive. As before, most of the works were produced in south and east India under the patronage of local rulers, though a few were produced by brahmanas employed in the translation department of the emperors.

Regional languages acquired stability and maturity and some of the finest lyrical poetry was produced during this period. The dalliance of Krishna with Radha and the milkmaids, pranks of the child Krishna and stories from *Bhagawat* figure largely in lyrical poetry in Bengali, Oriya, Hindi, Rajasthani and Gujarati during this period. Many devotional hymns to Rama were also composed and the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* translated into the regional languages, especially if they had not been translated earlier. A few translations and adaptations from Persian were also made. Both Hindus and Muslims contributed in this. Thus, Alaol composed in Bengali and also translated from Hindi the *Padmavat*, the story written by a Muslim Sufi saint, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, who used the attack of Alauddin Khalji on Chittor as an allegory to expound Sufi ideas on the relations of soul with God, along with Hindu ideas about *maya*.

Medieval Hindi in the Brij form, that is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Agra, was also patronised by the Mughal emperors and Hindu rulers. From the time of Akbar,

Hindi poets began to be attached to the Mughal court. A leading Mughal noble, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, produced a fine blend of Bhakti poetry with Persian ideas of life and human relations. Thus the Persian and the Hindi literary traditions began to influence each other. But the most influential Hindi poet was Tulsidas whose hero was Rama and who used a dialect of Hindi spoken in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh around Banaras. Pleading for a modified caste system based not on birth but on individual qualities, Tulsi was essentially a humanistic poet who upheld family ideals and complete devotion to Rama as a way of salvation open to all, irrespective of caste.

In south India, Malayalam started its literary career as a separate language in its own right. Marathi reached its apogee at the hands of Eknath and Tukaram. Asserting the importance of Marathi, Eknath exclaims: "If Sanskrit was made by God, was Prakrit born of thieves and knaves? Let these errings of vanity alone. God is no partisan of tongues. To Him Prakrit and Sanskrit are alike. My language Marathi is worthy of expressing the highest sentiments and is rich laden with the fruits of divine knowledge."

This undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of all those writing in local languages. It also shows the confidence and the status acquired by these languages. Due to the writings of the Sikh Gurus, Punjabi received a new life.

### MUSIC

Another branch of cultural life in which Hindus and Muslims cooperated was music. Akbar patronised Tansen of Gwalior who is credited with composing many new melodies (*ragas*). Jahangir and Shah Jahan as well as many Mughal nobles followed this example. There are many apocryphal stories about the burial of music by the orthodox Aurangzeb.

Recent research shows that Aurangzeb banished singing from his court, but not performance of musical instruments. In fact, Aurangzeb himself was an accomplished *veena* player. Music in all forms continued to be patronised by Aurangzeb's queens in the harem and by the nobles. That is why the largest number of books on classical Indian music in Persian were written during Aurangzeb's reign. But some of the most important developments in the field of music took place later on in the eighteenth century during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1720-48).

### RELIGIOUS IDEAS AND BELIEFS AND PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION

The Bhakti movement continued apace during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Amongst the new movements was the Sikh movement in the Punjab and what is called Maharashtra Dharma in Maharashtra. The Sikh movement had its origin with the preachings of Nanak. But its development is closely linked with the institution of Guruship. The first four Gurus continued the tradition of quiet meditation and scholarship. The fifth Guru, Arjun Das, completed the compilation of the Sikh scriptures called the *Adi Granth* or *Granth Sahib*. To emphasise that the Guru combined both spiritual and worldly leadership in his person, he began to live in an aristocratic style. He erected lofty buildings at Amritsar, wore fine clothes, kept fine horses procured from Central Asia and maintained retainers in attendance. He also started a system of collecting offerings from the Sikhs at the rate of one-tenth of their income.

Akbar had been deeply impressed with the Sikh Gurus and, it is said, visited them at Amritsar. However, a clash began with the imprisonment and death of Guru Arjun by Jahangir on a charge of helping rebel prince, Khusrau, with

money and prayers. His successor, Guru Har Govind, was also imprisoned for some time, but he was soon set free and developed good relations with Jahangir and accompanied him in his journey to Kashmir just before his death. But he came into clash with Shah Jahan on a hunting incident. By this time the Guru had a sizeable following, including a Pathan contingent led by Painsa Khan. There were a series of skirmishes and ultimately the Guru retired to the Punjab foothills where he was not interfered with.

Thus there was no atmosphere of confrontation between the Sikhs and the Mughal rulers during this period. Nor was there any systematic persecution of the Hindus, and hence, no occasion for the Sikhs or any group or sect to stand forth as the champion of the Hindus against religious persecution. The occasional conflict between the Gurus and the Mughal rulers was personal and political rather than religious. Despite some display of orthodoxy by Shah Jahan at the beginning of his reign and a few acts of intolerance, such as the demolition of "new" temples, he was not narrow in his outlook which was further tempered towards the end of his reign by the influence of his liberal son, Dara. Dara, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, was by temperament a scholar and a Sufi who loved to discourse with religious divines. With the help of brahmanas of Kasi, he got the *Gita* translated into Persian. But his most significant work was an anthology of the *Vedas* in the introduction to which Dara declared the *Vedas* to be "heavenly books in point of time" and "in conformity with the holy *Quran*", thus underlining the belief that there was no fundamental difference between Hinduism and Islam.

From Gujarat another saint, Dadu, preached a non-sectarian (*nipakh*) path. He refused to identify himself with either the Hindus or the Muslims, or to bother with the revealed scrip-

tures of the two, asserting the indivisibility of the *Brahma* or the Supreme Reality.

The same liberal trend can be seen in the life and works of Tukaram, the supreme exponent of Bhakti in Maharashtra at Pandharpur, which had become the centre of the Maharashtra Dharma and where worship of Vithoba, a form of Vishnu, had become popular. Tukaram, who states that he was born a sudra used to do *puja* to the god with his own hand.

It was not to be expected that such ideas and practices would be easily accepted by the orthodox elements belonging to the two leading faiths, Hinduism or Islam, and thus give up the entrenched positions of power and influence which they had enjoyed for a long time. The sentiments of the orthodox Hindus were echoed by Raghunandan of Navadwipa (Nadia) in Bengal. Considered to be the most influential writer on the *Dharamshastras* during the medieval period, Raghunandan asserted the privileges of the brahmanas stating that none other except the brahmanas had the right to read the scriptures or to preach. He ends up by saying that in the *Kali* age there were only two *varnas*, brahmanas and sudras, the true kshatriyas having disappeared long ago and the vaishyas and others having lost their caste status due to the non-performance of appropriate duties. Ramanand of Maharashtra, while putting forward a philosophy of activism, was equally vehement in asserting the privileges of the brahmanas.

Among the Muslims, too, while the trend of *tauhid* continued apace, and was supported by many leading Sufi saints, a small group of the orthodox *ulama* reacted against it and the liberal policies of Akbar. The most renowned figure in the Muslim orthodox and revivalist movement of the time was Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. A follower of the orthodox Naqshbandi school of Sufis which had been introduced in

India during Akbar's reign, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi opposed the concept of pantheistic mysticism (*tauhid*) or the belief in the unity of Godhead denouncing it as un-Islamic. He also opposed all those practices and beliefs which were due to the influence of Hinduism, such as the use of music in religious gatherings (*sama*), excessive meditation, visiting tombs of saints, etc. In order to assert the Islamic character of the state, he demanded reimposition of *jizyah*, a stern attitude towards the Hindus and the minimum association with them by Muslims. In order to implement this programme, he started centres and also wrote letters to the emperor and to many nobles to win them over to his side.

However, the ideas of Shaikh Ahmad had little impact. Jahangir imprisoned him for claiming a status beyond that of the Prophet and only released him after his retraction. Nor did Aurangzeb pay any special attention to his son and successor.

It will thus be seen that the influence of the orthodox thinkers and preachers was limited,

being necessarily confined to narrow circles. Their chief hope was that their ideas would receive the support and backing of those who held positions of wealth and power in society and the state. On the other hand, the liberal thinkers made their appeal to the broad masses.

The recurrent cycles of liberalism and orthodoxy in Indian history should be seen against the situation which was rooted in the structure of Indian society. It was one aspect of the struggle between entrenched privilege and power on the one hand, and the egalitarian and humanistic aspirations of the mass of the people on the other.

The prestige and influence of the narrow, orthodox elements and their re-assertion of narrow ideas and beliefs was a barrier to the growing process of rapprochement and tolerance among the votaries of the two dominant religions, Hinduism and Islam, and a hindrance to the process of cultural integration. The clash between the two trends came to the surface during Aurangzeb's reign.

## EXERCISES

1. What were the main components of the Mughal nobility? Describe their way of life.
2. Describe the living conditions of the common people in the Mughal empire.
3. Discuss the position of the zamindars in India during the Mughal period.
4. Describe the position of trade and commerce in India in the seventeenth century. What was the status enjoyed by merchants during this period?

5. Describe the activities of the European trading companies in India in the seventeenth century.
6. How can the Mughal period be called the second classical age in Indian history ? Discuss.
7. Describe the growth of architecture under the Mughals.
8. Describe the contribution of the Mughals to painting. What were the main themes of Mughal paintings?
9. Describe the growth of literature during the Mughal period.
10. What were the main trends in religious ideas in the Mughal period? How did they influence the process of integration?

## CHAPTER XVII

# Climax and Disintegration of the Mughal Empire—1

### Problem of Succession

THE LAST years of Shah Jahan's reign were clouded by a bitter war of succession among his sons. There was no clear tradition of succession among the Timurids. The right of nomination by the ruler had been accepted by some of the Muslim political thinkers. But it could not be asserted in India during the Sultanat period. The Timurid tradition of partitioning had not been successful either and was never applied in India.

Hindu traditions were not very clear in the matter of succession either. According to Tulsidas, a contemporary of Akbar, a ruler had the right of giving the *tika* to any one of his sons. But there were many cases among the Rajputs where such a nomination had not been accepted by the other brothers. Thus Sanga had to wage a bitter struggle with his brothers before he could assert his claim to the *gaddi*.

The growing trend towards a struggle for the throne among brothers was a cause of concern to Shah Jahan during the latter part of his reign. Four of his sons, Dara, Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad, had been carefully trained for government and in the art of warfare. They had been placed in command of important campaigns, as was the Mughal practice, and entrusted with

the responsibility of looking after the affairs of different provinces in the empire. Each of them had proved to be able and energetic. Shuja and Murad had made a mark for bravery, but were slothful and ease-loving. Dara was known for his liberal views in matters of religion and was a patron of learning. He was affable, and had won over the confidence of his father who leaned on him increasingly for advice in matters of government. But Dara was vain, with little actual experience of warfare and as events proved, a poor judge of human character. On the other hand, Aurangzeb had proved to be a good organizer, an able commandant and a shrewd negotiator. By paying court to individual nobles, both Hindu and Muslim, he had won over many of them to his side. Thus, from the outset, the real contest appeared to be between the eldest son, Dara, and the third son, Aurangzeb.

Towards the end of 1657, Shah Jahan was taken ill at Delhi and for some time, his life was despaired of. But he rallied and gradually recovered his strength under the loving care of Dara. Meanwhile, all kinds of rumours had gained currency. It was said that Shah Jahan had already died, and Dara was concealing the reality to serve his own purposes. After some

time, Shah Jahan slowly made his way to Agra. Meanwhile, the princes, Shuja in Bengal, Murad in Gujarat and Aurangzeb in the Deccan, had either been persuaded that these rumours were true, or pretended to believe them, and made preparations for the inevitable war of succession.

Anxious to avert a conflict between his sons, which might spell ruin to the empire, and anticipating his speedy end, Shah Jahan now decided to nominate Dara as his successor (*wali-ahd*). He raised Dara's *mansab* from 40,000 *zat* to the unprecedented rank of 60,000. Dara was given a chair next to the throne and all the nobles were instructed to obey Dara as their future sovereign. But these actions, far from ensuring a smooth succession as Shah Jahan had hoped, convinced the other princes of Shah Jahan's partiality to Dara. It thus strengthened their resolve for making a bid for the throne.

It is not necessary for us to follow in detail the events leading to the ultimate triumph of Aurangzeb. There were many reasons for Aurangzeb's success. Divided counsel and under-estimation of his opponents by Dara were two of the major factors responsible for Dara's defeat. On hearing of the military preparations of his sons and their decision to march on the capital, Shah Jahan had sent an army to the east led by Dara's son, Sulaiman Shikoh, and aided by Mirza Raja Jai Singh to deal with Shuja who had crowned himself. Another was sent to Malwa under Raja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Jodhpur. On his arrival in Malwa, Jaswant found that he was faced with the combined forces of Aurangzeb and Murad. The two princes were intent on a conflict and invited Jaswant to stand aside. Jaswant's instructions were vague. Shah Jahan had instructed him to bar the advance of the princes to the capital and to persuade them to go back, and in any case to avoid entering into a military conflict

with them. Jaswant could have retreated but deeming retreat to be a matter of dishonour, he decided to stand and fight, though the odds were definitely against him. This was a mistake on his part. The victory of Aurangzeb at Dharmat (15 April 1658) emboldened his supporters and raised his prestige, while it dispirited Dara and his supporters.

Meanwhile, Dara made a serious mistake. Over-confident of the strength of his position, he had assigned for the eastern campaign some of his best troops. Thus he denuded the capital—Agra. Led by Sulaiman Shikoh, the army moved to the east and gave a good account of itself. It surprised and defeated Shuja near Banaras (February 1658). It then decided to pursue him into Bihar—as if the issue at Agra had been already decided. After the defeat of Dharmat, express letters were sent to these forces to hurry back to Agra. After patching up a hurried treaty (7 May 1658) Sulaiman Shikoh started his march to Agra from his camp near Monghyr in eastern Bihar. But it was hardly likely that he could return to Agra in time for the conflict with Aurangzeb.

After Dharmat, Dara made frantic efforts to seek allies. He sent repeated letters to Jaswant Singh who had retired to Jodhpur. The Rana of Udaipur was also approached. Jaswant Singh moved out tardily to Pushkar near Ajmer. After raising an army with the money provided by Dara, he waited there for the Rana to join him. But the Rana had already been won over by Aurangzeb with a promise of a rank of 7000 and the return of the *parganas* seized by Shah Jahan and Dara from him in 1654 following a dispute over refortifying Chittor. Aurangzeb also held out to the Rana a promise of religious freedom and "favours equal to those of Rana Sanga." Thus, Dara failed to win over even the important Rajput rajas to his side.

The battle of Samugarh (29 May 1658) was basically a battle of good generalship, the two sides being almost equally matched in numbers (about 50,000 to 60,000 on each side). In this field, Dara was no match for Aurangzeb. The Hada Rajputs and the Satyids of Barha upon whom Dara largely depended could not make up for the weakness of the rest of the hastily recruited army. Aurangzeb's troops were battle hardened and well led.

Aurangzeb had all along pretended that his only object of coming to Agra was to see his ailing father and to release him from the control of the "heretical" Dara. But the war between Aurangzeb and Dara was not between religious orthodoxy on the one hand, and liberalism on the other. Both Muslim and Hindu nobles were equally divided in their support to the two rivals. We have already seen the attitude of the leading Rajput rajas. In this conflict, as in so many others, the attitude of the nobles depended upon their personal interests and their association with individual princes.

A suggestion had been made to Shah Jahan before the battle of Samugarh that he should either go to Aurangzeb and persuade him to go back, or take the field in person. It is doubtful if the former course would have had any effect, relations between father and son having been embittered earlier. But by refusing to take the field in person, Shah Jahan virtually ensured that whoever won, the reigns of power would no longer be held by him. Aurangzeb forced Shah Jahan into surrender by seizing the source of water supply to the fort. Shah Jahan was strictly supervised and confined to the female apartments in the fort though he was not ill-treated. There he lived for eight long years, lovingly nursed by his favourite daughter, Jahanara, who voluntarily chose to live within the fort. She re-emerged

into public life after Shah Jahan's death and was accorded great honour by Aurangzeb who restored her to the position of the first lady of the realm. He also raised her annual pension from twelve lakh rupees to seventeen lakhs.

According to the terms of Aurangzeb's agreement with Murad, the kingdom was to be partitioned between the two. But Aurangzeb had no intention of sharing the empire. Hence, he treacherously imprisoned Murad and sent him to the Gwalior jail. He was killed two years later.

After losing the battle at Samugarh, Dara had fled to Lahore and was planning to retain control of its surrounding areas. But Aurangzeb soon arrived in the neighbourhood, leading a strong army. Dara's courage failed him. He abandoned Lahore without a fight and fled to Sindh. Thus he virtually sealed his fate. Although the civil war dragged on for more than two years, its outcome was hardly in doubt. Dara's move from Sindh into Gujarat and then into Ajmer on an invitation from Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, and the subsequent treachery of the latter are too well known. The battle of Deorai near Ajmer (March 1659) was the last major battle Dara fought against Aurangzeb. Dara might well have escaped into Iran, but he wanted to try his luck again in Afghanistan. On the way, in the Bolan pass, a treacherous Afghan chief made him a prisoner and handed him over to his dreaded enemy. A panel of jurists decreed that Dara could not be suffered to live "out of necessity to protect the faith and Holy law, and also for reasons of state (and) as a destroyer of the public peace." This is typical of the manner in which Aurangzeb used religion as a cloak for his political motives. Two years after Dara's execution, his son, Sulaiman Shikoh, who had sought shelter with the ruler of Garhwal was handed over by him to Aurangzeb on an imminent

threat of invasion. He soon suffered the same fate as his father.

Earlier, Aurangzeb had defeated Shuja at Khajwah near Allahabad (December 1658). Further campaigning against him was entrusted to Mir Jumla who had steadily excited pressure till Shuja was hounded out of India into Arakan (April 1660). Soon afterwards, he and his family met a dishonourable death at the hands of the Arakanese on a charge of fomenting rebellion.

The civil war which kept the empire distracted for more than two years showed that neither nomination by the ruler, nor plans of division of the empire were likely to be accepted by the contenders for the throne. Military force became the only arbiter for succession and the civil wars became steadily more destructive. After being seated securely on the throne, Aurangzeb tried to mitigate, to some extent, the effects of the harsh Mughal custom of war to death between brothers. At the instance of Jahanara Begum, Sikhr Shikoh, son of Dara, was released from prison in 1673, given a *mansab* and married to a daughter of Aurangzeb. Murad's son, Izzat Bakhsh, was also released, given a *mansab* and married to another daughter of Aurangzeb. Earlier, in 1669, Dara's daughter, Jani Begum, who had been looked after by Jahanara as her own daughter, was married off to Aurangzeb's third son, Muhammad Azam. There were many other marriages between Aurangzeb's family and the children and grandchildren of his defeated brothers. Thus, in the third generation, the families of Aurangzeb and his defeated brothers became one.

#### **Aurangzeb's Reign—His Religious Policy**

Aurangzeb ruled for almost 50 years. During his long reign, the Mughal empire reached its territorial climax. At its height, it stretched from Kashmir in the north to Jinji in the south,

and from the Hindukush in the west to Chittagong in the east. Aurangzeb proved to be a hardworking ruler, and never spared himself or his subordinates in the tasks of government. His letters show the close attention he paid to all affairs of state. He was a strict disciplinarian who did not spare his own sons. In 1686, he imprisoned prince Muazzam on a charge of intriguing with the ruler of Golconda, and kept him in prison for 12 long years. His other sons also had to face his wrath on various occasions. Such was the awe of Aurangzeb that even late in his life, when Muazzam was governor of Kabul, he trembled every time he received a letter from his father. Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb did not like ostentation. His personal life was marked by simplicity. He had the reputation of being an orthodox, Godfearing Muslim. In course of time, he began to be regarded as a *zinda pir*, or "a living saint."

Historians are, however, deeply divided about Aurangzeb's achievements as a ruler. According to some, he reversed Akbar's policy of religious toleration and thus undermined the loyalty of the Hindus to the empire. According to them, this, in turn, led to popular uprisings which sapped the vitality of the empire. His suspicious nature added to his problems so that in the words of Khafi Khan, "all his enterprises were long drawn out" and ended in failure. Some other historians think that Aurangzeb has been unjustly maligned, that the Hindus had become disloyal due to the laxity of Aurangzeb's predecessors, so that Aurangzeb had no option but to adopt harsh methods and to try to rally the Muslims on whose support in the long run the empire had to rest. A new trend has, however, emerged in the recent writings on Aurangzeb and efforts have been made to assess Aurangzeb's political and religious policies in the context of social, economic and institutional developments. There is little doubt that by

temperament Aurangzeb was an orthodox Sunni Musalman. He was not interested in philosophical debates or in mysticism—though he did not debar his sons from dabbling in Sufism. While taking his stand on the Hanafi school of Muslim law which had been traditionally followed in India, Aurangzeb did not hesitate in issuing secular decrees, called *zawabit*. A compendium of his decrees has been collected in a work *Zawabit-i-Alamgiri*. Theoretically, the *zawabits* supplemented the *shara*. In practice, however, they often modified the *shara*, in view of the conditions obtaining in India which were not provided for in the *shara*.

Thus, apart from being an orthodox Muslim, Aurangzeb was also a ruler. He could hardly forget the political reality that the overwhelming population of India was Hindu, and that they were deeply attached to their faith. Any policy which meant the complete alienation of the Hindus and of the powerful Hindu rajas and zamindars was obviously unworkable.

In analysing Aurangzeb's religious policy, we may take note first of what have been called moral and religious regulations. At the beginning of his reign, he forbade the *kalma* being inscribed on coins—lest a coin be trampled underfoot or be defiled while passing from hand to hand. He discontinued the festival of *Nauruz* as it was considered a Zoroastrian practice favoured by the Safavid rulers of Iran. *Muhtasibs* were appointed in all the provinces. These officials were asked to see that people lived their lives in accordance with the *shara*. Thus it was the business of these officials to see that wine and intoxicants such as *bhang* were not consumed in public places. They were also responsible for regulating the houses of ill-repute, gambling dens, etc. and for checking weights and measures. In other words, they were responsible for ensuring that things forbidden by the *shara* and the *zawabits*

(secular decrees) were, as far as possible, not flouted openly. In appointing *muhtasibs*, Aurangzeb emphasised that the state was also responsible for the moral welfare of the citizens. But these officials were instructed not to interfere in the private lives of citizens.

Later, in the eleventh year of his reign (1669) Aurangzeb took a number of measures which have been called puritanical, but many of which were really of an economic and social character, and against superstitious beliefs. Thus, he forbade singing in the court and the official musicians were pensioned off. Instrumental music and *naubat* (the royal band) were, however, continued. Singing also continued to be patronised by the ladies in the harem, and by individual nobles. It is of some interest to note that the largest number of Persian works on classical Indian music were written in Aurangzeb's reign and that Aurangzeb himself was proficient in playing the *veena*. Thus, the jibe of Aurangzeb to the protesting musicians that they should bury the bier of music they were carrying deep under the earth so "that no echo of it may rise again" was only an angry remark.

Aurangzeb discontinued the practice of *jharoka darshan* or showing himself to the public from the balcony since he considered it a superstitious practice and against Islam. Similarly, he forbade the ceremony of weighing the emperor against gold and silver and other articles on his birthdays. This practice which was apparently started during Akbar's reign had become widespread and was a burden on the smaller nobles. But the weight of social opinion was too much! Aurangzeb had to permit this ceremony for his sons when they recovered from illness. He forbade astrologers to prepare almanacs. But the order was flouted by everybody including members of the royal family!

Many other regulations of a similar nature, some of moral character and some to instil a sense of austerity, were issued. The throne room was to be furnished in a cheap and simple style ; clerks were to use porcelain ink-stands instead of silver ones ; silk clothes were frowned upon, the gold railings in the *diwan-i-am* were replaced by those of *lapis lazuli* set on gold. Even the official department of history-writing was discontinued as a measure of economy !

To promote trade among the Muslims who depended almost exclusively on state support, Aurangzeb at first largely exempted Muslim traders from the payment of cess. But he soon found that the Muslim traders were abusing it, even passing off the goods of Hindu merchants as their own to cheat the state. So Aurangzeb reimposed the cess for Muslim traders, but kept it at half of what was charged from others.

Similarly, he tried to reserve the posts of *peshkars* and *karoris* (petty revenue officials) for Muslims but soon had to modify it in the face of opposition from the nobles and lack of qualified Muslims.

These and other steps of a similar nature do not necessarily denote growing puritanism on Aurangzeb's part. The motives were different, as we have noted. But, as in the case of the execution of Dara, Aurangzeb thought it prudent to back up his decisions by seeking the approval of the clergy. Thus, when Aurangzeb was keen to crown himself after Samugarh, he felt he could not do so legally till his father was alive. The chief qazi at the court was not prepared to give a decree that it was legal for Aurangzeb to ascend the throne in this situation. Finally, Abdul Wahab, who had been a qazi in Gujarat and had joined Aurangzeb in the Deccan, silenced the qazis

by arguing that since Shah Jahan was very weak (because of his age) and his faculties were affected, and the tranquility and the welfare of the people had suffered a setback, the reading of the *khutba* in the name of the son "who is capable of ruling over the Sultanat" is permissible according to the *shara*, Aurangzeb rewarded Abdul Wahab by making him the chief qazi of the empire !

This style of justifying political, economic and other actions by reference to the *shara* or seeking the approval of the clergy was an undesirable trend. It appears that Aurangzeb wanted to have the clergy on his side since the clergy still exercised a powerful hold on the minds of men. A modern historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, has suggested that Aurangzeb wanted to pose as an orthodox Muslim in order to make the public forget his harsh treatment/ of his father. However, public prudence/and Aurangzeb's own personal beliefs might have led him in the same direction.

We may now turn our attention to some of the other measures of Aurangzeb which may be called discriminatory and show a sense of bigotry towards people professing other religions. The most important was Aurangzeb's attitude towards temples, and the levying of *jizyah*.

At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb reiterated the position of the *shara* regarding temples, synagogues, churches, etc., that "long standing temple should not be demolished but no new temples allowed to be built." Further, old places of worship could be repaired "since buildings cannot last for ever." This position is clearly spelt out in a number of extant *farmans* he issued to the brahmanas of Banaras, Vrindavan, etc.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Banaras *farman* is in the National Library Calcutta, and the Vrindavan *farman* is preserved in a temple at Jaipur.

Aurangzeb's order regarding temples was not a new one. It reaffirmed the position which had existed during the Sultanat period and which had been reiterated by Shah Jahan early in his reign. In practice, it left wide latitude to the local officials as to the interpretation of the words "long standing temples". The private opinion and sentiment of the ruler in the matter was also bound to weigh with the officials. For example, after the rise of the liberal-minded Dara as Shah Jahan's favourite, a few temples had been demolished in pursuance of his order regarding temples. Aurangzeb, as governor of Gujarat, ordered a number of temples in Gujarat to be destroyed, which often meant merely breaking the images and closing down the temples. At the outset of his reign, Aurangzeb found that images in these temples had been restored and idol-worship had been resumed. Aurangzeb, therefore, ordered again in 1665 that these temples be destroyed. The famous temple of Somnath which he ordered to be destroyed earlier in his reign was apparently one of the temples mentioned above.

However, it does not seem that Aurangzeb's order regarding ban on new temples led to a large-scale destruction of temples at the outset of the reign. As Aurangzeb encountered political opposition from a number of quarters, such as the Marathas, Jats, etc., he seems to have adopted a new stance. In case of conflict with local elements, he now considered it legitimate to destroy even long

standing Hindu temples as a measure of punishment and as a warning. Further, he began to look upon temples as centres of spreading subversive ideas, that is, ideas which were not acceptable to the orthodox elements. Thus, he took strict action when he learnt in 1669 that in some of the temples in Thatta, Multan and especially at Banaras, both Hindus and Muslims used to come from great distances to learn from the brahmanas. Aurangzeb issued orders to the governors of all provinces to put down such practices and to destroy the temples where such practices took place. As a result of these orders, a number of temples such as the famous temples of Vishwanath at Banaras and the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura built by Bir Singh Deo Bundela in the reign of Jahangir were destroyed and mosques erected in their place. The destruction of these temples had a political motive as well. Mustaid Khan, author of the *Maasiri-Alamgiri* says, with reference to the destruction of the temple of Keshava Rai at Mathura, "On seeing this instance of the strength of the Emperor's faith and the grandeur of his devotion to God, the proud rajas were stifled, and in amazement they stood like images facing the wall."<sup>1</sup>

It was in this context that many temples built in Orissa during the last ten to twelve years were also destroyed. But it is wrong to think that there were any orders for the general destruction of temples.<sup>1</sup> But the situation changed during periods of hostilities.

<sup>1</sup> Mustaid Khan, who wrote his history of Aurangzeb in the early eighteenth century and who had been closely associated with Aurangzeb, further asserts that the motive of Aurangzeb's orders was to "establish Islam" and that the Emperor ordered the governors to destroy all temples and to bar public practice of the religion of these misbelievers that is, the Hindus. If Mustaid Khan's version

Thus during 1679-80 when there was a state of hostility with the Rathors of Marwar and the Rana of Udaipur, many temples of old standing were destroyed at Jodhpur and its *parganas*, and at Udaipur.

In his policy towards temples, Aurangzeb may have remained formally within the framework of the *shara*, but there is little doubt that his stand in the matter was a setback to the policy of broad toleration followed by his predecessors. It led to a climate of opinion that destruction of temples on any excuse would not only be condoned but would be welcomed by the emperor. While we do have instances of grants to Hindu temples and *maths* by Aurangzeb, on the whole, the atmosphere generated by Aurangzeb's policy towards Hindu temples was bound to create disquiet among large sections of Hindus. However, it seems that Aurangzeb's zeal for the destruction of temples abated after 1679, for we do not hear of any large-scale destruction of temples in the south between 1681 and his death in 1707. But a new irritant, the *jizyah* or the poll tax was introduced in the interval.

We have already explained the background of the *jizyah* and its introduction in India by the Arab and Turkish rulers. According to the *shara*, in a Muslim state, the payment of *jizyah* was obligatory (*wajib*) for the non-Muslims. Akbar had abolished it for reasons that we have noted. However, a section of orthodox theologians had been agitating for the revival of *jizyah*, so that the superior position of the Muslims, including the theologians, could

be made manifest to all. We are told that after accession to the throne, Aurangzeb contemplated revival of the *jizyah* on a number of occasions but did not do so for fear of political opposition. Ultimately, in 1679, in the twenty-second year of his reign, he finally reimposed it. There has been a considerable discussion among historians for Aurangzeb's motive for the step. Let us first see what it was not. It was not meant to be an economic pressure for forcing the Hindus to convert to Islam for its incidence was too light—women, children, the disabled and the indigent, that is those whose income was less than the means of subsistence were exempted, as were those in government service. Nor, in fact, did any significant section of Hindus change their religion due to this tax. Secondly, it was not a means of meeting a difficult financial situation. Although the income from *jizyah* is said to have been considerable, Aurangzeb sacrificed a considerable sum of money by giving up a large number of cesses called *abwabs* which were not sanctioned by the *shara* and were hence considered illegal. The reimposition of *jizyah* was, in fact, both political and ideological in nature. It was meant to rally the Muslims for the defence of the state against the Marathas and the Rajputs who were up in arms, and possibly against the Muslim states of the Deccan, especially Golconda which was in alliance with the infidels. Secondly, *jizyah* was to be collected by honest, God-fearing Muslims, who were especially appointed for the purpose, and its proceeds were reserved

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was correct, it would have meant Aurangzeb going far beyond the position of the *shara*, for the *sharia* did not ban the non-Muslims from practising their faiths as long as they observed certain conditions, such as loyalty to the ruler, etc. Nor have we found any *farmans* to the governors on the lines suggested by Mustaid Khan.

for the *ulama*. It was thus a big bribe for the theologians among whom there was a lot of unemployment. But the disadvantages outweighed the possible advantages of the step. It was bitterly resented by the Hindus who considered it as a mark of discrimination. Its mode of collection also had some special features. The payee was required to pay it personally and sometimes he suffered humiliation at the hands of the theologians in the process. Since in the rural areas *jizyah* was collected along with the land revenue, only well-to-do Hindus in the cities were subjected to these practices. We, therefore, hear of a number of occasions when Hindu traders shut their shops and observed *hartal* against the measure. In a number of instances, the *amin* or collector of *jizyah* was killed. But Aurangzeb was unrelenting, and was reluctant to grant exemption for payment of *jizyah* to the peasants, even when remission in land revenue had to be given on account of natural calamities.

Some modern writers are of the opinion that Aurangzeb's measures were designed to convert India from a *dar-ul-harb*<sup>1</sup> or a land of infidels into *dar-ul-Islam*, or a land inhabited by Muslims. Although Aurangzeb considered it legitimate to encourage conversion to Islam, evidence of systematic or large-scale attempts at forced conversion is lacking.<sup>2</sup> Nor were Hindu nobles discriminated against. A recent study has shown that the number of Hindus in the

nobility during the second half of Aurangzeb's reign steadily increased, till the Hindus including Marathas formed about one-third of the nobility as against one fourth under Shah Jahan. On one occasion, Aurangzeb wrote on a petition in which a post was claimed on religious grounds "what connection and what right have worldly affairs with religion? And what right have matters of religion to enter into bigotry? For you is your religion, for me is mine. If this rule (suggested by) were established it would be my duty to extirpate all (Hindu) rajas and their followers."

Thus, Aurangzeb did not try to change the nature of the state, but reasserted its fundamentally Islamic character. Aurangzeb's religious beliefs cannot be considered the basis of his political policies. While an orthodox Muslim and desirous of upholding the strict letter of the law, as a ruler he was keen to strengthen and expand the empire, and hence did not want to lose the support of the Hindus to the extent possible. However, his religious ideas and beliefs on the one hand, and his political or public policies on the other, clashed on many occasions and Aurangzeb was faced with difficult choices. Sometimes this led him to adopt contradictory policies which harmed the empire.

#### Political Developments—North India

During the war of succession, many local zamindars and rajas had withheld revenue, or

<sup>1</sup> A state in which the laws of Islam prevailed and where the ruler was a Muslim was *dar-ul-Islam*. In such a state, the Hindus who submitted to the Muslim ruler, and agreed to pay *jizyah* were *zimmis* or protected people according to the *shariat*. Hence the state in India had been considered a *dar-ul-Islam* since the advent of the Turks. Even when Mahadji Sindhia, the Maratha general, occupied Delhi in 1772, and the Mughal emperor became a puppet in

his hands, the theologians decreed that the state remained a *dar-ul-Islam* since the laws of Islam were allowed to prevail and the throne was occupied by a Muslim.

The conversion of large sections of the population to Islam in Kashmir had taken place apparently during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, as has been noted in an earlier chapter.

started plundering the neighbouring areas including Mughal territories and royal highways. After seating himself on the throne formally, Aurangzeb embarked upon an era of strong rule. In some cases, such as the north-east and the Deccan, the imperial frontier was advanced. However, in general, Aurangzeb did not embark upon a forward policy. His first attempt immediately after his succession was to reassert imperial authority and prestige. This included recovery of areas which had been lost during the war of succession and to which the Mughals felt they had legal claim. To begin with, Aurangzeb was more concerned with consolidation than conquest and annexation. Thus he sent an army to Bikaner to enforce obedience to the Mughal emperor, but made no effort to annex it. But in another case, such as Palamau in Bihar, the ruler who was accused of disloyalty was dispossessed and the bulk of his state annexed. The rebel Bundela chief, Chhatrapat Rai, who had been an ally of Aurangzeb at first but had taken to a life of plunder, was relentlessly hunted down. But Bundela lands were not annexed.

#### NORTH-EAST AND EAST INDIA

We have mentioned in an earlier chapter the rise of the Ahom power in Assam valley and their conflict with the rulers of Kamata (Kamrup) on the one hand and with the Afghan rulers of Bengal on the other. The kingdom of Kamata declined by the end of the fifteenth century and was replaced by the kingdom of Kuch (Cooch Bihar) which dominated north Bengal and western Assam and continued the policy of conflict with the Ahoms. However, internal disputes led to the division of the kingdom in the early seventeenth century and to the entry of the Mughals in Assam at the instance of the Kuch ruler. The Mughals

defeated the split-away kingdom and in 1612 occupied the western Assam valley up to Bar Nadi with the help of Kuch armies. The Kuch ruler became a Mughal vassal. Thus, the Mughals came into contact with the Ahoms who ruled eastern Assam across the Bar Nadi. After a long war with the Ahoms who had harboured a prince of the defeated dynasty, a treaty was made with them at last in 1638 which fixed the Bar Nadi as the boundary between them and the Mughals. Thus Gauhati came under Mughal control.

There was a long drawn out war between the Mughals and the Ahoms during the reign of Aurangzeb. The war began with the attempt of the Ahom rulers to expel the Mughals from Gauhati and the neighbouring area and thus complete their control over Assam. Mir Jumla, who had been appointed the governor of Bengal by Aurangzeb, wanted to make his mark by bringing Cooch Bihar and the entire Assam under Mughal rule. He first assaulted Cooch Bihar which had repudiated Mughal suzerainty and annexed the entire kingdom to the Mughal empire. He next invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla occupied the Ahom capital, Garhgaon, and held it for six months. Next, he penetrated up to the limit of the Ahom kingdom, finally forcing the Ahom king to make a humiliating treaty (1663). The raja had to send his daughter to the Mughal harem, pay a large war indemnity and an annual tribute of 20 elephants. The Mughal boundary was extended from the Bar Nadi to the Bharali river.

Mir Jumla died soon after his brilliant victory. However, the advantages of a forward move in Assam were doubtful since the area was not rich and was surrounded by warlike tribes living in the mountains. It was found that the back of Ahom power had not been broken, and that it was beyond Mughal power

to enforce the treaty. In 1667, the Ahoms renewed the contest. They not only recovered the areas ceded to the Mughals, but also occupied Gauhati. Earlier, the Mughals had also been expelled from Cooch Bihar. Thus all the gains of Mir Jumla were rapidly lost. A long, desultory warfare with the Ahoms lasting a decade and a half followed. For a long period the command of the Mughal forces were with Raja Ram Singh, the ruler of Amber. But he hardly had the resources for the task. Finally, the Mughals had to give up even Gauhati, and fix a boundary west of it.

The events in Assam showed the limits of the Mughal power in far-flung areas, and also the skill and determination of the Ahoms who avoided pitched battles and adopted a mode of guerilla warfare. Similar tactics were to be adopted with similar success by the opponents of the Mughals in other areas. However, the shock of the Mughal invasion and the subsequent warfare undermined the strength of the Ahom monarchy and led to the decline and disintegration of the Ahom empire.

The Mughals had more success elsewhere in the east. Shaista Khan, who succeeded Mir Jumla as the governor of Bengal after his setback at the hands of Shivaji, proved to be a good administrator and an able general. He modified Mir Jumla's forward policy. First he patched up an agreement with the ruler of Cooch Bihar. Next he gave his attention to the problem of south Bengal, where the Magh (Arakanese) pirates, in conjunction with Firingi (Portuguese) pirates, had been terrorizing the area up to Dacca from their headquarters at Chittagong. The land up to Dacca had become desolate and trade and industry had suffered a setback. Shaista Khan built up a flotilla to meet the Arakanese pirates and captured the island of Sondip as a base of operations

against Chittagong. Next, he won the Firingi to his side by inducements of money and favours. The Arakan navy near Chittagong was routed and many of the ships captured. Chittagong was next assailed and captured early in 1666. The destruction of Arakanese navy was complete and opened the seas to free commerce. This was no minor factor in the rapid growth of Bengal's foreign trade during the period and the expansion of cultivation in east Bengal.

In Orissa, the rebellion of the Pathans was put down and Balasore reopened to commerce.

#### POPULAR REVOLTS AND MOVEMENTS FOR REGIONAL INDEPENDENCE: JATS, AFGHANS, AND SIKHS

Within the empire, Aurangzeb had to deal with a number of difficult political problems, such as the problems of the Marathas in the Deccan, the Jats and Rajputs in north India and that of the Afghans and Sikhs in the north-west. Some of these problems were not new, but had to be faced by Aurangzeb's predecessors. But they assumed a different character under Aurangzeb. The nature of these movements also varied. In the case of the Rajputs, it was basically a problem of succession. In the case of the Marathas, it was a question of local independence. The clash with the Jats had a peasant-agrarian background. The only movement in which religion played a role was the Sikh movement. But the Jat and the Sikh movements culminated in attempts to set up independent regional states. The struggle of the Afghans was tribal in character, but there also the sentiment of setting up a separate Afghan state was at work. Thus economic and social factors, as well as the sentiment of regional independence which continued to be strong were major factors in shaping these movements.

It has sometimes been argued that all these movements, excluding the Afghan one, represented a Hindu reaction against Aurangzeb's narrow religious policies. In a country where the overwhelming section of the people consisted of Hindus, any movement which came into conflict with the predominantly Muslim central government could be dubbed a challenge to Islam. Likewise, the leaders of these "rebel" movements could use religious slogans or symbols to broaden their appeal. Hence, we must be careful in analysing the real nature of these movements.

#### *Jats and Satnamis*

The first section to come into conflict with the Mughal government were the Jats of the Agra-Delhi region living on both sides of the river Yamuna. The Jats were mostly peasant cultivators, only a few of them being zamindars. With a strong sense of brotherhood and justice, the Jats had often come into conflict with the government and taken to rebellion, taking advantage of their difficult terrain. Thus conflict with the Jats had taken place during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan over collection of land revenue. Since the imperial road to the Deccan and the western seaports passed through this area, the Mughal government had taken a serious view of these rebellions and taken stern measures.

In 1669, the Jats of the Mathura region broke out in rebellion under the leadership of a local zamindar, Gokla. The rebellion spread rapidly among the peasants of the area and Aurangzeb decided to march in person from Delhi to quell it. Although the Jat levies had swelled to 20,000, they were no match for the organised imperial army. In a stiff battle the Jats were defeated. Gokla was captured and executed.

However, the movement was not completely

crushed and discontent continued to simmer. Meanwhile, in 1672, there was another armed conflict between the peasants and the Mughal state at Narnaul, not far from Mathura. This time the conflict was with a religious body called Satnamis. The Satnamis were mostly peasants, artisans and low caste people, called "goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners and other ignoble beings" by a contemporary writer. They did not observe distinctions of caste and rank or between Hindus and Muslims and followed a strict code of conduct. Starting from a clash with a local official, it soon assumed the character of an open rebellion. Again the emperor had to march in person to crush it. It is interesting to note that the local Hindu zamindars, many of whom were Rajputs, sided with the Mughals in this conflict.

In 1685, there was a second uprising of the Jats under the leadership of Rajaram. The Jats were better organised this time and adopted the methods of guerilla warfare, combining it with plunder. Aurangzeb approached Raja Bishan Singh, the Kachhawaha ruler to crush the uprising. Bishan Singh was appointed faujdar of Mathura and the entire area was granted to him in zamindari. Conflict between the Jats and the Rajputs over zamindari rights complicated the issue, most of the primary zamindars, that is those cultivating peasants who owned the land being Jats, and the intermediary zamindars, that is those who collected the land revenue being Rajputs. The Jats put up stiff resistance, but by 1691, Rajaram and his successor, Churaman, were compelled to submit. However, unrest among the Jat peasants continued and their plundering activities made the Delhi-Agra road unsafe for travellers. Later on, in the eighteenth century, taking advantage of Mughal civil wars and weakness in the central government, Churaman was able to carve out a separate Jat principality in the

area and to oust the Rajput zamindars. Thus, what apparently started as a peasants' uprising, was diverted from its character, and culminated in a state in which Jat chiefs formed the ruling class.

### *The Afghans*

Aurangzeb came into conflict with the Afghans also. Conflict with the hardy Afghan tribesmen who lived in the mountain region between the Punjab and Kabul was not new. Akbar had to fight against the Afghans and in the process, lost the life of his close friend and confidant, Raja Birbal. Conflict with the Afghan tribesmen had taken place during the reign of Shah Jahan also. These conflicts were partly economic and partly political and religious. With little means of livelihood in the rugged mountains, the Afghans had little option but to prey on caravans or to enrol in the Mughal armies. Their fierce love of freedom made service in the Mughal armies difficult. The Mughals generally kept them happy by paying them subsidies. But growth of population or the rise of an ambitious leader could lead to a breach of this tacit agreement.

During the reign of Aurangzeb, we see a new stirring among the Pathans. In 1667, Bhagu, the leader of the Yusufzai tribe, proclaimed as king a person named Muhammad Shah who claimed descent from an ancient royal lineage, and proclaimed himself his *wazir*. It would appear that among the Afghans, as among the Jats the ambition of setting up a separate state of their own had begun to stir. A religious revivalist movement called the Raushanai, which emphasised a strict ethical life and devotion to a chosen *pir* had provided an intellectual and moral background to the movement.

Gradually, Bhagu's movement spread till his followers started ravaging and plundering the

Hazara, Attock and Peshawar districts and brought the traffic in the Khyber to a standstill. To clear the Khyber and crush the uprising Aurangzeb deputed the Chief Bakhshi, Amir Khan. A Rajput contingent was posted with him. After a series of hard battles, the Afghan resistance was broken. But to watch over them, in 1671, Maharaja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, was appointed as thanedar of Jamrud.

There was a second Afghan uprising in 1672. The leader of the opposition this time was the Afridi leader, Akmal Khan, who proclaimed himself king and struck *khutba* and *sikka* in his name. He declared war against the Mughals and summoned all the Afghans to join him. According to a contemporary writer, with a following "more numerous than ants and locusts", they closed the Khyber Pass. Moving forward to clear the pass, Amin Khan advanced too far and suffered a disastrous defeat in the narrow defile. The Khan managed to escape with his life, but 10,000 men perished, and cash and goods worth two crores were looted by the Afghans. This defeat brought other tribesmen into the fray including Khushhal Khan Khattak, a sworn enemy of Aurangzeb from whose hands he had suffered imprisonment for some time.

In 1674, another Mughal noble Shujaat Khan, suffered a disastrous rout in the Khyber. But he was rescued by a heroic band of Rathors sent by Jaswant Singh. At last, in the middle of 1674, Aurangzeb himself went to Peshawar and remained in the neighbourhood till the end of 1675. Slowly, by force and diplomacy, the Afghan united front was broken, and peace was slowly restored.

The Afghan uprising shows that sentiments of resistance to the Mughal rule and the urge for regional freedom were not confined to sections of Hindus, such as Jats, Marathas, etc. Also, the Afghan uprising helped to relax

Mughal pressure on Shivaji during a crucial period. It also made difficult, if not impossible, a forward policy by the Mughals in the Deccan till 1676 by which time Shivaji had crowned himself and entered into an alliance with Bijapur and Golconda.

### *The Sikhs*

The Sikhs were the last to come into military conflict with Aurangzeb. As we have seen, there was conflict with the Sikh Gurus during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. But the reasons for the conflict were political and personal rather than religious. The Gurus had started living in style, with an armed following, and assumed the title of *sachcha padshah* ("the true sovereign") However, there was no conflict with the Guru and Aurangzeb till 1675 when Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested with five of his followers, brought to Delhi and executed. The causes of this are not clear. According to some Persian accounts, the Guru had joined hands with a Pathan, Hafiz Adam, and created disturbances in the Punjab. According to Sikh tradition, the execution was due to intrigues against the Guru by some members of his family who disputed his succession and who had been joined by others. But we are also told that Aurangzeb was annoyed because the Guru had converted a few Muslims to Sikhism and raised a protest against religious persecution in Kashmir by the local governor. It is difficult to sift the truth of these allegations. Sikhism had gradually spread to many Jat peasants and low-caste artisans who were attracted by its simple, egalitarian approach. The economic discontent of these

sections may have been reflected by the Guru. In Kashmir, the previous governor, Saif Khan, is famous as a builder of bridges. He was a humane and broad-minded person who had a Hindu to advise him in administrative matters. Stories of mass persecution by the new governor<sup>1</sup> appear to be exaggerated because Kashmir had been predominantly Muslim since the fifteenth century.

Whatever the reasons, Aurangzeb's action was unjustified from any point of view and betrayed a narrow approach. The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur forced the Sikhs to go back to the Punjab hills. It also led to the Sikh movement gradually turning into a military brotherhood. A major contribution in this sphere was made by Guru Govind Singh. He showed considerable organisational ability and founded the military brotherhood or the *khalsa* in 1699. Before this, Guru Govind Singh had made his headquarters at Makhawal or Anandpur in the foothills of the Punjab. At first, the local Hindu hill rajas had tried to use the Guru and his followers in their internecine quarrels. But soon the Guru became too powerful and a series of clashes took place between the hill rajas and the Guru who generally triumphed. The organisation of the *khalsa* further strengthened the hands of the Guru in this conflict. However, an open breach between the Guru and the hill rajas took place only in 1704, when the combined forces of a number of hill rajas attacked the Guru at Anandpur. The rajas had again to retreat and pressed the Mughal government to intervene against the Guru on their behalf.

The struggle which followed was thus not a

<sup>1</sup> The Sikh tradition gives his name as Sher Afghan. But the governor since 1671 was Iftekhhar Khan. The Sikh accounts which were written later may have confused the name.

religious struggle. It was partly an offshoot of local rivalries among the Hindu hill rajas and the Sikhs and partly an outcome of the Sikh movement as it had developed. Aurangzeb was concerned with the growing power of the Guru and had asked the Mughal faujdar earlier "to admonish the Guru". He now wrote to the governor of Lahore and the faujdar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, to aid the hill rajas in their conflict with Guru Govind Singh. The Mughal forces assaulted Anandpur but the Sikhs fought bravely and beat off all assaults. The Mughals and their allies now invested the fort closely. When starvation began inside the fort, the Guru was forced to open the gate apparently on a promise of safe conduct by Wazir Khan. But when the forces of the Guru were crossing a swollen stream, Wazir Khan's forces suddenly attacked. Two of the Guru's sons were captured, and on their refusal to embrace Islam, were beheaded at Sirhind. The Guru lost two of his remaining sons in another battle. After this, the Guru retired to Talwandi and was generally not disturbed.

It is doubtful whether the dastardly actions of Wazir Khan against the sons of the Guru were carried out at the instance of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb, it seems, was not keen to destroy the Guru and wrote to the governor of Lahore "to conciliate the Guru". When the Guru wrote to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, apprising him of the events, Aurangzeb invited him to meet him. Towards the end of 1706, the Guru set out for the Deccan and was on the way when Aurangzeb died. According to some, he had hoped to persuade Aurangzeb to restore Anandpur to him.

Although Guru Govind Singh was not able to withstand Mughal might for long, or to establish a separate Sikh state, he created a tradition and also forged a weapon for its realisation later on. It also showed how an egalitarian religious movement could, under certain circumstances, turn into a political and militaristic movement, and subtly move towards regional independence.

#### Relations with the Rajputs—Breach with Marwar and Mewar

We have seen how Jahangir settled in 1613 the long drawn out conflict with Mewar. Jahangir continued Akbar's policy of giving favours to the leading Rajput rajas and of entering into matrimonial relations with them. Shah Jahan maintained the alliance with the Rajputs. During his reign, Rajput contingents served with distinction in such far-flung areas as the Deccan, Balkh in Central Asia and Qandhar. However, no Rajput raja was appointed governor of a province, and no further matrimonial relations were made with the leading Rajput rajas—though Shah Jahan himself was the son of a Rathor princess.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, alliance with the Rajputs having become consolidated, it was felt that matrimonial relations with the leading rajas were no longer necessary. However, Shah Jahan accorded high honour to the heads of the two leading Rajput houses, Jodhpur and Amber. Raja Jaswant Singh, the ruler of Marwar, was high in Shah Jahan's favour. Both he and Jai Singh held the ranks of 7000/7000 at the time of Aurangzeb's accession.

Aurangzeb attached great value to the alli-

<sup>1</sup> Tradition persists in naming Jodha Bai as the mother of Jahangir. But the only marriage of a Rathor princess we know of was the marriage in 1585 of the daughter of Mota Raja Udai Singh with Salim (Jahangir). Jahangir's mother may have been a Kachchwaha princess.

ance with the Rajputs. He tried to secure the active support of the Maharana of Mewar and raised his *mansab* from 5000/5000 to 6000/6000. Although Jaswant Singh had fought against him at Dharmat and defected from his side during the campaign against Shuja and invited Dara to his dominions, Aurangzeb pardoned him and restored him to his previous *mansab* and he was appointed to important commands, including the governorship of Gujarat. Jai Singh remained the close friend and confidant of Aurangzeb till his death in 1667.

Jaswant Singh who had been deputed to look after the affairs of the Afghans in the north-west died towards the end of 1678. The Maharaja had no surviving male issue and hence the question of succession to the *gaddi* immediately arose. There was a long-standing Mughal tradition that in case of a disputed succession, the state was brought under Mughal administration (*khalisa*) to ensure law and order, and then handed over to the chosen successor. Thus in 1650, when there was a dispute about succession in Jaisalmer, Shah Jahan first took the state under *khalisa* and then sent Jaswant Singh at the head of an army to instal the candidate chosen by the emperor. There was another reason also for bringing Marwar under *khalisa*. The maharaja, like most Mughal nobles, had large sums of money due to the state which he had not been able to pay back. Many Rajputs, whom Jaswant Singh had annoyed, or whose territories had been granted to him as jagir by the emperor, were eager to use the absence of a ruler on the *gaddi* of Jodhpur to create disturbances.

Anticipating resistance from the Rathors, Aurangzeb had allotted two *parganas* in Marwar for the maintenance of the family and supporters of Jaswant Singh. He also assembled a strong army and marched to Ajmer to

enforce his orders. Rani Hadi, the chief queen of Jaswant Singh, who had been objecting to handing over charge of Jodhpur to the Mughals, since it was the *watan* (homeland) of the Rathors, had no option but to submit. A diligent search was now made for any hidden treasures that Jaswant Singh might have possessed. Mughal officials were posted all over Marwar and orders were issued that "new" temples should be demolished or at least closed down.

Thus the Mughals behaved as conquerors and treated Marwar as hostile territory. It is difficult to find a justification for this. However, Aurangzeb had no intention of retaining control of the territory of Marwar, on account of its strategic importance in linking Delhi with the Gujarat seaports, as has been asserted by some historians. Two sons had been born at Lahore to two ranis of Jaswant Singh after his death. Their claim to the *gaddi* was strongly canvassed. However, before reaching Delhi, Aurangzeb decided to award the *tika* of Jodhpur to Inder Singh, the grandson of Jaswant Singh's elder brother, Amar Singh, in return for a succession fee of thirty-six lakhs of rupees. Perhaps, Aurangzeb was moved by the argument that Shah Jahan had done a great injustice in passing over the claims of Amar Singh, in giving the *tika* to his younger brother, Jaswant Singh. He may also have wanted to avoid a minority administration in Marwar.

According to some modern historians, Aurangzeb offered Jodhpur to Ajit Singh, the son of Jaswant Singh on condition of his becoming a Muslim. There is no such suggestion in contemporary sources. According to a contemporary Rajasthani work, *Hukumat-ri-Bahi*, Aurangzeb offered a *mansab* to Ajit Singh when he was presented at the court in Agra and declared that the two *parganas* in Marwar, Sojat and Jaitaran, would continue as his jagir.

Thus, Aurangzeb was virtually contemplating a partition of the state of Marwar between two branches of the family.

The Rathor sardars led by Durgadas, rejected this proffered compromise which they felt would be against the best interests of the state. Angered at the rejection of his offer by the sardars, Aurangzeb ordered that the princes and their mothers be put in confinement at the fort of Nurgarh. This alarmed the Rathor sardars who after a valiant fight made their escape from Agra along with one of the princes, and crowned him as Ajit Singh at Jodhpur amidst great rejoicing.

Aurangzeb might have gracefully accepted the fact that Inder Singh had no following among the Rathors. He set aside Inder Singh for "incompetence" but adopted a stern, unbending attitude towards Ajit Singh, declaring him to be a "pretender". Strong forces were summoned from all parts of the empire and once again, Aurangzeb marched to Ajmer. The Rathor resistance was crushed and Jodhpur occupied, Durgadas fleeing with Ajit Singh to Mewar where the Rana sent him to a secret hideout.

It was at this stage that Mewar entered the war on the side of Ajit Singh. Rana Raj Singh who at one stage had supported Aurangzeb had been gradually alienated. He had sent a force of 5000 men under one of his leading men to Jodhpur to back up the claim of Rani Hadi. Apparently, he was deeply opposed to Mughal interference in the internal affairs of the Rajputs, such as questions of succession. Apart from this, he nursed a grievance at Mughal efforts to detach from Mewar the states to its south and west: Dungarpur, Banswara, etc. which had at one time tribute-paying, dependent rulers. But the immediate cause was his unease at the Mughal military occupation of Marwar and Aurangzeb's rejection of Ajit

Singh's claim.

Aurangzeb struck the first blow. In November 1679 he attacked Mewar. A strong Mughal detachment reached Udaipur and even raided the camp of the Rana who had retreated deep into the hills to conduct a harassing warfare against the Mughals. The war soon reached a stalemate. The Mughals could neither penetrate the hills, nor deal with the guerilla tactics of the Rajputs. The war became highly unpopular, Aurangzeb's admonitions and warnings to his commanders having little effect. At last, the eldest son of Aurangzeb, prince Akbar, tried to take advantage of this situation by turning his arms against his father. In alliance with the Rathor chief, Durgadas, he marched on Ajmer (January 1681) where Aurangzeb was helpless, all his best troops being engaged elsewhere. But prince Akbar delayed and Aurangzeb was able to stir up dissensions in his camp by false letters. Prince Akbar had to flee to Maharashtra and Aurangzeb heaved a sigh of relief.

The campaign of Mewar now became secondary for Aurangzeb. He patched up a treaty with Rana Jagat Singh who had succeeded Rana Raj Singh in the meantime. The new Rana was forced to surrender some of his *parganas* in lieu of *jizyah* and was granted a *mansab* of 5000 on a promise of loyalty and of not supporting Ajit Singh. Regarding Ajit Singh, all that Aurangzeb would promise was that *mansab* and *raj* would be given to him when he came of age.

This agreement and the promise regarding Ajit Singh satisfied none of the Rajputs. The Mughals kept their control on Marwar and desultory warfare continued till 1698 when at last, Ajit Singh was recognised as the ruler of Marwar. But the Mughals refused to relax their hold on the capital, Jodhpur. The Rana of Mewar, too, remained dissatisfied at the surrender of his *parganas* to the Mughals. There

was no change in this situation till Aurangzeb died in 1707.

Aurangzeb's policy towards Marwar and Mewar was clumsy and blundering and brought no advantage of any kind to the Mughals. On the other hand, Mughal failure against these states damaged Mughal military prestige. It is true that the battles in Marwar after 1681 involved only a few troops, and were not of much consequence militarily. It is also true that Hada and Kachchwaha and other Rajput contingents continued to serve the Mughals. But the results of the Marwar policy of Aurangzeb cannot be judged solely by these. The breach with Marwar and Mewar weakened the Mughal alliance with the Rajputs at a crucial

period. Above all, it created doubts about the firmness of Mughal support to old and trusted allies and the ulterior motive of Aurangzeb. While it showed the rigid and obstinate nature of Aurangzeb, it did not, however, show a determination to subvert Hinduism as has been alleged, because during the period after 1679, large numbers of Marathas were allowed entry into the nobility raising the proportion of the Hindus in the nobility from about 24 percent during the reign of Shah Jahan to about 33 percent.

While Aurangzeb's conflicts in the north-east and with the Jats, Afghans and Rajputs put a strain on the empire, the real conflict lay in the Deccan.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the events leading to Aurangzeb's accession.
2. Discuss the religious views of Aurangzeb. In what respects did they affect the policy of the state ?
3. What is meant by *jizyah* ? Discuss the reasons behind its reimposition by Aurangzeb.
4. Discuss the causes of the Jat and Afghan revolts against the Mughal empire during Aurangzeb's reign.
5. Discuss the relations between the Mughal state and the Sikhs during the reign of Aurangzeb. What were the changes that took place in the Sikh movement during this period ?
6. Trace the history of Rajput-Mughal relations during Aurangzeb's reign. Were there any basic changes in the Mughal policy towards the Rajputs ? Discuss.

## CHAPTER XVIII

# Climax and Disintegration of the Mughal Empire—2

### The Rise of the Marathas

WE HAVE already seen that the Marathas had important positions in the administrative and military systems of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, and that their power and influence in the affairs of government had grown as the Mughals advanced towards the Deccan. Both, the Deccani sultans and the Mughals made a bid for their support and Malik Ambar used them in his army in large numbers as loose auxiliaries. Although a number of influential Maratha families—the Mores, the Ghatages, the Nimbalkars, etc., exercised local authority in some areas, the Marathas did not have any large, well-established states as the Rajputs had. The credit for setting up such a large state goes to Shahji Bhonsale and his son, Shivaji. As we have seen, for some time, Shahji acted as the kingmaker in Ahmadnagar, and defied the Mughals. However, by the treaty of 1636, Shahji yielded the territories he was dominating. He joined the service of Bijapur and turned his energies to Karnataka. Taking advantage of the unsettled conditions, Shahji tried to set up a semi-independent principality at Bangalore just as Mir Jumla, the leading noble of Golconda, tried to carve out such a principality on the

Coromandal coast. A number of other chiefs, such as the Abyssinian chiefs on the western coast, the Sidis, behaved in a similar manner. This forms the background to Shivaji's attempt to carve out a large principality around Poona.

### EARLY CAREER OF SHIVAJI

Shahji had left the Poona jagir to his neglected senior wife, Jija Bai and his minor son, Shivaji. Shivaji showed his mettle when at the young age of 18, he overran a number of hill forts near Poona—Rajgarh, Kondana and Torna in the years 1645-47. With the death of his guardian, Dadaji Kondadeo in 1647, Shivaji became his own master and the full control of his father's jagir passed under him.

Shivaji began his real career of conquest in 1656 when he conquered Javli from the Maratha chief, Chandra Rao More. The Javli kingdom and the accumulated treasure of the Mores were important, and Shivaji acquired them by means of treachery. The conquest of Javli made him the undisputed master of the Mavala area or the highlands and freed his path to the Satara area and to the coastal strip, the Konkan. Mavali foot-soldiers became a strong part of his army.

With their help, he further strengthened his position by acquiring a further series of hill forts near Poona.

The Mughal invasion of Bijapur in 1657 saved Shivaji from Bijapuri reprisal. Shivaji first entered into negotiations with Aurangzeb and asked him for the grant of all the Bijapuri territories he held and other areas including the port of Dabhol in the Konkan. Shivaji then changed sides and made deep inroads into Mughal areas, seizing rich booty. When Aurangzeb came to terms with the new Bijapur ruler in preparation for the civil war, he pardoned Shivaji also. But he distrusted Shivaji and advised the Bijapur ruler to expel him from the Bijapuri areas he had seized, and if he wanted to employ him, employ him in Karnataka, away from the Mughal frontiers.

With Aurangzeb away in the north, Shivaji resumed his career of conquest at the expense of Bijapur. He burst into the Konkan, the coastal strip between the Ghats and the sea, and seized the northern part of it. He also overran a number of other hill forts. Bijapur now decided to take stern action. It sent against Shivaji a premier Bijapuri noble, Afzal Khan, at the head of 10,000 troops, with instructions to capture him by any means possible. Treachery was common in those days and both Afzal Khan and Shivaji had resorted to treachery on a number of occasions. Shivaji's forces were not used to open fighting and shrank from an open contest with this powerful chief. Afzal Khan sent an invitation to Shivaji for a personal interview, promising to get him pardoned from the Bijapuri court. Convinced that this was a trap, Shivaji went prepared, and murdered the Khan (1659) in a cunning but daring manner. Shivaji put his leaderless army to rout and captured all his goods and equipment including his artillery. Flushed with victory, the Maratha troops over-

ran the powerful fort of Panhala and poured into south Konkan and the Kolhapur districts making extensive conquests.

Shivaji's exploits made him a legendary figure. His name passed from house to house and he was credited with magical powers. People flocked to him from the Maratha areas to join his army, and even Afghan mercenaries who had been previously in the service of Bijapur, joined his army.

Meanwhile, Aurangzeb was anxiously watching the rise of a Maratha power so near the Mughal frontiers. Poona and adjacent areas which had been parts of the Ahmadnagar kingdom had been transferred to Bijapur by the treaty of 1636. But these areas were now claimed by the Mughals. Aurangzeb instructed the new Mughal governor of the Deccan, Shaista Khan, who was related to Aurangzeb by marriage, to invade Shivaji's dominions. Adil Shah, the ruler of Bijapur, was asked to cooperate. The Adil Shah sent Sidi Jauhar, the Abyssinian chief, who invested Shivaji in Panhala. Trapped, Shivaji made his escape while Panhala fell to the Bijapuri forces. The Adil Shah, however, had no desire to see Shivaji destroyed. Hence, he took no further interest in the war against Shivaji, and soon came to a secret understanding with him. This freed Shivaji to deal with the Mughals.

At first, the war went badly for Shivaji. Shaista Khan occupied Poona (1660) and made it his headquarters. He then sent detachments to wrest control of the Konkan from Shivaji. Despite harassing attacks from Shivaji, and the bravery of Maratha defenders, the Mughals secured their control on north Konkan. Driven into a corner, Shivaji made a bold stroke. He infiltrated into the camp of Shaista Khan at Poona, and at night attacked the Khan in his harem (1663), killing his son and one of his captains and wounding the Khan. This daring

attack put the Khan into disgrace and Shivaji's stock rose once again. In anger, Aurangzeb transferred Shaista Khan to Bengal, even refusing to give him an interview at the time of transfer as was the custom. Meanwhile, Shivaji made another bold move. He attacked Surat, which was the premier Mughal port, and looted it to his heart's content (1664), returning home laden with treasure

#### TREATY OF PURANDAR AND SHIVAJI'S VISIT TO AGRA

After the failure of Shaista Khan, Aurangzeb deputed Raja Jai Singh of Amber, who was one of the most trusted advisers of Aurangzeb, to deal with Shivaji. Full military and administrative authority was conferred on Jai Singh so that he was not in any way dependent on the Mughal viceroy in the Deccan, and dealt directly with the emperor. Unlike his predecessors, Jai Singh did not underestimate the Marathas. He made careful diplomatic and military preparations. He appealed to all the rivals and opponents of Shivaji, and even tried to win over the sultan of Bijapur in order to isolate Shivaji. Marching to Poona, Jai Singh decided to strike at the heart of Shivaji's territories—fort Purandar where Shivaji had lodged his family and his treasure. Jai Singh closely besieged Purandar (1665), beating off all Maratha attempts to relieve it. With the fall of the fort in sight, and no relief likely from any quarter, Shivaji opened negotiations with Jai Singh. After hard bargaining, the following terms were agreed upon :

(i) Out of 35 forts held by Shivaji, 23 forts with surrounding territory which yielded a revenue of four lakhs of *huns* every year were to be surrendered to the Mughals, while the remaining 12 forts with an annual income of one lakh of *huns* were to be left to Shivaji "on condition of service and loyalty to the throne";

(ii) Territory worth four lakhs of *huns* a year in the Bijapuri Konkan, which Shivaji had already held, was granted to him. In addition, the Bijapur territory worth five lakhs of *huns* a year in the uplands (Balaghat), which Shivaji was to conquer, was also granted to him. In return for these, he was to pay 40 lakhs *huns* in instalments to the Mughals.

Shivaji asked to be excused from personal service. Hence, a *mansab* of 5000 was granted in his place to his minor son, Sambhaji. Shivaji promised, however, to join personally in any Mughal campaign in the Deccan.

Jai Singh cleverly threw a bone of contention between Shivaji and the Bijapuri ruler. But the success of Jai Singh's scheme depended upon Mughal support to Shivaji in making up from Bijapur territory worth the amount he had yielded to the Mughals. *This proved to be the fatal flaw* Aurangzeb had not lost his reservations about Shivaji, and was doubtful of the wisdom of a joint Mughal-Maratha attack on Bijapur. But Jai Singh had larger ideas. He considered the alliance with Shivaji the starting point of the conquest of Bijapur and the entire Deccan. And once this had been done, Shivaji would have no option but to remain an ally of the Mughals since, as Jai Singh wrote to Aurangzeb, "We shall hem Shiva in like the centre of a circle".

However, the Mughal-Maratha expedition against Bijapur failed. Shivaji who had been deputed to capture fort Panhala was also unsuccessful. Seeing his grandiose scheme collapsing before his eyes, Jai Singh persuaded Shivaji to visit the emperor at Agra. If Shivaji and Aurangzeb could be reconciled, Jai Singh thought, Aurangzeb might be persuaded to give greater resources for a renewed invasion of Bijapur. But the visit proved to be a disaster. Shivaji felt insulted when he was put in the category of *mansabdars* of 5000—a

rank which had been granted earlier to his minor son. Nor did the emperor, whose birthday was being celebrated, find time to speak to Shivaji. Hence, Shivaji walked off angrily and refused imperial service. Such an episode had never happened, and a strong group at the court argued that exemplary punishment should be meted out to Shivaji in order to maintain and assert imperial dignity. Since Shivaji had come to Agra on Jai Singh's assurances, Aurangzeb wrote to Jai Singh for advice. Jai Singh strongly argued for a lenient treatment for Shivaji. But before any decision could be taken, Shivaji escaped from detention (1666). The manner of Shivaji's escape is too well known to be repeated here.

Aurangzeb always blamed himself for his carelessness in allowing Shivaji to escape. There is little doubt that Shivaji's Agra visit proved to be the turning point for Mughal relations with the Marathas—although for two years after his return home, Shivaji kept quiet. The visit proved that unlike Jai Singh, Aurangzeb attached little value to the alliance with Shivaji. For him, Shivaji was just a "petty *bhumia*" (land-holder). As subsequent developments proved, Aurangzeb's stubborn reservations about Shivaji, refusal to recognize his importance and attaching a low price to his friendship, was one of the biggest political mistakes made by Aurangzeb.

#### FINAL BREACH WITH SHIVAJI—SHIVAJI'S ADMINISTRATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Aurangzeb virtually goaded Shivaji into resuming his career of conquest by insisting upon a narrow interpretation of the treaty of Purandar, although with the failure of the expedition against Bijapur, the bottom had dropped out of the treaty. Shivaji could not be reconciled to the loss of 23 forts and territory worth four lakhs *huns* a year to the

Mughals without any compensation from Bijapur. He renewed the contest with the Mughals, sacking Surat a second time in 1670. During the next four years, he recovered a large number of his forts, including Purandar, from the Mughals and made deep inroads into Mughal territories, especially Berar and Khandesh. Mughal preoccupation with the Afghan uprising in the north-west helped Shivaji. He also renewed his contest with Bijapur, securing Panhala and Satara by means of bribes, and rarding the Kanara country at leisure.

In 1674 Shivaji crowned himself formally at Rajgarh. Shivaji had travelled far from being a petty jagirdar at Poona. He was by now the most powerful among the Maratha chiefs, and by virtue of the extent of his dominions and the size of his army could claim a status equal to the effete Deccani sultans. The formal coronation had, therefore, a number of purposes. It placed him on a pedestal much higher than any of the Maratha chiefs, some of whom had continued to look upon him as an upstart. To strengthen his social position further, Shivaji married into some of the leading old Marath families—the Mohites, the Shirkes, etc. A formal declaration was also made by the priest presiding over the function, Gaga Bhatt, that Shivaji was a high class *kshatriya*. Finally, as an independent ruler it now became possible for Shivaji to enter into treaties with the Deccani sultans on a footing of equality and not as a rebel. It was also an important step in the further growth of Maratha national sentiment.

In 1676 Shivaji undertook a bold new venture. With the active aid and support of the brothers, Madanna and Akhanna at Hyderabad, Shivaji undertook an expedition into the Bijapuri Karnataka. Shivaji was given a grand welcome by the Qutb Shah at his

capital and a formal agreement was arrived at. The Qutb Shah agreed to pay a subsidy of one lakh *huns* (five lakhs of rupees) annually to Shivaji and a Maratha ambassador was to live at his court. The territory and the booty gained in Karnataka was to be shared. The Qutb Shah supplied a contingent of troops and artillery to aid Shivaji and also provided money for the expenses of his army. The treaty was very favourable to Shivaji and enabled him to capture Jinji and Vellore from Bijapur officials and also to conquer much of the territories held by his half-brother, Ekoji. Although Shivaji had assumed the title of "*Haindava-Dharmoddharak*" (Protector of the Hindu faith) he plundered mercilessly the Hindu population of the area. Returning home laden with treasure, Shivaji refused to share anything with the Qutb Shah, thus straining his relations with him.

The Karnataka expedition was the last major expedition of Shivaji. The base at Jinji built up by Shivaji proved to be a haven of refuge for his son, Rajaram, during Aurangzeb's all-out war on the Marathas.

Shivaji died in 1680, shortly after his return from the Karnataka expedition. Meanwhile, he had laid the foundations of a sound system of administration. Shivaji's system of administration was largely borrowed from the administrative practices of the Deccani states. Although he designated eight ministers, sometimes called the *Ashtapradhan*, it was not in the nature of a council of ministers, each minister being directly responsible to the ruler. The most important ministers were the Peshwa who looked after the finances and general administration, and the *sari-i-naubat* (*senapati*) which was a post of honour and was generally given to one of the leading Maratha chiefs. The *majumdar* was the accountant, while the *wagenavis* was responsible for intelligence,

posts and household affairs. The *surunavis* or *chitnis* helped the king with his correspondence. The *dabir* was master of ceremonies and also helped the king in his dealings with foreign powers. The *nyayadhish* and *panditrao* were in charge of justice and charitable grants.

More important than the appointment of these officials was Shivaji's organisation of the army and the revenue system. Shivaji preferred to give cash salaries to the regular soldiers, though sometimes the chiefs received revenue grants (*saranjam*). Strict discipline was maintained in the army, no women or dancing girls being allowed to accompany the army. The plunder taken by each soldier during campaigns was strictly accounted for. The regular army (*paga*) consisting of about 30,000 to 40,000 cavalry, as distinct from the loose auxiliaries (*silahdars*), were supervised by *havalgars* who received fixed salaries. The forts were carefully supervised, Maval footsoldiers and gunners being appointed for it. We are told that three men of equal rank were placed in charge of each fort to guard against treachery.

The revenue system seems to have been patterned on the system of Malik Ambar. A new revenue assessment was completed by Annaji Datto in 1679. It is not correct to think that Shivaji abolished the zamindari (*desh-mukhi*) system, or that he did not award jagirs (*mokasa*) to his officials. However, Shivaji strictly supervised the *mirasdars*, that is, those with hereditary rights in land. Describing the situation, Sabhasad, who wrote in the eighteenth century, says that these sections paid to the government only a small part of their collections. "In consequence, the *mirasdars* grew and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers ... This class

had become unruly and seized the country". Shivaji destroyed their bastions and forced them to submit.

Shivaji supplemented his income by levying a contribution on the neighbouring Mughal territories. This contribution which came to one-fourth of the land revenue, began to be called *chauthai* (one-fourth) or *chauth*.

Shivaji not only proved to be an able general, a skilful tactician and a shrewd diplomat, he also laid the foundation of a strong state by curbing the power of the *deshmukhs*. The army was an effective instrument of his policies where rapidity of movement was the most important factor. The army depended for its salaries to a considerable extent on the plunder of the neighbouring areas. But the state cannot thereby be called just a "war-state". It was regional in character, no doubt, but it definitely had a popular base. To that extent, Shivaji was a popular king who represented the assertion of popular will in the area against Mughal encroachments.

#### **Aurangzeb and the Deccani States (1658-87)**

It is possible to trace three phases in the relations of Aurangzeb with the Deccani states. The first phase lasted till 1668 during which the main attempt was to recover from Bijapur the territories belonging to the Ahmadnagar state surrendered to it by the treaty of 1636: the second phase lasted till 1684 during which the major danger in the Deccan was considered to be the Marathas, and efforts were made to pressurise Bijapur and Golconda into joining hands with the Mughals against Shivaji and then against his son, Sambhaji. Simultaneously, the Mughals nibbled at the territories of the Deccani states which they tried to bring under their complete domination and control. The last phase began when Aurangzeb despaired of getting the cooperation of Bijapur and

Golconda against the Marathas and decided that to destroy the Marathas it was necessary first to conquer Bijapur and Golconda.

#### **THE FIRST PHASE (1658-68)**

The treaty of 1636, by which Shah Jahan had given one-third of the territories of Ahmadnagar state as a bribe for withdrawing support to the Marathas, and promised that the Mughals would "never never" conquer Bijapur and Golconda, had been abandoned by Shah Jahan himself. In 1657-58, Golconda and Bijapur were threatened with extinction. Golconda had to pay a huge indemnity, and Bijapur had to agree to the surrender of the Nizam Shahi territories granted in 1636. The "justification" for this was that both these states had made extensive conquests in Karnataka and that "compensation" was due to the Mughals on the ground that the two states were Mughal vassals, and that their conquests had been made possible due to benevolent neutrality on the part of the Mughals. Also, the cost of maintaining the Mughal armies in the Deccan was high, and the income from the Deccani areas under the control of the Mughals was insufficient to meet it. For a long time, the cost was met by subsidies from the treasuries of Malwa and Gujarat.

The resumption of a policy of limited advance in the Deccan had far-reaching implications which, it seems, neither Shah Jahan nor Aurangzeb adequately appreciated: it destroyed for all times confidence in the Mughal treaties and promises, and made impossible "a union of hearts" against the Marathas—a policy which Aurangzeb pursued with great perseverance for a quarter of a century but with little success.

On coming to the throne, Aurangzeb had two problems in the Deccan: the problem posed by the rising power of Shivaji, and the

problem of persuading Bijapur to part with the territories ceded to it by the treaty of 1636. Kalyani and Bidar had been secured in 1657. Parenda was secured by bribe in 1660. Sholapur still remained. However, Aurangzeb's expectation that, placed in this situation, the Adil Shah would willingly cooperate in the campaign against Shivaji was unrealistic. In 1636, Shah Jahan had given a huge bribe to the Adil Shah for giving his support against Shahji. Aurangzeb had nothing to offer to the Adil Shah except to surrender the gains of 1636. Yet, angered by Adil Shah's attitude of non-cooperation, Aurangzeb asked Jai Singh to punish both Shivaji and Adil Shah. This shows Aurangzeb's confidence in the superiority of the Mughal arms and the underestimation of his opponents. But Jai Singh was an astute politician. He told Aurangzeb, "It would be unwise to attack both these fools at the same time".

However, Jai Singh was the only Mughal politician who advocated an all-out forward policy in the Deccan during this period. Jai Singh was of the opinion that the Maratha problem could not be solved without a forward policy in the Deccan—a conclusion to which Aurangzeb finally came 20 years later.

While planning his invasion of Bijapur, Jai Singh had written to Aurangzeb, "The conquest of Bijapur is the preface to the conquest of all Deccan and Karnataka." But Aurangzeb shrank from this bold policy. We can only guess at the reasons: the ruler of Iran had adopted a threatening attitude in the north-west; the campaign for the conquest of the Deccan would be long and arduous and would need the presence of the emperor himself for large armies could not be left in charge of a noble or an ambitious prince, as Shah Jahan had discovered to his misfortune. But as long as Shah Jahan was alive, how could Aurangzeb

afford to go away on a distant campaign?

With his limited resources, Jai Singh's Bijapur campaign (1665) was bound to fail. The campaign recreated the united front of the Deccan states against the Mughals, for the Qutb Shah sent a large force to aid Bijapur. The Deccanis adopted guerilla tactics, luring Jai Singh on to Bijapur while devastating the countryside so that the Mughals could get no supplies. Jai Singh found that he had no means to assault the city since he had not brought siege guns, and to invest the city was impossible. The retreat proved costly, and neither money nor any additional territory was gained by Jai Singh by this campaign. This disappointment and the censures of Aurangzeb hastened Jai Singh's death (1667). The following year (1668), the Mughals secured the surrender of Sholapur by bribery. The first phase was thus over.

#### THE SECOND PHASE (1668-81)

The Mughals virtually marked time in the Deccan between 1668 and 1676. A new factor during the period was the rise to power of Madanna and Akhanna in Golconda. These two gifted brothers virtually ruled Golconda from 1672 almost till the extinction of the state in 1687. The brothers followed a policy of trying to establish a tripartite alliance between Golconda, Bijapur and Shivaji. This policy was periodically disturbed by faction fights at the Bijapur court, and by the overweening ambition of Shivaji. The factions at Bijapur could not be depended upon to follow a consistent policy. They adopted a pro- or anti-Mughal stance depending upon their immediate interests. Shivaji looted and alternately supported Bijapur against the Mughals. Although seriously concerned at the growing Maratha power, Aurangzeb, it seems, was keen to limit Mughal expansion in the Deccan.

Hence, repeated efforts were made to instal and back a party at Bijapur which would cooperate with the Mughals against Shivaji and which would not be led by Golconda.

In pursuit of this policy, a series of Mughal interventions were made. The first intervention took place in 1676, following the overthrow of the Bijapur regent Khawas Khan, who had agreed to join the Mughals against Shivaji for a price—Mughal help for the destruction of his domestic rivals, the Afghans! The invasion had to contend with the united opposition of the Bijapur and Golconda forces. Although the Mughals secured possession of Naldurg and Gulbarga by bribery, the basic objective of placing a pro-Mughal and anti-Maratha group in power could not be realised.

Aurangzeb now made a new approach. The Mughal viceroy, Bahadur Khan, was recalled, and an Afghan noble and soldier, Diler Khan, who had good relations with the Afghan faction in Bijapur was placed in command. Diler Khan persuaded the Afghan leader Bahlol Khan to join in an expedition against Golconda. The Golconda ruler had openly welcomed Shivaji in his capital, while Madanna and Akhanna virtually ruled the state. The failure of the Mughal-Bijapur attack (1677) was in no small measure due to the firm leadership of Madanna and Akhanna. The Afghan party in Bijapur was now discredited, and an appeal was made to Qutb Shah to mediate and save the Adil Shahi monarchy. At the instance of the Qutb Shah, it was agreed that Sidi Masud, the leader of the Deccani party, would become the regent, and that six lakh rupees would be paid to Sidi Masud to pay off the arrears of the Afghan soldiers who would then be disbanded, and that a resident from Golconda would advise the Bijapuri administration; Akhanna was chosen for the post. *This marks the high watermark of Hyderabad influence over Bijapur and*

*in the politics of the Deccan.*

For the time being, Shivaji was not a party to this agreement. Shivaji had angered the Qutb Shah by not agreeing to give him his share of the spoils of the Karnataka campaign. Hence, it was agreed that Shivaji would be "confined to the Konkan." Shivaji was the most uncertain factor in the situation, and was bent on playing a lone hand. Returning from Karnataka, he had continued his policy of "boundless violence" and intrigued to get Bijapur in his hands. Sidi Masud wrote to Shivaji, "We are neighbours We eat the same salt. You are as deeply concerned in (the welfare of) this state as I am. The enemy (that is, the Mughals) are day and night trying to ruin it. We two ought to unite and expel the foreigner."

Masud also met the Mughal chief, Diler Khan. As a peace offering, the sister of the Adil Shah who was widely respected, was promised in marriage to a son of Aurangzeb. Masud also promised to obey Aurangzeb and not to make any alliance with Shivaji. However, news of the negotiations of Sidi Masud with Shivaji leaked out to the Mughals who now decided to besiege Bijapur (1679).

Thus, the only result of Mughal diplomatic and military efforts was the re-assertion of the united front of the three Deccani powers against the Mughals. The last desperate effort of Diler Khan to capture Bijapur (1679-80) also failed, largely because no Mughal viceroy had the means to contend against the united forces of the Deccani states. A new element which was brought into play was the Karnataka foot-soldiers. Thirty thousand of them sent by the Berad chief, Pem Naik, were a major factor in withstanding the Mughal siege of Bijapur. Shivaji, too, sent a large force to relieve Bijapur, and raided the Mughal dominions in all directions. Thus Diler Khan could achieve nothing except laying Mughal territories open to

Maratha raids and he was recalled by Aurangzeb.

#### THE THIRD PHASE (1681-87)

Thus the Mughals achieved little during 1676-80. When Aurangzeb reached the Deccan in 1681 in pursuit of his rebel son, prince Akbar, he concentrated his forces against Sambhaji, the son and successor of Shivaji while making renewed efforts to detach Bijapur and Golconda from the side of the Marathas. His efforts did not have an outcome different from that of the earlier efforts. The Marathas were the only shield against the Mughals, and the Deccani states were not prepared to throw it away.

Aurangzeb now decided to force the issue. He called upon the Adil Shah as a vassal to supply provisions to the imperial army to allow the Mughal armies free passage through his territory and to supply a contingent of 5000 to 6000 cavalry for the war against the Marathas. He also demanded that Sharza Khan, the leading Bijapuri noble opposed to the Mughals, be expelled. An open rupture was now inevitable. The Adil Shah appealed for help both to Golconda and Sambhaji, which was promptly given. However, even the combined forces of the Deccani states could not withstand the full strength of the Mughal army, particularly when commanded by the Mughal emperor or an energetic prince, as had been demonstrated earlier. Even then, it took 18 months of siege, with Aurangzeb being personally present during the final stages, before Bijapur fell (1686). This provides an ample justification for the earlier failure of Jai Singh (1665), and Diler Khan (1679-80).

A campaign against Golconda was inevitable following the downfall of Bijapur. The "sins" of the Qutb Shah were too many to be pardoned. He had given supreme power to the

infidels, Madanna and Akhanna, and helped Shivaji on various occasions. His latest "treachery" was sending 40,000 men to aid Bijapur, despite Aurangzeb's warnings. In 1685, despite stiff resistance, the Mughals had occupied Golconda. The emperor had agreed to pardon the Qutb Shah in return for a huge subsidy, the ceding of some areas and the ousting of Madanna and Akhanna. The Qutb Shah agreed. Madanna and Akhanna were dragged out into the streets and murdered (1686). But even this crime failed to save the Qutb Shahi monarchy. After the fall of Bijapur, Aurangzeb decided to settle scores with the Qutb Shah. The siege opened early in 1687 and after more than six months of campaigning the fort fell on account of treachery and bribery.

Aurangzeb had triumphed but he soon found that the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda was only the beginning of his difficulties. The last and the most difficult phase of Aurangzeb's life began now.

#### Aurangzeb, the Marathas and the Deccan—the Last Phase (1687-1707)

After the downfall of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb was able to concentrate all his forces against the Marathas. Apart from raiding Burhanpur and Aurangabad, the new Maratha king, Sambhaji had thrown a challenge to Aurangzeb by giving shelter to his rebel son, prince Akbar. Aurangzeb was mortally afraid that a sally by prince Akbar into Mughal territories, backed up by the Marathas, might lead to a protracted civil war. However, Sambhaji took a peculiarly passive attitude towards prince Akbar, spending his energies in a futile war with the Sidis on the coast and with the Portuguese. Prince Akbar chafed and fretted, for even when Aurangzeb was busy in his wars against Bijapur and Golconda, Sambhaji refused to give any large-scale help

to prince Akbar. The prince's dash into Mughal territory in 1686 was, therefore, easily repulsed. Discouraged, prince Akbar escaped by sea to Iran, and sought shelter with the Iranian king.

Even after the fall of Bijapur and Golconda, Sambhaji remained immersed in pleasure, and in dealing with his internal enemies. In 1689, Sambhaji was surprised at his secret hideout at Sangameshwar by a Mughal force. He was paraded before Aurangzeb and executed as a rebel and an infidel. This was undoubtedly another major political mistake on the part of Aurangzeb. He could have set a seal on his conquest of Bijapur and Golconda by coming to terms with the Marathas. By executing Sambhaji, he not only threw away this chance, but provided the Marathas a cause. In the absence of a single rallying point, the Maratha sardars were left free to plunder the Mughal territories, disappearing at the approach of the Mughal forces. Instead of destroying the Marathas, Aurangzeb made the Maratha opposition all-pervasive in the Deccan. Rajaram, the younger brother of Sambhaji, was crowned as king, but had to escape when the Mughals attacked his capital. Rajaram sought shelter at Jinji on the east coast and continued the fight against the Mughals from there. Thus Maratha resistance spread from the west to the east coast.

However, for the moment, Aurangzeb was at the height of his power, having triumphed over all his enemies. Some of the nobles were of the opinion that Aurangzeb should return to north India, leaving to others the task of mopping-up operations against the Marathas. There was also an opinion which, it appears, had the support of the heir-apparent, Shah Alam that the task of ruling over Karnataka should be left to the vassal rulers of Bijapur and Golconda. Aurangzeb rejected all these

suggestions and imprisoned Shah Alam for daring to negotiate with the Deccan rulers. Convinced that the Maratha power had been crushed, Aurangzeb, after 1690, concentrated on annexing to the empire the rich and extensive Karnataka tract. However, Aurangzeb bit off more than he could chew. He unduly extended his lines of communications which became vulnerable to Maratha attacks, and neglected the task of providing a sound administration to the settled areas of Bijapur and Golconda.

During the period between 1690 and 1703, Aurangzeb stubbornly refused to negotiate with the Marathas. Rajaram was besieged at Jinji, but the siege proved to be long drawn out. Jinji fell in 1698, but the chief prize, Rajaram, escaped. Maratha resistance grew and the Mughals suffered a number of serious reverses. The Marathas recaptured many of their forts and Rajaram was able to come back to Satara.

Undaunted, Aurangzeb set out to win back all the Maratha forts. For five and half years, from 1700 to 1705, Aurangzeb dragged his weary and ailing body from the siege of one fort to another. Floods, disease and the Maratha roving bands took fearful toll of the Mughal army. Weariness and disaffection steadily grew among the nobles and the army. Demoralisation set in and many jagirdars made secret pacts with the Marathas and agreed to pay *chauth* if the Marathas did not disturb their jagirs.

In 1703, Aurangzeb opened negotiations with the Marathas. He was prepared to release Shahu, the son of Sambhaji, who had been captured at Satara along with his mother. Shahu had been treated well. He had been given the title of raja and the *mansab* of 7000/7000. On coming of age he had been married to two Maratha girls of respectable families. Aurangzeb was prepared to grant Shahu Shivaji's swarajya and the right of

*sardeshmukhi* over the Deccan, thus recognising his special position. Over 70 Maratha sardars actually assembled to receive Shahu. But Aurangzeb cancelled the arrangements at the last minute, uncertain about the intentions of the Marathas.<sup>1</sup>

By 1706, Aurangzeb was convinced of the futility of his effort to capture all the Maratha forts. He slowly retreated to Aurangabad while an exulting Maratha army hovered around and attacked the stragglers.

Thus when Aurangzeb breathed his last at Aurangabad in 1707, he left behind an empire which was sorely distracted, and in which all the various internal problems of the empire were coming to a head.

#### **Decline of the Mughal Empire—Responsibility of Aurangzeb**

The Mughal empire declined rapidly after the death of Aurangzeb. The Mughal court became the scene for faction fighting among the nobles, and soon ambitious provincial governors began to behave in an independent manner. The Maratha depredations extended from the Deccan to the heartland of the empire, the Gangetic plains. The weakness of the empire was proclaimed to the world when Nadir Shah imprisoned the Mughal emperor and looted Delhi in 1739.

To what extent was the downfall of the Mughal empire due to developments after the death of Aurangzeb, and to what extent was it due to the mistaken policies adopted by Aurangzeb? There has been a good deal of discussion on this point among historians.

While not absolving Aurangzeb from all responsibility, the recent trend has been to view his reign in the context of the economic, social, administrative and intellectual situation prevailing in the country as also the developing international trends, before and during his reign.

The working of economic and social forces in medieval India has yet to be fully understood. We have seen in an earlier chapter that trade and commerce were expanding in India during the seventeenth century and that handicraft production was keeping pace with the growing demand. This, in turn, could only have been made possible if the production of raw materials such as cotton, indigo, etc., had expanded simultaneously. The area under *zabt*, that is, where the system of measurement was followed, expanded, according to official Mughal statistics. There is some evidence, in fact, that the total area under cultivation expanded. This was due, in part, to the working of the economic forces and, in part, to the administrative policies pursued by the Mughals. Every noble, even a religious grantee, was expected to take personal interest in the expansion and improvement of cultivation, and careful records of such growth were maintained. Historians are surprised at the detailed records that were maintained regarding the number of ploughs, bullocks and wells in each village, and the increase in their numbers as well the number of cultivators.

Despite this, there is reason to believe that trade and manufacture, as well as agricultural production were stagnating, that is, they were

<sup>1</sup> It has been said that Aurangzeb offered the Raj to Shahu on condition of his turning a Muslim. Contemporary records do not support this. If Aurangzeb had wanted to convert Shahu to Islam, he could have done so while he was his captive during the preceding 13 years.

not expanding' as rapidly as the situation required. This was due to a number of factors. No new methods of cultivation were available to counter the trend of declining production as the soil became exhausted. The land revenue was heavy. From Akbar's time, it was more or less half of the produce,<sup>1</sup> if we include the share due to the zamindars and to the other local elements. Though the state demand varied from area to area, being less in the less fertile areas of Rajasthan and Sindh, and more in such fertile areas as the saffron-producing areas in Kashmir, it was not, generally speaking, so heavy as to drive the peasant away from land. In fact, figures from eastern Rajasthan show that new villages were continuously being founded during the second half of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century. (We do not have figures for the earlier period.) The basic reasons for limiting expansion, it appears, were social and partly administrative. Since the population of the country during the period is estimated to be about 125 million, there was plenty of surplus cultivable land available. However, we hear of landless labourers in many villages. The bulk of these people, it seems, can be broadly classified as untouchables. The cultivating communities, and the zamindars who often belonged to the upper castes, had little desire or incentive for making it possible for the untouchables to settle new villages and thus acquire proprietary rights in land. They had, in fact, a vested interest in keeping them in the village as a reserve labour force, and for per-

forming various menial jobs for them, such as skinning the dead animals, making leather ropes, etc. The rural landless and poor (those who had very small holdings) had neither the necessary capital nor the organisation needed for settling new villages or breaking uncultivated lands on their own. The state did, sometimes, take the initiative in settling new lands but the untouchables were not able to take full advantage of this because the state had to involve the local zamindars and the village headmen (*muqaddams*) in the enterprise, and they belonged to other caste groups and had their own vested interests, as we have noted.

While production increased slowly, the demands and expectations of the ruling classes expanded rapidly. Thus the number of *mansabdars* rose from 2069 at the time of Jahangir's accession in 1605, to 8000 in 1637 during Shah Jahan's reign, and to 11,456 during the latter half of Aurangzeb's reign. While the number of nobles rose five times, the revenue resources of the empire did not increase in the same proportion. Moreover, Shah Jahan inaugurated what may be called an age of magnificence. The opulence of the nobles who already enjoyed the highest salaries in the world increased further during the period. Though many nobles took part in trade and commerce directly or through merchants acting on their behalf, income from trade and commerce could only supplement their income which continued to be mainly from land. Hence, they tried to increase their income from land, squeezing the

<sup>1</sup> Under Akbar, the standard rate was one third of the average produce, but the share of the zamindar and other local elements was not included in it. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the state share generally rose to half, but it included the share of the zamindar and local elements (village headman etc.).

peasants and the zamindars.

We know very little about the number of zamindars and their living standards. Mughal policy towards the zaminders was contradictory. While on the one hand, the zamindars were considered the main threat to the internal stability of the empire, on the other hand, efforts were made to draw them into the task of local administration and many of them—Rajputs, Marathas and others—were given *mansabs* and political offices in an effort to broaden the political base of the empire. The zamindars, who as a class had become more powerful and influential in the process, were in no mood to submit to the illegal exactions of the nobles. Nor was it easy to increase the exactions on the peasantry still further, especially when there was plenty of surplus cultivable land and the zamindars and the village headmen vied with each other to try to attract new cultivators to their lands. The movement of these migrant peasants called *pahis* or *uparis* from village to village in search of better conditions is a little noticed feature of medieval rural life.

Thus attempts to realize more from the jagirs, often by means not sanctioned by the state, brought to the surface all the internal contradictions of medieval rural society. It led to peasant discontent in some areas, uprisings led by zamindars in some others, and attempts to carve out independent local kingdoms in still others. At the administrative level, it led to growing dissatisfaction and factionalism in the nobility and to the growth of what has been called the crisis of the jagirdari system. The attempt of the nobles to corner the most profitable jagirs resulted in the Mughal administrative system becoming even more corrupt. Aurangzeb added to the crisis by steadily increasing the *khalisa* or the tracts reserved for royal expenses. This was

to meet the growing administrative expenses as also the cost of the wars which were a continuous feature of his reign.

The nobility was the most important institution which developed under the Mughals. We have seen how the Mughals were able to attract to their services some of the most competent people irrespective of race or creed, from various sections within the country, and also from outside. The nobility was able to function successfully in the highly personalised system of administration and, on the whole, maintained a fair state of security and peace in the country. But this role the nobility played only as service to the emperor served their own interests. It is wrong to argue, as some historians have done, that the nobility decayed because the "vivifying" stream of immigrants from Central Asia stopped after the death of Aurangzeb. By the time Aurangzeb ascended the throne, the bulk of the Mughal nobility consisted of those who had been born in India. The belief that there was something wrong in the Indian climate which led to the decline of character was really a racialist argument put forward by the British historians to justify India's domination by people coming from colder climates, and can no longer be accepted by us.

It has also been argued that the Mughal nobility acted in an anti-national manner, because it was drawn from diverse communities and ethnic and racial groups and hence lacked a national character. A sense of nationalism, as we understand the term today, did not exist in medieval times. But the concept of loyalty to the salt was effective enough to ensure loyalty to the Mughal dynasty and a broad sense of patriotism. As we have seen, the nobles who came from abroad had few links left with the country of their origin and shared the Indo-Mughal cultural values and

outlook.

The Mughals had devised a careful system of checks and balances at various levels in the administrative machinery and tried to balance various ethnic and religious groups in such a way that the ambitions of individual nobles or groups of them could be kept under control. Nobles began to assume independent airs only when the administrative machinery was allowed to decay by the successors of Aurangzeb and on account of the steady accentuation of the crisis of the jagirdari system. Thus, disintegration was speeded up not because of but as a result of the breakdown of the Mughal administrative system. Of course, it can be said that the Mughal administrative system was highly centralised and needed a competent monarch to run it. In the absence of such monarchs, *wazirs* tried to fill the bill, but they failed. Thus, individual failure and the breakdown of the system reacted on each other.

In the political field, Aurangzeb committed a number of serious mistakes. We have already referred to his inability to understand the true nature of the Maratha movement and his disregard of Jai Singh's advice to befriend Shivaji. The execution of Sambhaji was another mistake, for it deprived Aurangzeb of a recognised Maratha head to negotiate with. Apparently, Aurangzeb had no desire to negotiate with the Marathas. He was convinced that after the extinction of Bijapur and Golconda, he had the Marathas at his mercy and that the Marathas had no option but to accept his terms—a truncated *swarajya*<sup>1</sup> and promise of loyalty and service to the Mughal emperor. When Aurangzeb realised his mistake and opened negotiations with the Marathas, the demand for *chauth* and *sardesh-*

*mukhi* proved a serious obstacle. Even this had been, by and large, surmounted. In 1703, agreement had been, more or less arrived at, but Aurangzeb could not bring himself to trust Shahu and the Maratha sardars, as we have seen.

Aurangzeb failed to solve the Maratha problem, and thus left an open sore. He did give *mansabs* to many Maratha sardars; in fact, Maratha sardars had more *mansabs* at the highest levels than the Rajputs ever had. Yet, the Maratha sardars were not trusted. Unlike the Rajputs, they were never given offices of trust and responsibility. Thus the Marathas could not be integrated into the Mughal political system. Here again, a political settlement with Shivaji, or Sambhaji or Shahu might have made a big difference.

Aurangzeb has been criticised for having failed to unite with the Deccani states against the Marathas, or for having conquered them, thereby making the empire "so large that it collapsed under its own weight." A unity of hearts between Aurangzeb and the Deccani states was "a psychological impossibility" once the treaty of 1636 was abandoned, a development which took place during the reign of Shah Jahan himself. After his accession, Aurangzeb desisted from pursuing a vigorous forward policy in the Deccan. In fact, he postponed as long as possible the decision to conquer and annex the Deccani state. Aurangzeb's hand was virtually forced by the growing Maratha power, the support extended to Shivaji by Madanna and Akhanna from Golconda, and fear that Bijapur might fall under the domination of Shivaji and the Maratha-dominated Golconda. Later, by giving shelter to the rebel prince Akbar,

1. This is the term used by Marathu writers for the state carved out by Shivaji.

Sambhaji virtually threw a challenge to Aurangzeb who quickly realised that the Marathas could not be dealt with without first subduing Bijapur and possibly Golconda.

The attempt to extend Mughal administration over Golconda, Bijapur and Karnataka, stretched the Mughal administration to breaking point. It also laid Mughal lines of communications open to Maratha attacks, so much so, that the Mughal nobles in the area found it impossible to collect their dues from the jagirs assigned to them and sometimes made private pacts with the Marathas. This, in turn, raised the power and prestige of the Marathas, led to demoralisation in the nobility, and a setback to the imperial prestige. Perhaps, Aurangzeb might have been better advised to accept the suggestion apparently put forward by his eldest son, Shah Alam, for a settlement with Bijapur and Golconda, annex only a part of their territories, and let them rule over Karnataka which was far away and difficult to manage.

The impact of the Deccani and other wars on the Mughal empire and of the prolonged absence of Aurangzeb from northern India, should not be overestimated. Despite the mistakes of policy and some of the personal shortcomings of Aurangzeb, such as his excessive suspiciousness and his narrow and cold temperament, the Mughal empire was still a powerful and vigorous military and administrative machinery. The Mughal army might fail against the elusive and highly mobile bands of Marathas in the mountainous region of the Deccan. Maratha forts might be difficult to capture and still more difficult to retain. But in the plains of northern India and the vast plateau extending up to the Karnataka, the Mughal artillery was still master of the field. Thirty or forty years after Aurangzeb's death, when the Mughal artillery had declined

considerably in strength and efficiency, the Marathas could still not face it in the field of battle. Continuous anarchy, wars and the depredations of the Marathas may have depleted the population of the Deccan and brought its trade, industry and agriculture to a virtual stand-still. But in northern India which was the heart of the empire and was of decisive economic and political importance in the country, the Mughal administration still retained much of its vigour. In fact, the administration at the district level proved amazingly tenacious and a good deal of it survived and found its way indirectly into the British administration.

Politically, despite the military reverses and the mistakes of Aurangzeb, the Mughal dynasty still retained a powerful hold on the mind and imagination of the people.

As far as the Rajputs are concerned, we have seen that the breach with Marwar was not due to an attempt on Aurangzeb's part to undermine the Hindus by depriving them of a recognised head, but to a miscalculation on his part. He wanted to divide the Marwar state between the two principal claimants, and in the process alienated both, as also the ruler of Mewar who considered Mughal interference in such matters to be a dangerous precedent. The breach with Mewar and the long drawn out war which followed damaged the moral standing of the Mughal state. However, the fighting was not of much consequence militarily after 1681. It may be doubted whether the presence of Rathor Rajputs in larger numbers in the Deccan between 1681 and 1706 would have made much difference in the outcome of the conflict with the Marathas. In any case, the demands of the Rajputs related to grant of high *mansabs* as before and restoration of their homelands. These demands having been accepted within half a dozen years

of Aurangzeb's death, the Rajputs ceased to be a problem for the Mughals. They played no role in the subsequent disintegration of the empire, but could not arrest the process of decline.

Aurangzeb's religious policy should be seen in the social, economic and political context. Aurangzeb was orthodox in his outlook and tried to remain within the frame-work of the Islamic law. But this law was developed outside India in vastly dissimilar situations, and could hardly be applied rigidly to India. His failure to respect the susceptibilities of his non-Muslim subjects on many occasions, his adherence to the time-worn policy towards temples and reimposition of *jizyah* as laid down by the Islamic law did not help him to rally the Muslims to his side or generate a greater sense of loyalty towards a state based on Islamic law. On the other hand, it alienated the Hindus and strengthened the hands of those sections which were opposed to the Mughal empire for political or other reasons. By itself,

religion was not a point at issue. *Jizyah* was scrapped within half a dozen years of Aurangzeb's death and restrictions on building new temples eased. But these, again, had no effect on the rapidly accelerating decline and disintegration of the empire.

In the ultimate resort, the decline and downfall of the empire was due to economic, social, political and institutional factors. Akbar's measures helped to keep the forces of disintegration in check for some time. But it was impossible for him to effect fundamental changes in the structure of society. By the time Aurangzeb came to the throne, the socio-economic forces of disintegration were already strong. Aurangzeb lacked the foresight and statesmanship necessary to effect fundamental changes in the structure or to pursue policies which could, for the time being, reconcile the various competing elements.

Thus Aurangzeb was both a victim of circumstances and helped to create the circumstances of which he became a victim.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the rise of the Marathas under Shivaji. How far did Aurangzeb succeed in checking the power of the Marathas ?
2. Describe the administrative system established by Shivaji. Discuss its role in building a strong Maratha state.
3. Describe the main features of Aurangzeb's policy towards the Deccan kingdoms. How far was it influenced by the need to check the growth of the Maratha power ?
4. What were the causes of the increasing exploitation of the peasantry in the seventeenth century ?
5. Discuss the position and role of the zamindars during the reign of Aurangzeb.
6. Discuss the main failings of Aurangzeb. How far were they responsible for the disintegration of the Mughal empire ?

## CHAPTER XIX

# Assessment and Review

THE THOUSAND years from the beginning of the eighth century to the end of the seventeenth century saw important changes in the political, economic and cultural life of the country and also, to a smaller extent, in its social life.

In the field of social life, the caste system continued to dominate, despite the challenge posed to it by Islam and loss of political power by the Rajput rulers who were duty bound to protect *dharma* which implied, among other things, the upholding of the fourfold division of society (*varnashrama-dharma*). Although the Nath Panthi Jogis and the Bhakti saints vehemently criticised the caste system, they could hardly make a dent in it. A tacit agreement was arrived at in course of time. The criticism of the caste system by saints did not, with some notable exceptions, extend to day-to-day or secular life, while the brahmanas acquiesced in the advocacy of the path of devotion as the way for salvation for all castes, specially for the sudras. However, the brahmanas continued to claim a privileged position for themselves, including the exclusive right to preach and educate.

Within the framework of caste, new sub-groups arose, partly due to the absorption of tribal groups into Hinduism, partly due to the growth of new professional groups and partly due to local and regional feelings. At the same

time, the varna status of castes rose or fell, according to their economic and political power. Rajputs, Marathas and Khattris may be mentioned in this context.

The Bhakti and Sufi saints gradually brought about a better understanding of the fundamental tenets of Hinduism and Islam underlining the fact that they had a great deal of similarity. This resulted in a greater spirit of mutual harmony and toleration, although forces advocating a narrow, intolerant approach continued to be strongly entrenched and sometimes influenced state policies. But such occasions were, on the whole, very few.

The Bhakti and Sufi saints also brought about important changes in the approach to religion, laying greater emphasis on true faith than to the formal observances. They also contributed to the growth of regional languages and literature. But the excessive concern with religious and spiritual affairs resulted in a setback to the growth of rational sciences, especially to the cultivation of science and technology.

On balance, the position of women worsened. Seclusion of women or *pardah* became more widespread, while Hindu women were not able to claim the right of remarriage or a share in their father's property which Muslim women had. In fact, these rights tended to be denied

more and more even to Muslim women.

In the political and economic fields, the most important development was the political integration of the country brought about by the Turks and later by the Mughals. Although the Turkish and Mughal system of administration remained largely confined to northern India, indirectly it affected other parts of India also. The institution of a well-minted currency based on silver, the development of roads and sarais and the preference for city life had a direct effect on the growth of trade and handicrafts which reached its climax during the seventeenth century. Under the Mughals, political integration was accompanied by a deliberate effort to create a unified ruling class consisting of Muslims and Hindus. However, the ruling class remained strongly aristocratic in character, with only limited opportunities of career being open to the people of talent from lower classes. The Mughal nobility was organised as a bureaucracy dependent on the monarch. However, it derived its income mainly from lands cultivated by peasant proprietors. For the collection of land revenue from peasants, the nobility depended partly on its military following and partly on the strength of the zamindars whose rights and privileges were defended and maintained by the state in return for this support. That is why many historians argue that the state in medieval India remained essentially feudal.

A significant contribution of the Turks was the defence of the country from Mongol onslaughts during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Later, for 200 years, the Mughals were able to secure the north-west frontier of India from foreign invasions. For this purpose, the politics of Central and West Asia were closely followed and sometimes an active part was taken.

India's reputation as a land of spices, and its position as the textile manufactory of the

eastern world including East Africa, led the European nations to try to establish direct trade relations with India. While the Portuguese monopoly of some items of the oriental trade and their domination of seas had, on the whole, a harmful effect on Indian trade and commerce, the Dutch and English traders who broke the Portuguese monopoly, helped to open the European markets for Indian products such as textiles, indigo and salt-petre which were not exported to Europe earlier. Thus, India was linked more closely to the rapidly expanding European market. However, in the absence of a strong navy and a well-developed mercantile fleet, the Indian trader and producer could secure only a marginal share of the profits of this new trade. On the other hand, the richness of the oriental trade further whetted the appetite of the European nations and quickened their economic and technological growth. Since they had hardly any commodities to offer which were in demand in the oriental world, except the silver and gold procured from Central and South America, the European traders, backed by their governments, sought an entry into the internal trade of India. On a number of occasions, they desired to control Indian territories whose income could be used for the purchase of Indian goods. As long as the Mughal empire was strong, the European nations were not successful in these twin objectives. This decline of the Mughal empire and important political events in India during the eighteenth century (such as the entry of Nadir Shah and later, the Afghans), as well as the rapid economic development in the European nations leading to the Industrial Revolution, enabled these nations to establish their dominations in India as also in many other Asian countries.

While scholars have tried to explain the causes of the decline and downfall of the

Mughal empire, the reasons why India, like many other Asian nations, could not develop as rapidly as the European nations in the economic and scientific fields, need further detailed study and research. We have shown that Indians could not take full advantage of growing international trade due to its weakness in the naval field. The Turkish and Mughal ruling classes had no traditions of connection with the sea. While the Mughals were quick to recognise the importance of foreign trade and for that reason, gave patronage and support to the European trading companies, they had little understanding of the importance of naval power in the economic development of a nation.

India's lagging behind in the field of naval power was a reflection of its growing backwardness in the field of science and technology all round. Even the mechanical clock which brought together all the European inventions in the field of dynamics was not known in India during the seventeenth century. The superiority of the Europeans in the field of artillery was freely acknowledged. Even where Indian craftsmen were able to copy European developments—as for example in the field of ship-building—little ability to innovate was displayed. Apart from the attitude of the ruling class to which we have referred, the social structure, historical traditions and the outlook of various sections are important in this context. There was too much emphasis on past learning and of showing deference to those who were supposed to be the depositories of this knowledge—the brahmanas and the mullahs. Akbar's efforts to modernise the syllabus by introducing more science subjects of secular interest were defeated due to the pressure of these elements. The very skill of the Indian artisans and their availability in large number inhibited the efforts to develop and apply machine power to productive enterprises.

Thus, India lagged behind the world in the field of science and technology and the Mughal ruling class remained singularly blind to this development. Like all ruling classes on their way out, the Mughal ruling class was more concerned with matters of immediate concern, including its creature comforts, than matters which would shape the future.

Despite this, the developments in various fields in India during the period should not be lost sight of. The growth of political integration was paralleled by cultural integration. Indian society was one of the few societies in the world which was able to develop a more or less unified culture despite differences in race, religion and language. This unified culture was reflected in an outburst of creative activity which makes the seventeenth century a second classical age. In the south, the traditions of the Cholas were continued by the Vijayanagara kingdom. The Bahmani kingdom and its successor states also contributed to cultural developments in various fields. The rich cultural developments in the various regional kingdoms during the fifteenth century were, to some extent, integrated in the new cultural forms developed by the Mughals. However, this integrated culture came under pressure from the religious dogmatists of the two faiths as well as from the competing and conflicting interests of various sections in the ruling classes. But that it survived, on the whole, till the middle of the nineteenth century is no mean tribute to all those saints, scholars and enlightened rulers who helped to fashion it.

The period was also marked by economic development and growth. Trade and manufactures expanded and there was expansion and improvement of cultivation also. However the growth was uneven in different areas and during different phases. Apart from the Ganga valley where the Mughals spent a substantial

## ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW

part of the revenue resources of the empire, the areas which developed rapidly during the seventeenth century were Gujarat, the Coromandal coast and Bengal. Perhaps, it is no accident that these have been the areas in the forefront of economic development of India in the modern period, particularly the post-independence era.

Would India have continued to progress economically and even attained Industrial Revolution on its own, if the Mughal empire had

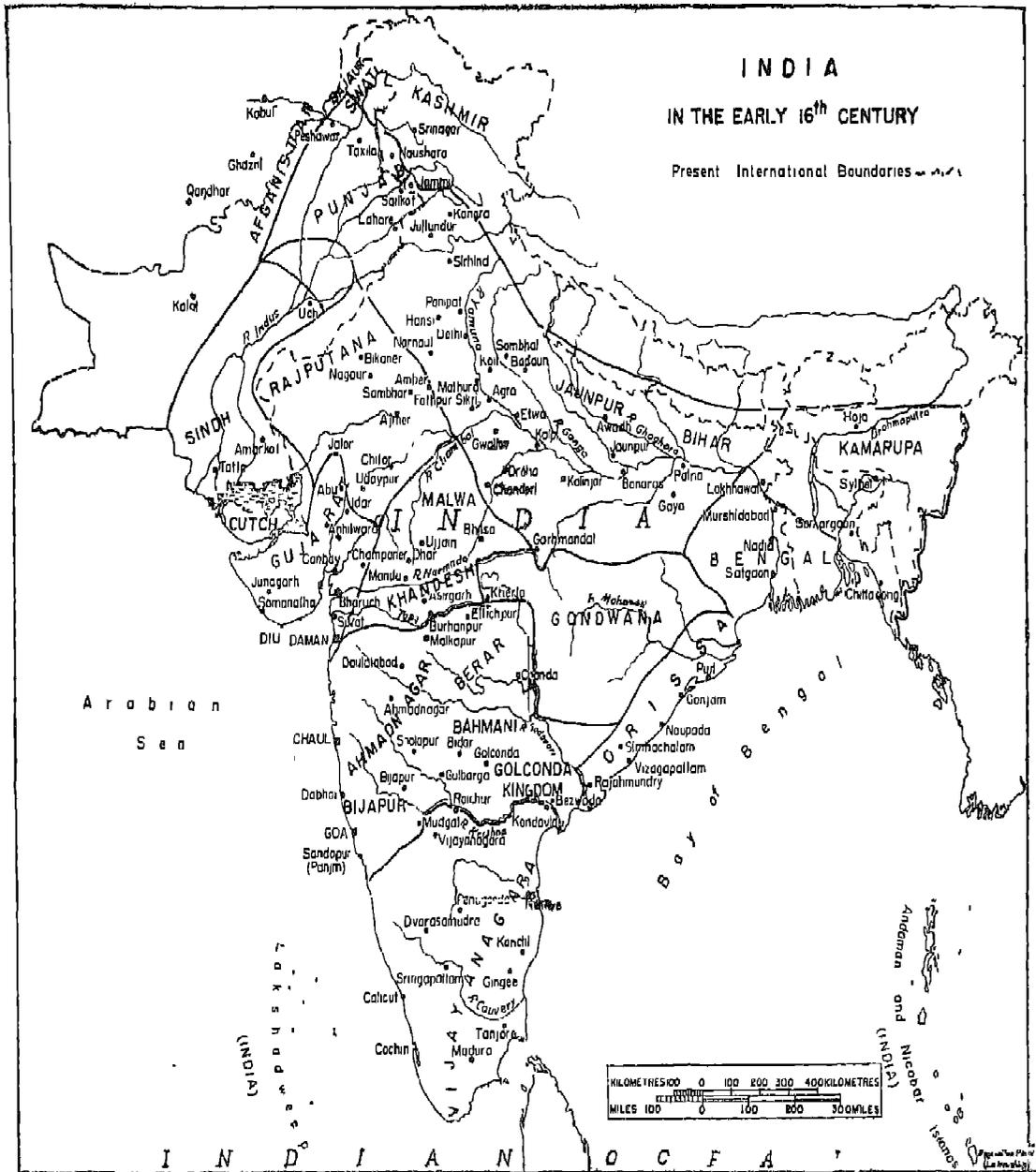
continued? The question is too speculative. Perhaps, the Mughal empire had already reached the limits of its development. The feudal aristocratic nature of the state, and the neglect of science and technology by the ruling class were already placing limits to the economic development of the country. But whether India was able to develop faster and in a more harmonious manner under British rule is a question which will be examined in the subsequent volume on modern India.

## EXERCISES

1. Discuss the changes that took place in Indian society during the medieval period.
2. What were the most important contributions of the Bhakti and Sufi saints?
3. What were the main political achievements of the Turkish sultans and Mughal emperors?
4. Discuss the consequences of India's backwardness in the field of science and technology in the medieval period.



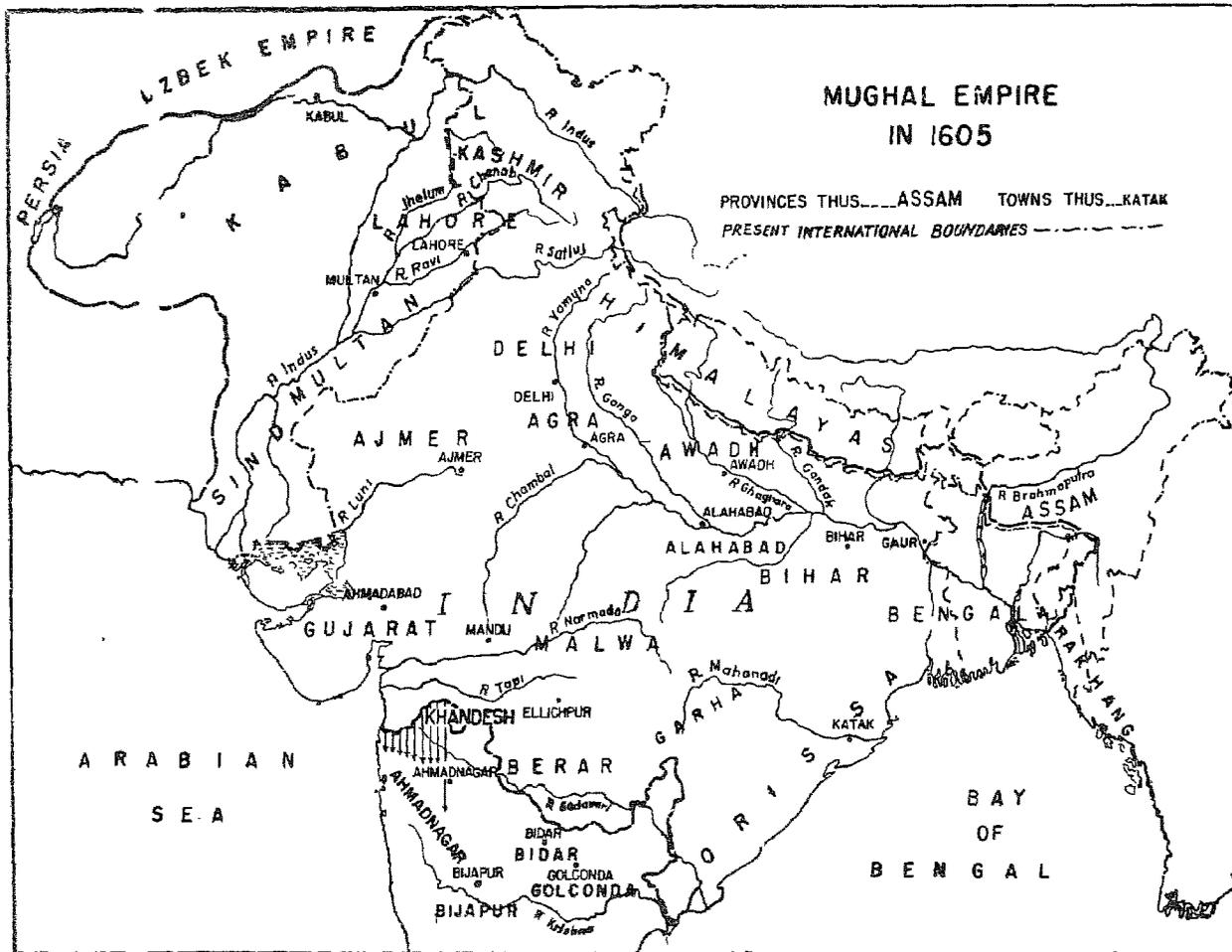
# APPENDICE



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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles from the coast.



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The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of three nautical miles, measured from the appropriate base line



