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THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAVELLERS PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIETY (C. Tenth to Seventeenth Century)

- The accounts of the travellers provide us with some aspects of social life of the people. This chapter discusses how these travel accounts enriched our understanding of the past.
- The theme focused on the accounts of three men: Al-Beruni, Ibn Batuta and Francois Bernier.
- **Travel accounts and reconstruction of Indian history from 10th to 17th century**
 1. The accounts of the foreign travellers are helpful in reconstructing the history of India from 10th to 17th century.
 2. Most of the travellers came from vastly different social and cultural environment. Hence, they were more attentive to everyday activities and practices. These were taken for granted by indigenous writers.
 3. Their difference in perspective makes their accounts interesting.
 4. Their accounts deal with affairs of the court, religious issues, architectural features and monuments

1. AL-Bruni and the Kitab-ul-Hind

- Al-Biruni was born in 973, in Khwarizm (present day Uzbekistan).
- He was a learnt man and well versed in several languages such as Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit.
- He has learnt the Arabic translation of Greeks philosophers like Plato.
- Mahamud Gazni invaded Khwarizm in 1017 and brought Al-Biruni with him to Gazni.
- When the Punjab became a part of the Ghaznavid Empire, Al-Beruni who also followed Gazni and settled there.
- Where he got a chance to learn Indian texts on Indian religion and philosophy.
- He came into contact with local Sanskrit scholars.

The kitab-ul-Hind

- The accounts of Al-Beruni came to be called Kitab-ul-Hind or Tahkik-e-Hind.
- The Kitab-ul-Hind was written in Arabic language and a voluminous text.
- It dealt with subjects such as religion and philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.
- Al-Beruni has adopted a mathematical approach. He begins each chapter with a question followed up with a description and comparison of cultures.
- Scholars viewed this method is result of his mathematical orientation.

Making sense of an alien world: Alberuni and the Sanskritic tradition

- Al-Beruni discussed several barriers that obstructed the understanding of Indian society.
 - ▶ The first barrier was the language. To him, Sanskrit was so different from Arabic and Persian and the ideas and concepts could not be easily translated from one language to another.
 - ▶ The second barrier was that Al-Beruni identified was the difference in religious beliefs and practices.

- ▶ The third barrier was the self-observation and consequent insularity of the local population. He depended mainly on the works of Brahmins and often quoted from the Vedas, the Puranas, the Bhagavad Gita, the works of Patanjali, and the Manusmriti.
- Al-Beruni tried to explain the caste system by comparing it with other societies. He said that in ancient Persia, there were four social categories: Knights and princes, monks, fire-priests and lawyers, physicians, astronomers and other scientists.
- He tried to understand that social divisions were not unique to India. He described about the four varnas such as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.
- He pointed out that within Islam all men were considered equal and difference was based on only the observance of piety.
- But he did not accept the Brahmanical notion of pollution. He said that everything which falls into a state of impurity strives and succeeds in regaining its original condition of purity.
- The sun cleanses the air, and the salt in the sea prevents the water from becoming polluted. According to him, the notion of pollution which was intrinsic to caste system was against the laws of nature.
- Al-Beruni's description of the caste system was deeply influenced by his familiarity with normative Sanskrit texts which laid down the rules governing the system from the point of view of the Brahmins.

2. Ibn Battuta's Rihla

- Ibn Battuta was an African traveller who came from Morocco.
- He considered that knowledge gained through travels is more important source than books.
- He loved travelling, and went far off places, exploring new worlds and peoples and before his visit to India, he travelled extensively.
- **Ibn Battuta's visit to India**
 - ▶ He set off his travel to India in 1332-33 and reached Sind in 1333.
 - ▶ He was able to get the reputation of the Sultan of Delhi, Muhammed bin Tughlaq.
 - ▶ The Sultan was impressed by the scholarship of Ibn Battuta and appointed him as the Qazi or judge of Delhi.
 - ▶ He remained judge for many years. The sultan appointed him as his ambassador to China.
 - ▶ During his journey to China, he also visited Malabar Coast, Maldives, Bengal, Assam and Sumatra.

Rihla

- Ibn Battuta's book of travels called Rihla was written in Arabic provides the social and cultural life in the subcontinent in the 14th century.
- He carefully recorded his observations about new cultures, peoples, beliefs, values etc.
- The best example of Ibn Battuta's strategies of representation are clear in the ways in which he described the coconut and the paan, two kinds of plant produce that were completely unfamiliar to his audience.

Ibn Battuta and Indian cities

- Ibn Battuta found cities in the subcontinent full of exciting opportunities for those who are able and have resources and skills.
- The cities were densely populated and prosperous. Cities were disrupted during wars invasions.
- His account said that streets in many cities were crowded and bright and colourful markets were with full of many varieties of goods.

- He described Delhi as a vast city, with a great population, the largest in India.
- Bazaars were not only places of economic transaction but also the hub of social and cultural activities. Many bazaars had mosque and temple with spaces for public performances by dancers and singers.
- Ibn Battuta noted that the cities obtained its wealth from villages. This was because of the agricultural production with two crops a year.
- He says that there was a great demand for Indian textiles like cotton cloth, fine muslins, silks, brocade and satin. He further says that certain varieties of fine muslin were so expensive that could be worn only by the nobles and the very rich.

A unique system of communication

- Almost all trade routes were well supplied with inns and guest houses.
- Ibn Battuta was amazed by the efficiency of the postal system. The Postal system was of two kinds.
 1. Uluq (horse post)
 2. Dawa (foot post)
 - ▶ This system enabled merchants to send information, remit credit across long distances and to dispatch goods required at short notice.

3. Francois Bernier (a doctor with a difference)

- Once the Portuguese arrived in India in about 1500, a number of them wrote detailed accounts regarding Indian social customs and religious practices. Francois Bernier was French by birth and doctor by profession.
- Among the best known of the Portuguese writers is Duarte Barbosa, who wrote a detailed account of trade and society in south India.
- Later, after 1600, we find growing numbers of Dutch, English and French travellers coming to India.
- One of the most famous was the French jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who travelled to India at least six times. He was particularly fascinated with the trading conditions in India, and compared India to Iran and the Ottoman empire.
- Some of these travellers, like the Italian doctor Manucci, never returned to Europe, and settled down in India.
- **Francois Bernier, a Frenchman**
 - ▶ He was a doctor, political philosopher and historian.
 - ▶ He came to the Mughal Empire in search of opportunities.
 - ▶ He lived in India for twelve years from 1656 to 1668.
 - ▶ He was a physician to Prince Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan and intellectual and scientist with Danishmand Khan, an Armenian noble at the Mughal court.

Comparing "East" and "West"

- Bernier travelled to several parts of the country, and wrote accounts of what he saw, frequently comparing what he saw in India with the situation in Europe.
- He dedicated his major writing to Louis XIV, the king of France, and many of his other works were written in the form of letters to influential officials and ministers.
- His works were published in France in 1670-71 and translated into English, Dutch, German and Italian. Later his account was reprinted number of times.

Bernier and the “denigrate” east (Bernier Travels in the Mughal empire)

- Bernier’s Travels in the Mughal Empire is marked by detailed observations, critical insights and reflection.
- His account contains discussions trying to place the history of the Mughals within some sort of a universal framework
- He constantly compared Mughal India with contemporary Europe and emphasized the superiority of the European society.
- His representation of India works on the model of binary opposition, where India is presented as the inverse of Europe.
- He also ordered the perceived differences hierarchically, so that India appeared to be inferior to the Western world.

The question of landownership

- According to Bernier, one of the fundamental differences between Mughal India and Europe was the lack of private property in the Indian society.
- He was a firm believer in the virtues of private property, and saw crown ownership of land as being harmful for both the state and its people.
- He thought that the Mughal Emperor owned all land and distributed it among the nobles and that this had disastrous consequences for the economy and society.
- He argued that lands under the crown ownership could not be passed on to their children.
- So, they were averse to any long-term investment in the sustenance and expansion of production.
- The absence of private property prevented the emergence of the class of ‘improving’ landlords as it was in Western Europe to maintain and improve the land.
- It had led to the uniform ruination of agriculture, excessive oppression of the peasantry and a continuous decline in the living standards of all sections of society, except the ruling aristocracy.
- This perception was not unique to Bernier, but is found in most travellers’ accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Bernier’s description on the social condition of India

- Bernier described Indian society as consisting of undifferentiated masses of a very rich and powerful ruling class.
- There was a wide gap between the poorest of poor and richest of the rich. He says “There is no middle state in India.”
- Bernier’s description on the Mughal Emperor and his subjects.
- Bernier described the Mughal Empire as the king of “beggars and barbarians”.
- Its cities and towns were ruined and contaminated with “ill air” and its fields “overspread with bushes” and full of “pestilential marishes”.
- He attributed all these problems to the crown ownership of land.
- Bernier says that there was the practice of crown ownership of land and no private ownership of land or private property.
- But none of the Mughal official documents show that the state was the sole owner of land.
- According to the official chronicler of Akbar’s reign Abul Fazl, the Mughal Emperor collected only the remunerations from the people for the protection given by the state and no rent was collected.
- Bernier regarded the remuneration as land revenue since it was very high sometimes.

The idea of oriental despotism

- Bernier's descriptions of landownership influenced western theorists from the 18th century onwards.
- For instance, the French philosopher Montesquieu used Bernier's account and developed the idea of Oriental despotism.
- According to this idea in Asia (the Orient or the East) the kings enjoyed absolute authority over his subjects and owned all lands.
- There was no private property. All people except King and nobles struggled for survival.

The concept of Asiatic mode of production

- Karl Marx further developed the idea of Oriental despotism as Asiatic mode of production.
- Marx observes that before colonialism, surplus production was appropriated by the state.
- This led to the emergence of a society that was composed of a large number of autonomous and egalitarian village communities.
- The imperial court respected these villages as long as the flow of surplus was continued. Marx regarded this as a stagnant system

A more complex social reality

- Bernier's descriptions occasionally hint at a more complex social reality.
- Artisans had no incentive to improve the quality of their manufactures.
- All profits were appropriated by the state. Manufactures were everywhere declining.
- At the same time, he agreed that vast quantities of the world's precious metals flowed into India, as manufactures were exported in exchange for gold and silver.
- He also mentioned that there existed a prosperous merchant community engaging in long distance trade.

Mughal cities

- During the 17th century about 15 percent of the population lived in towns.
- Bernier described Mughal cities as "camp towns", which were dependent upon imperial patronage.
- There were all kinds of towns: manufacturing towns, trading towns, port-towns, sacred centres, pilgrimage towns etc.
- The existence of towns indicates the prosperity of merchant communities and professional classes.
- Merchants had a strong community or kin ties and were organized into their own caste -cum- occupational groups.
- In western India these groups were called Mahajans, and their chief, the sheth.
- In urban centres such as Ahmedabad the chief of the merchant community who was called nagarsheth collectively represented the Mahajans.

Urban professional classes

- Urban groups included professional groups such as physicians (hakin or vaid), teachers (pundit or mulla), lawyers (wakil), painters, architects, musicians, calligraphers, etc.,
- While some depended on imperial patronage, many made their living by serving other patrons while still others served ordinary people in crowded markets and bazaars.

4. Women: Slaves, Sati and Labourers

Use of slaves

- Slaves were openly sold in markets. Like any other commodity, slaves were exchanged as gifts.
- When Ibn Battuta reached Sind, he purchased “horses, camels and slaves” as gifts for sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq.
- There was considerable differentiation among slaves.
 - ▶ Some female slaves in the service of the Sultan were experts in music and dance.
 - ▶ Female slaves were also used to keep a watch on his nobles by the sultan.
- Slaves were used for domestic labour.
- Ibn Battuta noted that men and women slaves carried palanquins or dola.
- The price of slaves particularly female slaves required for domestic labour, was very low.

The practice of sati

- Bernier has provided a detailed description of sati in his account.
- He mentioned that while some women seemed to embrace death cheerfully, others were forced to death.
- He also noticed the child satin which a twelve-year-old young widow sacrificed.

Women Labourers

- Women labour was crucial in both agricultural and non-agricultural production.
- Women from merchant families participated in commercial activities.
- Therefore, it seems unlikely that women were confined to the private spaces of their homes.

Travellers who wrote detailed accounts regarding Indian social customs and religious practices

- Jesuit Roberto Nobili- He translated Indian texts into European languages
- Duarte Barbosa- He was a Portuguese traveler. He wrote a detailed account of trade and society in south India
- Jean-BaptisteTavernier- He was the famous French jeweller who visited India six times. He was particularly fascinated with the trading conditions in India, and compared India to Iran and the Ottoman Empire.
- Italian doctor Manucci- He wrote detailed accounts regarding Indian social customs and religious practices and settled in India.
- Pelsaert-He visited the subcontinent during the 17th century. He was shocked to see the widespread poverty of the people.
- Abdur Razzaq Samarqandi. He visited south India in the 1440s.and saw India as a land of wonder.

KEY WORDS & MISCELLANEOUS

- Metrology: Metrology is the science of measurement
- Hindu: The term “Hindu” was derived from an old Persian word, used to refer to the region east of the river Sindhu (Indus)
- Ibn Battuta’s description of the coconut and the paan: The two kinds of plant produce that Ibn Battuta mentions were the paan and the coconut. He describes the coconut as resembling a man’s head because in it are what looks like two eyes and a mouth and inside of it when it is green looks like the brain. Attached to it are the fibres that look like hair. He describes about paan that the betel has no fruit and is grown only for the sake of its leaves.

6

BHAKTI-SUFI TRADITIONS CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND DEVOTIONAL TEXTS (C. Eighth to Eighteenth Century)

- This chapter discusses how textual traditions have been used by historians to understand Bhakti-Sufi traditions.
- New textual sources available from this period include compositions attributed to poet-saints, most of whom expressed themselves orally in regional languages used by ordinary people.
- Others have been reconstructed from textual traditions, including the Puranas, many of which received their present shape around the same time, and yet others remain only faintly visible in textual and visual records.
- Historians also draw on hagiographies or biographies of saints written by their followers (or members of their religious sect).

1. A Mosaic of Religious Beliefs and Practices

- Perhaps the most striking feature of this phase is the increasing visibility of a wide range of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts.

The Integration of cults

- Historians who have tried to understand these developments suggest that there were at least two processes at work.
 1. One was a process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas. This is exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of Puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse, explicitly meant to be accessible to women and Shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning.
 2. There was a second process at work that of the Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices these and other social categories.
- Through an example we can say that a local deity, whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal specialists, was recognized as a form of Vishnu. These local deities were often incorporated within the puranic frame work by providing them with an identity as a wife of the principal male deities sometimes they were equated with Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu.

Differences and conflict

- **Tantric Worship**
 - ▶ The forms of worship often associated with goddess were classified as Tantric.
 - ▶ Tantric practices were widespread in several parts of the subcontinent – they were open to women and men, and practitioners often ignored differences of caste and class within the ritual context.
 - ▶ Many of these ideas influenced Shaivism and the Buddhism.

■ Conflicts that arose during the bhakti movement

- ▶ There were conflicts between those who followed the Vedic tradition and those who practiced the Tantric way of worshipping deities.
- ▶ Those who valued Vedic tradition often condemned the practices that went beyond the performance of sacrifices and chanting of mantras.
- ▶ On the other hand, those who engaged in Tantric practices ignored the authority of the Vedas.
- ▶ Relations with other traditions, such as Buddhism or Jainism, were also often fraught with tension if not open conflict.

2. Poems of Prayer Early Traditions of Bhakti

- In the course of the evolution of these forms of worship, in many instances, poet-saints emerged as leaders around whom there developed a community of devotees.
- Further, while Brahmanas remained important intermediaries between gods and devotees in several forms of bhakti, these traditions also accommodated and acknowledged women and the “lower castes”, categories considered ineligible for liberation within the orthodox Brahmanical framework.
- The historians of religion classified Bhakti traditions into two broad categories: saguna (with attributes) and nirguna (without attributes).
 - ▶ Saguna included traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi.
 - ▶ Nirguna bhakti on the other hand was worship of an abstract form of god.

The Alvars and Nayanars of Tamil Nadu

- Some of the earliest bhakti movements in sixth century were led by
 1. The Alvars (literally, those who are “immersed” in devotion to Vishnu).
 2. Nayanars (literally, leaders who were devotees of Shiva).
- They travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods.
- During their travels the Alvars and Nayanars identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities.
- Very often large temples were later built at these sacred places. These developed as centres of pilgrimage.
- Singing compositions of these poet-saints became part of temple rituals in these shrines, as did worship of the saints’ images.

Attitudes towards caste

- Some historians suggest that the Alvars and Nayanars initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system.
- The devotees came from the different social backgrounds such as artisans, cultivators and even from the caste that were considered “untouchable”
- The importance of the traditions of the Alvars and Nayanars was sometimes indicated by the claim that their compositions were as important as the Vedas.
- For instance, one of the major anthologies of compositions by the Alvars, **the Nalayira Divyaprabandham, was frequently described as the Tamil Veda**, thus claiming that the text was as significant as the four Vedas in Sanskrit that were cherished by the Brahmanas.

Women devotees

- One of the striking features of these traditions was the presence of women.
- For instance, the compositions of **Andal**, a woman Alvar, were widely sung (and continue to be sung to date). She saw herself as the beloved of Vishnu; her verses express her love for the deity.
- Another woman, **Karaikkal Ammaiyar**, a devotee of Shiva adopted the path of extreme asceticism to attain her goal.
- Her compositions were preserved within the Nayanar tradition.
- These women renounced their social obligations, but did not join an alternative order or become nuns.
- Their very existence and their compositions posed a challenge to patriarchal norms.

Opposition to Buddhism and Jainism

- One of the major themes in Tamil bhakti hymns is the poets' opposition to Buddhism and Jainism.
- The saint-poets the Alvars and the Nayanars opposed Buddhism and Jainism. This is particularly marked in the compositions of the Nayanars.
- This hostility was due to competition between members of other religious traditions for royal patronage.

Relation with the state

■ Patronage of Chola rulers

- ▶ From the second half of the first millennium there is evidence for states, including those of the Pallavas and Pandyas (c. sixth to ninth centuries CE). While Buddhism and Jainism had been prevalent in this region for several centuries, drawing support from merchant and artisan communities, these religious traditions received occasional royal patronage.
- ▶ The powerful Chola rulers (ninth to thirteenth centuries) supported Brahmanical and bhakti traditions, making land grants and constructing temples for Vishnu and Shiva.
- ▶ The Chola kings, tried to win the support of these popular saints and often attempted to claim divine support and proclaim their own power and status by building splendid temples that were adorned with stone and metal sculpture to recreate the visions of these popular saints who sang in the language of the people.
- ▶ Some of the most magnificent Shiva temples, including those at Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, were constructed under the patronage of Chola rulers.
- ▶ This was also the period when some of the most spectacular representations of Shiva in bronze sculpture were produced.
- ▶ The Chola kings introduced the singing of Tamil Shaiva hymns under royal patronage, taking the initiative to collect and organize them into a text (**Tevaram**).
- ▶ According to Inscriptional evidence, the Chola king Parantaka I had constructed the metal images of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar in a Shiva temple.
- ▶ These were carried in procession during the festivals of these saints.

3. The Virashaiva Tradition in Karnataka

- The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-68) who was a minister in the court of a Kalachuri ruler.
- His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats (wearers of the linga)

■ **Lingayats and their belief**

- ▶ Lingayats are an important community even today. They worship Shiva in his manifestation as a linga,
- ▶ They wear a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over the left shoulder.
- ▶ Those who are revered include the jangama or wandering monks.
- ▶ Lingayats believe that on death, the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world.
- ▶ Therefore, they do not practice funerary rites such as cremation as prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead; they ceremonially bury their dead body.
- ▶ The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the “pollution” attributed to some groups by Brahmanas.
- ▶ They also questioned the theory of rebirth. Their opposition to caste system won them number of followers who were marginalized within the Brahmanical social order.
- ▶ The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows
- ▶ Our understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from vachanas (literally, sayings) composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement.

4. Religious ferment in North India (Religious condition of north India)

- According to historians, in north India there was a period when several Rajput states emerged and in most of these states Brahmanas occupied important place by performing rituals. There was no attempt to question their position directly.
- At the same time other religious leaders, who did not function within the orthodox Brahmanical framework, were gaining ground. These included the Naths, Jogis and Siddhas. Many of them came from artisanal groups, including weavers, who were becoming increasingly important with the development of organised craft production.
- Demand for such production grew with the emergence of new urban centres, and long-distance trade with Central Asia and West Asia.
- These new religious leaders questioned the authority of the Vedas and expressed themselves in languages spoken by ordinary people. However, they were unable to win the support of the ruling elites.
- A new element in this situation was the coming of the Turks which culminated in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (thirteenth century). The power of many Rajput rulers was thus undermined and also of the Brahmanas who were associated with those kingdoms. The coming of the Sufis was a significant part of these developments.

5. New Strands in the Fabric Islamic Traditions

- Arab merchants, frequented ports along the western coast in the first millennium CE, while Central Asian people settled in the north-western parts of the subcontinent during the same period. From the seventh century, with the advent of Islam, these regions became part of what is often termed the Islamic world.

Faiths of rulers and subjects

- Muhammed bin Qasim conquered Sind in 711 AD. Sind became a part of the caliph’s domain. During the thirteenth century the Turks and Afghans established the Delhi Sultanate.
- Sultanates were also formed in the Deccan and other parts of the subcontinent. Islam was recognized as the religion of several areas. This continued with the establishment of the Mughal Empire.

- Muslim rulers were to be guided by the Ulema, which were expected to ensure that they ruled according to the **Sahria**.
- The Zimmi means “protected” and is derived from the Arabic word **zimma**, protection. It was developed for peoples who followed revealed scriptures, such as the Jews and Christians, and lived under Muslim rule. They paid a tax called jizya and received protection from Muslims. In India this status was extended to Hindus as well.
- In general, rulers often adopted a flexible policy towards their subjects. For example, several rulers gave land endowments and granted tax exemptions to Hindu, Jaina, Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish religious institutions. They also showed respect and devotion towards non-Muslim religious. These grants were made by several Mughal rulers, including Akbar and Aurangzeb.

The popular practice of Islam

- The developments that followed the coming of Islam were not confined to ruling elites; in fact, they permeated far and wide, through the subcontinent, amongst different social strata – peasants, artisans, warriors, merchants, etc.,
- The popular practice of Islam. The five pillars of faith in Islam. Those who adopted Islam follow five “pillars” of faith.
 1. There is one God, Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is his messenger (shahada)
 2. Offering prayers five times a day (namaz/salat)
 3. Giving alms (zakat)
 4. Fasting during the month of Ramzan (sawam)
 5. Performing the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj)
- The universal features of Islam declined due to the sectarian practices (Sunni, Shi’) and the influence of local customary practices.
- **Examples:**
 1. The Khojahs, a branch of the Ismailis (a Shi’a sect), developed new modes of communication, disseminating ideas derived from the Qur’an through indigenous literary genres. These included the ginan (derived from the Sanskrit jnana, meaning “knowledge”), devotional poems in Punjabi, Multani, Sindhi, Kachchi, Hindi and Gujarati, sung in special ragas during daily prayer meetings
 2. Arab Muslim traders who settled Malabar Coast adopted Malayalam language and matrilineal system.
- The best example of the blending of a universal faith and local traditions is perhaps best exemplified in the architecture of mosques.
- Some architectural features of mosques are universal – such as their orientation towards Mecca, evident in the placement of the **mihrab (prayer niche)** and the **minbar (pulpit)**.
- There are variations such as roofs and building materials.

Names for communities

- Historians who have studied Sanskrit texts and inscriptions dating between the eighth and fourteenth centuries point out that the term musalman or Muslim was virtually never used.
- Instead, people were occasionally identified in terms of the region from which they came. So, the Turkish rulers were designated as Turushka, Tajika were people from Tajikistan and Parashika were people from Persia.

- Sometimes, terms used for other peoples were applied to the new migrants. For instance, the Turks and Afghans were referred to as Shakas and Yavanas (a term used for Greeks).
- A more general term for these migrant communities was **mlechchha**, indicating that they did not observe the norms of caste society and spoke languages that were not derived from Sanskrit.

6. The Growth of Sufism

- In the early centuries of Islam, a group of religious minded people called Sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution.
- They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and Sunna (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians.
- They laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being.
- The Sufis thus sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience.

Khanqahs and silsilas

- By the eleventh century Sufism evolved into a well-developed movement with a body of literature on
- Quranic studies and Sufi practices.
- Institutionally, the Sufis began to organise communities around the hospice or Khanqah controlled by a teaching master known as sheikh, pir or murshid.
- He enrolled disciples (murids) and appointed a successor (khalifa). He established rules for spiritual conduct and interaction between inmates as well as between laypersons and the master.
- **Silsilas**
 - ▶ Silsila literally meaning a chain signifies a continuous link between master and disciple, stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammed. Sufi silsilas began to appear in different parts of the Islamic world around the twelfth century.
- **Dargah**
 - ▶ Dargah is a Persian term. Its meaning is tomb-shrine. When the sheikh died, his tomb shrine became the centre of devotion for his followers.
 - ▶ This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or ziyarat to his grave, particularly on his death anniversary.
 - ▶ It was believed that, after death the soul of sheikh get united with the soul of Allah. People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus, evolved the cult of the sheikh revered as wali.

Outside the khanqah

- Some mystics-initiated movements based on a radical interpretation of Sufi ideals.
- Many scorned the khanqah and took to mendicancy and observed celibacy. They ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism.
- They were known by different names – Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc.
- Because of their deliberate defiance of the shari'a they were often referred to as be-shari'a, in contrast to the ba-shari'a Sufis who complied with it.

7. The Chishtis in the Subcontinent

- Of the groups of Sufis who migrated to India in the late twelfth century, the Chishtis were the most influential.
- This was because they adapted successfully to the local environment and adopted several features of Indian devotional traditions.

Life in the Chishti khanqah

- The khanqah was the centre of social life. It comprised several small rooms and a big hall where inmates and visitors lived and prayed. The Shaikh lived in a small room on the roof of the hall where he met visitors in the morning and evening. There was an open kitchen (langar).
- From morning till evening people from all walks of life, came to seek the blessings from the Shaikh in various matters. Other visitors included poets such as Amir Hasan Sijzi and Amir Khusru and the court historian Ziyauddin Barani and all of them wrote about the Shaikh.
- The practices that were adopted by the Chishtis in their kanqah
 1. Bowing before the Shaikh
 2. Offering water to visitors
 3. Shaving the heads of initiates
 4. Yogic exercises
- Shaikh Nizamuddin appointed several spiritual successors and deputed them to set up hospices in various parts of the subcontinent. As a result, the teachings, practices and organisation of the Chishtis as well as the fame of the Shaikh spread rapidly. This in turn drew pilgrims to his shrine, and also to the shrines of his spiritual ancestors.

Chishti devotionalism: Ziyarat and qawwali

- Pilgrimage called Ziyarat tombs of Sufi saints is prevalent all over the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the **Sufi's spiritual grace (barakat)**. For more than seven centuries people from different walks of life expressed their devotion at the dargahs of the five great Chishti saints.
- The use of music and dance including mystical chants performed by specially trained musicians or qawwals to evoke divine ecstasy is also part of ziyarat. The Sufis remember God either by reciting the zikr (the Divine Names) or evoking His presence through **sama or performance of mystical music known as qawwali**.
- **Dargah of Khwaja Muinuddin:**
 - ▶ The earliest textual references to Khwaja Muinuddin's dargah date to the fourteenth century.
 - ▶ It was evidently popular because of the austerity and piety of its Shaikh, the greatness of his spiritual successors, and the patronage of royal visitors.
 - ▶ Muhammad bin Tughlaq (ruled, 1324-51) was the first Sultan to visit the shrine, but the earliest construction to house the tomb was funded in the late fifteenth century by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa.
 - ▶ Since the shrine was located on the trade route linking Delhi and Gujarat, it attracted a lot of travellers
 - ▶ Akbar, the Mughal emperor visited dargah at Ajmer fourteen times in his life and these visits were aimed at seeking blessings for new conquests, fulfilling his of vows and to get sons.
 - ▶ Many of his wishes were soon fulfilled and thus as an offering:
 1. He gave generous gifts on each visit.
 2. He offered a huge cauldron (degh) to facilitate cooking for pilgrims.
 3. He even got a mosque constructed within the dargah.

Languages and communication

- The Chishtis composed their poems in several languages. The Chishtis used Hindavi or Persian language. Sufis such as Baba Farid composed poetry in local language, which were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Some Sufis composed long poems or masnavis to express ideas of divine love using human love as an allegory.

- For example, the prem-akhyan (love story) Padmavat composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi revolved around the romance of Padmini and Ratansen, the king of Chittor. Their trials were symbolic of the soul's journey to the divine. Such poetic compositions were often recited in hospices, usually during sama'.
- Sufi poetry was composed in the Dakhani language around the Bijapur and Karnataka region. Women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning sang these poems.
- Other poems were in the form of lurinama(lullabies) or wedding songs(shadinama). The Sufis of this region were inspired by the kannada vachanas of the Lingayats and the Marathi abhangs of the sants of Pandharpur.

Sufis and the state

- The Chishti tradition was austere but it did not isolate political power. The Sufis accepted unsolicited grants and donations from the political elites. The sultans set up charitable trusts (auqaf) as endowments for hospices and granted tax-free land (inam).
- The Chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind and used for their immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities such as Sama. The moral high status of the Sufis attracted people from all walks of life.
- The kings wished to secure their support. Kings simply did not need to show their association with Sufis and also required legitimating for them. When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, Sufis resisted the insistence of the ulama on imposing shari'a as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects.
- The sultans also came to depend on the Sufis to interpret the Sahri'a. It was believed that Auliya could intercede with god to improve the material and spiritual conditions of the people. As a result, kings got the shrines of the Sufis near built near their tombs.
- There were instances of conflict between the Sultans and the Sufis. To assert their authority both expected certain rituals performed like kissing of the feet etc.

8. New Devotional Paths: Dialogue and Dissent in North India

- Many poet-saints engaged in explicit and implicit dialogue with these new social situations, ideas and institutions.

Weaving a divine fabric: Kabir

- During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Kabir was one of the most outstanding examples of a poet-saint. Verses ascribed to Kabir have been compiled in three distinct traditions.
- **Sources to reconstruct the life of Kabir**
 - ▶ The Kabir Bijak is preserved by the Kabirpanth (the path or sect of Kabir) in Varanasi and in Uttar Pradesh. The Kabir Granthavali is associated with the Dadupanth in Rajasthan and many of his compositions are found in the Adi Granth Sahib. All these compilations were made after the death of Kabir. Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects and sometimes with special language of nirguna poets (the sant bhasha) and others known as ulatbansi (upside-down sayings).
- **Teachings of Kabir**
 - ▶ Kabir tried to describe the Ultimate Reality including Islam. According to him the Ultimate Reality was Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir. He also used certain Vedic terms such as Brahman and Atman.
 - ▶ He also used some yogic traditional terms such as shabda(sound) or shunya (emptiness)Some poems of Kabir expressed conflicting and diverse ideas. Some poems attacked Hindu polytheism and idol worship and others use sufi concept of zikr and ishq (love) to express the Hindu practice of nam-simaran (remembrance of God's name).

- ▶ Historians have tried to analyse the language, style and content of these poems. Debates about whether Kabir was a Hindu or a Muslim by birth are well reflected in hagiographies.
- ▶ Hagiographies within the Vaishnava tradition suggest that he was born a Hindu, Kabirdas but brought up by a poor Muslim community of weavers. They also suggest that he was initiated into bhakti by a guru, Ramananda.
- ▶ The poems of Kabir used words guru and satguru but do not mention the name of any specific guru. Historians pointed out that it is very difficult to establish that Ramananda and Kabir were contemporaries.

Baba Guru Nanak and the Sacred Word

- Baba Guru Nanak was born in a village called Nankana Sahib near Ravi in Punjab in 1469. He trained to be an accountant and studied Persian. He was married at a young age but he spent most of his time among Sufis and bhaktas. He also travelled widely.
- **Teachings of Guru Nanak**
- His teachings are well reflected in his hymns. These hymns suggest that he advocated a form of nirguna bhakti. He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship and the scriptures of Hindus and Muslims.
 - ▶ According to him, the Absolute or 'rab' had no gender or form. He proposed a simple way to connect to the Divine by remembering the Divine Name.
 - ▶ He expressed his ideas through hymns called "shabad" in Punjabi, the language of the region and sang with different ragas.
 - ▶ He organized his followers into a community. He set up rules for congregational worship (sangat). He appointed one of his disciples, Angad, to succeed him as the preceptor (guru).
 - ▶ Guru Nanak did not want to establish a new religion. After his death, his followers consolidated their own practices to form a distinct community.
 - ▶ The fifth guru, Guru Arjun compiled Guru Nanak's hymns along with those of his four successors and other religious poets like Baba Farid, Ravidas and Kabir in the Adi Granth Sahib. These hymns called "gurbani" are composed in various languages.
 - ▶ The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, included the compositions of the ninth guru; Guru Tegh Bahadur. This scripture was called the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh also laid the foundation of the Khalsa Panth (army of the pure).
 - ▶ He also defined its five symbols: Uncut hair, a dagger, a pair of shorts, a comb and a steel bangle. It was under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh that the community became a socio-religious and military force.

Mirabai, the devotee princess

- Mirabai was the best-known woman poet within the bhakti tradition. She was a Rajput princess from Merta in Marwar. She was married to a prince of the Sisodia clan of Mewar against her wishes. She defied her husband and did not submit to the traditional role of wife and mother.
- She recognized Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu as her lover. Her in-laws tried to poison her, but she escaped and lived as a wandering singer composing songs with intense expressions of emotion.
- Her most famous preceptor was Raidas; a leather worker. It shows her defiance of the norms of caste society.
- She had donned the white robes of a widow or the saffron robe of the renouncer. Although she did not attract a sect or group of followers, she has been recognized as a source of inspiration for centuries.
- We get information about her from the bhajans attributed to her.

9. Reconstructing Histories of Religious Traditions

- Historians used a variety of sources to reconstruct histories of religious traditions. These include stupas, monasteries, and temples.
- Historians also draw on textual sources including devotional literature and hagiographies. These sources enable historians to understand certain religious beliefs and practices.
- They range from the simple direct language of the vachanas of Basavanna to the ornate language of the farman of the Mughal emperors.
- Understanding each type of text requires different skills. Historians have to acquire familiarity with several languages and to be aware of the subtle variations in style that characterize each type.

KEY WORDS & MISCELLANEOUS

- **Compilations of devotional literature:** By the tenth century the compositions of the 12 Alvars were compiled in an anthology known as the Nalayira Divyaprabandham (“Four Thousand Sacred Compositions”). The poems of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar form the Tevaram, a collection that was compiled and classified in the tenth century on the basis of the music of the songs.
- **New religious developments:** This period also witnessed two major developments. On the one hand, many ideas of the Tamil bhaktas (especially the Vaishnavas) were incorporated within the Sanskritic tradition, culminating in the composition of one of the best-known Puranas, the Bhagavata Purana. Second, we find the development of traditions of bhakti in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century.
- **Ulama** (plural of alim, or one who knows) are scholars of Islamic studies. As preservers of this tradition they perform various religious, juridical and teaching functions.
- **Sharia:** The sharia is the law governing the Muslim community. It is based on the Qur’an and the hadis, traditions of the Prophet including a record of his remembered words and deeds. With the expansion of Islamic rule outside Arabia, in areas where customs and traditions were different, qiyas (reasoning by analogy) and ijma (consensus of the community) were recognised as two other sources of legislation. Thus, the sharia evolved from the Qur’an, hadis, qiyas and ijma
- **Matrilocal residence** is a practice where women after marriage remain in their natal home with their children and the husbands may come to stay with them.
- **Sufism and tasawwuf:** Sufism is an English word coined in the nineteenth century. The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is tasawwuf. Historians have understood this term in several ways. According to some scholars, it is derived from suf, meaning wool, referring to the coarse woollen clothes worn by sufis. Others derive it from safa, meaning purity. It may also have been derived from suffa, the platform outside the Prophet’s mosque, where a group of close followers assembled to learn about the faith.
- **Names of silsilas:** Most Sufi lineages were named after a founding figure. For example, the Qadiri order was named after Shaikh Abd’ul Qadir Jilani. However, some like the Chishti order, were named after their place of origin, in this case the town of Chishti in central Afghanistan.
- **Wali** (plural Auliya) or friend of God was a Sufi who claimed proximity to Allah, acquiring His Grace (barakat) to perform miracles (Karamat).

7

AN IMPERIAL CAPITAL VIJAYANAGARA (C. Fourteenth to Sixteenth Century)

- **Vijayanagara:** Vijayanagara or “city of victory” was the name of both a city and Empire. The Empire was founded in the 14th century by Harihara and Bukka in 1336. The Empire stretched from the river Krishna in the north to the extreme south of the peninsula.
- **Hampi:** Hampi is another name for Vijayanagara Empire. The name Hampi is derived from the local mother goddess, Pampadevi. The local people remember Vijayanagara Empire as Hampi. The remains of Vijayanagara Empire have been found at the modern Hampi in Karnataka.
- **Sources:** Oral traditions, inscriptions, monuments and other records helped historians to reconstruct the history of Vijayanagara Empire.

1. The Discovery of Hampi

- The ruins at Hampi were brought to light in 1800 by an engineer and antiquarian named Colonel Colin Mackenzie. He was born in 1754 and became an engineer, surveyor and cartographer.
- In 1815, he was appointed as the first Surveyor General of India and remained in the post till his death in 1821. In order to understand India’s past to make governance of the colony easier he surveyed many historic sites.
- He thought that regional customs and traditions will benefit the English East India Company in its administration. As an employee of the English East India Company, he prepared the first survey map of the site.
- He conducted his studies first based on the memories of priests of the Virupaksha temple and the shrine of Pampadevi. Subsequently, from 1856, photographs began to record the monuments which enabled scholars to study them.
- As early as 1836, epigraphists began collecting several dozen inscriptions found at this and other temples at Hampi. The information thus collected was corroborated with the accounts of foreign travellers and other literary works.

2. Rayas, Nayakas and Sultans

Founding of the Empire

- According to tradition and epigraphic evidence, two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, founded the Vijayanagara Empire in 1336. Guru Vidyanarya inspired them to establish the empire. The empire included different people who spoke different languages and followed different religious traditions.
- **The rulers with whom the Vijayanagara kings competed**
 - ▶ On the northern frontier, the Vijayanagara kings competed with contemporary rulers such as the Sultans of the Deccan and the Gajapati rulers of Orissa for control of the fertile river valleys and the resources that were brought by overseas trade.

- ▶ At the same time, interaction between these states led to sharing of ideas, especially in the field of architecture. The rulers of Vijayanagara borrowed concepts and building techniques which they then developed further.
- ▶ Some of the areas that were incorporated within the empire had witnessed the development of powerful states such as those of the Cholas in Tamil Nadu and the Hoysalas in Karnataka.
- ▶ Ruling elites in these areas had extended patronage to elaborate temples such as the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur and the Chennakeshava temple at Belur.
- ▶ The rulers of Vijayanagara, who called themselves Rayas, built on these traditions.
- ▶ **Karnataka Samrajyamu:** Karnataka Samrajyamu was the name used by the contemporaries to describe Vijayanagara Empire.

Kings and traders

■ **Trade on horse during Vijayanagara rule**

- ▶ Cavalry was very important part of warfare during this period.
- ▶ The import of horses from Arabia and central Asia was important for the kings. This trade was initially controlled by Arab merchants.
- ▶ Local merchants who were involved in the horse trade were known as **kudirai chettis or horse merchants**.
- ▶ From 1498 other actors such as Portuguese arrived on the scene.

■ **Markets in the Vijayanagara Empire**

- ▶ Markets in the Vijayanagara Empire were known for its spices, textiles and other precious stones.
- ▶ Trade was a status symbol for cities in the empire and boasted of a wealthy population that was in need of high value exotic goods such as precious stones and jewellery.
- ▶ The revenue that came from the trade was used for the development of the state.

The Apogee and Decline of the Empire

- Within the polity, claimants to power included members of the ruling lineage as well as military commanders.
- The first dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire was the Sangama dynasty founded by Harihara and Bukka. They ruled the empire till 1485.
- They were replaced by the Saluvas, the military commanders who remained in power till 1503.
- The Saluva dynasty was replaced by the Tuluva dynasty. Krishna deva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty.
- Krishna deva Raya's rule was characterized by full expansion and consolidation. He brought under his control the land between the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers called the Raichur doab in the year 1512.
- He defeated Pratap Rudra of Gajapati dynasty, the ruler of Orissa in 1514 and the sultan of Bijapur in 1520.
- His rule is credited with building of fine temples and attractive gopurams to many important south Indian temples. For example, the gopuram of the Brihaddishwara temple at Thanjavur.
- He also founded the suburban township near Vijayanagara called Nagalapuram named after his mother.
- **Condition of Vijayanagara after Krishna deva Raya**
 - ▶ After the death of Krishna deva Raya in 1529, his successors faced problems created by rebellious nayakas or military chiefs.
 - ▶ By 1542 the control of the empire came under another ruling lineage, the Aravidu, which continued till the end of the 17th century.

■ The battle at Rakshai-Tangadi or the battle of Talikota

- ▶ During this period, as indeed earlier, the military ambitions of the rulers of Vijayanagara as well as those of the Deccan Sultanates resulted in shifting alignments. Eventually this led to an alliance of the Sultanates against Vijayanagara
- ▶ In 1565 Rama Raya, the chief minister of Vijayanagara, led the army into battle at Rakshasi-Tangadi (also known as Talikota), where his forces were routed by the combined armies of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda
- ▶ The victorious armies sacked the city of Vijayanagara. The city was abandoned within a few years.
- ▶ After the defeat the Aravidu dynasty shifted its focus to the east and ruled from Penukonda later from Chandragiri near Tirupati.

■ Relationship between the Sultans and the Rayas

- ▶ The Sultans were responsible for the destruction of the city of Vijayanagara, relations between the Sultans and the rayas were not always or inevitably hostile, in spite of religious differences.
- ▶ Krishna deva Raya, for example, supported some claimants to power in the Sultanates and took pride in the title “establisher of the Yavana kingdom”.
- ▶ Similarly, the sultan of Bijapur intervened in an attempt to resolve the succession dispute in Vijayanagara following the death of Krishna deva Raya.
- ▶ The Vijayanagara kings were keen to ensure the stability of the Sultanates and vice versa. It was the adventurous policy of Rama Raya who tried to play off one Sultan against another that led the Sultans to combine together and decisively defeat him.

The Rayas and the Nayakas

- In the Vijayanagara Empire, the nayakas were military chiefs who exercised power and controlled forts and had armed supporters.
- These chiefs often moved from one place to another and many a times were accompanied by peasants looking for fertile land in order to settle.
- The nayakas spoke Telugu or Kannada. Many nayakas were under the control of the kings of Vijayanagara but often rebelled and faced military action by the kings.

■ The Amara-Nayaka System

- ▶ The Amara-nayaka system was a major political innovation of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- ▶ Most probably many features of this system were derived from the Iqta system of Delhi Sultanate.
- ▶ The Amara-nayakas were military commanders. They were given territories to govern by the raya.
- ▶ Their duty was to collect taxes and other dues from peasants, craftsmen and traders in the area.
- ▶ They kept part of the revenue for personal use and for maintaining a stipulated contingent of horses and elephants.
- ▶ Some of the revenue was also used for the maintenance of temples and irrigation works.
- ▶ They sent tribute to the king annually and personally appeared in the royal court with gifts to express their loyalty.
- ▶ Kings asserted their control over them by transferring them from one place to another.
- ▶ In course of time, they established independent kingdoms. This was one of the causes of weakening and declining of the Vijayanagara Empire.

3. Vijayanagara The Capital and its Environs

- Vijayanagara, was characterised by a distinctive physical layout and building style.

Water resources

- Vijayanagara was located in the natural basin formed by the river Tungabhadra which flows in the north-easterly direction.
- Large granite hills formed a girdle around the city. A number of streams flowed from these rocky outcrops to the river.
- Embankments were built along these streams to create reservoirs of different sizes. Since Vijayanagara was one of the most arid zones of the peninsula, elaborate arrangements were made to store rainwater to be used in the city.
- **Kamalapuram tank** is the most important tank built in the early years of the 15th century. Water from this tank was used not only to irrigate the fields but also to channel water into the royal centre.
- The **Hiriya canal** was one of the most prominent waterworks. This canal drew water from a dam built across the Tungabhadra and irrigated the cultivated fields that separated the “sacred centre” from the “urban core”. This canal was built by kings of the Sangama dynasty.

Fortifications and roads

- The accounts of Abdul Razzaq about the walls of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- Abdul Razzak was an ambassador sent by the ruler of Persia to Calicut in the 15th century. He was greatly impressed by the fortifications and mentioned seven lines of the forts.
- He says that the forts were encircled not only the city but also its agricultural hinterland and forests. The outermost wall linked the hills surrounding the city. The masonry construction was slightly tapered. No mortar or cementing agent was employed anywhere in the construction. The stone blocks were wedge shaped, which held them in place.
- The inner portion of the walls was of earth packed with rubble. Square or rectangular bastions projected outer wards.
- The most important feature of the Vijayanagara fortification was its incorporation of the agricultural tracts, because the rulers were well prepared to face the sieges and its consequences. Abdur Razzaq noted that “between the first, second and the third walls there are cultivated fields, gardens and houses”.

Why do you think agricultural tracts were incorporated within the fortified area?

- During the medieval period, the major objective of the sieges was to starve the defenders into submission.
- These sieges could continue for months and sometimes even years. Rulers were ready to face it with proper arrangements by building large granaries within fortified areas.
- The rulers of Vijayanagara adopted a more expensive and elaborate method of protecting the agricultural belt itself by incorporating agricultural tracts in the fort.
- A second line of fortification went around the inner core of the urban complex.
- A third line surrounded the royal centre, within which each set of major buildings was surrounded by its own high walls.
- The fort was entered through well-guarded gates leading to the major roads.
- Gateways were with defined architectural features. The arch on the gateway leading into the fortified settlement as well as the dome over the gate is regarded as typical features of the architecture introduced by the Turkish Sultans.

The Urban Core

- Archaeologists have studied roads within the city and those leading out from it. These have been identified by tracing paths through gateways and finds of pavements.
- Moving along roads leading into the urban core, there is little archaeological evidence of the houses of ordinary people. Archaeologists have found fine Chinese porcelain in some areas of the urban core. They suggested that these areas may have been occupied by rich traders.
- Tombs and mosques located here have distinctive functions. The ordinary people of the Vijayanagara Empire lived in ordinary houses. This is how the 16th century Portuguese traveler Barbosa described the houses of ordinary people.
- Field surveys indicate that wells, rainwater tanks and temple tanks of the various small shrines scattered throughout the urban core, might have served as sources of water for the ordinary dwellers.

4. The Royal Centre

- The royal centre was located in the south-western part of the settlement. It included 60 temples.
- The patronage of temples was important for rulers, because they were trying to establish their authority through association with the divinities housed in the shrines. About thirty buildings have been identified as palaces.
- The difference between temples and secular buildings was that temples were constructed entirely of masonry whereas materials used in the secular buildings were perishable.

The Mahanavami Dibba

- Based on the form of the buildings as well as their functions some of structures have been assigned some names. The “king’s palace” is the largest of the enclosures but was not used as royal residence. It has two platforms:
 1. The “audience hall”
 2. The Mahanavami Dibba
- The audience hall is a high platform with slots for wooden pillars at close and regular intervals. It had a staircase going up to the second floor, which rested on these pillars.
- The Mahanavami Dibba is a massive platform rising from a base of about 11,000sq ft. to a height of 40 ft. There is evidence that it supported a wooden structure. The base of the platform is covered with relief carvings.
- **The significance of Mahanavami festival in the Vijayanagara Empire**
 - ▶ The Mahanavami festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Vijayanagar Empire.
 - ▶ Literally, Mahanavami means the great ninth day. Mahanavami is a ten-day Hindu festival (during September and October) known variously as Dusehra (northern India), Durga Puja (in Bengal) and Navaratri or Mahanavami (in Peninsular India).
 - ▶ The Vijayanagara kings displayed their prestige, power and suzerainty on this occasion. The ceremonies performed on the occasion included worship of the image, worship of the state horse and the sacrifice of buffaloes and other animals.
 - ▶ Dances, wrestling matches, and processions of caparisoned horses, elephants and chariots and soldiers, as well as ritual presentations before the king and his guests by the chief nayakas and subordinate kings marked the occasion.
 - ▶ These ceremonies were imbued with deep symbolic meanings.

- ▶ On the last day of the festival the king inspected his army and the armies of the nayakas in a grand ceremony in an open field. On this occasion the nayakas brought rich gifts for the king as well as the stipulated tribute.

Other buildings in the Royal Centre

- One of the beautiful buildings in the royal centre is the Lotus Mahal. According to Mackenzie, it may have been a council chamber, a place where the king met his advisers.
- One of the most spectacular buildings found in the royal centre is the Hazara Rama temple. This was probably meant to be used only by the king and his family.

5. The Sacred Centre

Traditions about the sacred centre

- The hills of northern region sheltered the monkey kingdom of Vali and Sugriva mentioned in the Ramayana.
- Other traditions suggest that Pampadevi, the local mother goddess, did penance in these hills in order to marry Virupaksha, the guardian deity of the kingdom, also recognized as a form of Shiva.

Features of the temples of Vijayanagara

- The Vijayanagara kings encouraged temple building as it conveyed a divine association between the deity and the king. The Vijayanagara kings claimed to rule on behalf of the god Virupaksha.
- All royal orders were signed “Shri Virupaksha”, usually in the Kannada script.
- Rulers also indicated their close links with the gods by using the title “Hindu Suratrana”. This was a Sanskritization of the Arabic term Sultan, meaning king, so literally meant Hindu Sultan.
- The Vijayanagara kings made grants to temples. Temples developed as centres of social and cultural activities. The king’s visits to the temples were important occasions and he was accompanied by nayakas.
- During this period, certain new features were evident in the temple architecture. These included structures of enormous size that must have been built to mark the imperial authority.
- One of the best examples is rayas gopurams or royal gateways that often dwarfed the towers on the central shrines. These gopurams signaled the presence of the temple from a great distance. These towering gateways also reminded about the power of the king who could command the resources techniques and skills that was required to construct them.
- Another distinctive feature of the temple architecture was mandapas or pavilion and long, pillared corridors that often ran around the shrines within the temple complex.
- One of the best examples is the Virupaksha temple. The Virupaksha temple was built over centuries. Inscriptions suggest that this shrine date to the ninth-tenth centuries. On the occasion of his coronation, Krishna deva Raya built the elaborate hall in front of the main shrine. The hall was adorned with delicately carved pillars. Eastern gopuram was also built by him.

Importance of halls in the temple

- The halls in the temple were used for a variety of purposes.
- In some spaces, images of gods were placed to witness special programmes of music, dance, drama, etc.
- Others were used to celebrate the marriages of the deities, and yet, others were meant for the deities to swing in.
- On such occasions, small images other than those kept in the central shrine were used.
- In the Vitthala temple, the principal deity was Vitthala, a form of Vishnu generally worshipped in Maharashtra. This temple has several halls and a unique shrine designed as a chariot.

- A characteristic feature of the temple complex is the chariot streets that extended from the temple gopuram in a straight line.
- These streets were paved with stone slabs and lined with pillared pavilions where merchants set up their shops.

Various steps involved in the mapping of the site at Hampi

- The first step was to divide the entire area into a set of 25 squares, each designated by a letter of the alphabet.
- Then each of the small squares was subdivided into a set of even smaller squares.
- Each of these smaller squares was further subdivided into yet smaller units.
- These detailed surveys have been extremely painstaking, and have recovered thousands of structures—from tiny shrines and residences to elaborate temples.

Buildings as source of information

- Buildings provide useful information in understanding the past.
- Buildings that survive tell us about the ways spaces were organized and used, how they were built, with what materials and techniques.
- We can assess the defence requirements and military preparedness of a city by studying its fortifications.
- Buildings also tell us about the spread of ideas and cultural influence if we compare them with buildings in other places. They convey ideas which the builders or their patrons wished to project.

6. Travellers Who Visited The Vijayanagara Empire

- Several travellers visited the city of Vijayanagara and left their travel accounts. Notable among them are,
 - ▶ Italian trader Nicolo de Conti, an ambassador named Abdur Razzaq sent by the ruler of Persia and a merchant named Afanasii Nikitin from Russia. All of them visited the city in the 15th century.
 - ▶ Portuguese travellers like Duarte Barbosa, Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz visited the city in the 16th century.

KEY WORDS & MISCELLANEOUS

- **Amuktamalyada:** A work on statecraft composed in Telugu by Krishnadevaraya
- **Amara:** The term amara is derived from the Sanskrit word samara, meaning battle or war. It also resembles the Persian term amir, meaning a high noble.
- **Yavana:** Yavana is a Sanskrit word used for the Greeks and other peoples who entered the subcontinent from the North West.
- **House of Victory:** Domingo Paes called the audience hall and the Mahanavami Dibba together as the House of Victory.

8

PEASANTS, ZAMINDARS AND THE STATE AGRARIAN SOCIETY AND THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

(C. Sixteenth to Seventeenth Century)

- During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about 85 per cent of the population of India lived in its villages. Both peasants and landed elites were involved in agricultural production and claimed rights to a share of the produce.
- This created relationships of cooperation, competition and conflict among them. The sum of these agrarian relationships made up rural society.
- At the same time agencies from outside also entered into the rural world. Most important among these was the Mughal state, which derived the bulk of its income from agricultural production.
- Agents of the state – revenue assessors, collectors, record keepers - sought to control rural society so as to ensure that cultivation took place and the state got its regular share of taxes from the produce.

1. PEASANTS AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

- The basic unit of agricultural society was the village, inhabited by peasants who performed the manifold seasonal tasks that made up agricultural production throughout the year and they contributed their labour to the production of agro-based goods such as sugar and oil.
- But rural India was not characterised by settled peasant production alone. Several kinds of areas such as large tracts of dry land or hilly regions were not cultivable in the same way as the more fertile expanses of land. In addition, forest areas made up a substantial proportion of territory.

Looking for sources

- **Chronicles and documents from the Mughal court: -**
 - ▶ One of the most important chronicles was the Ain-i Akbari authored by Akbar's court historian Abul Fazl. This text meticulously recorded the arrangements made by the state to ensure cultivation, to enable the collection of revenue by the agencies of the state and to regulate the relationship between the state and rural magnates, the zamindars.
 - ▶ The central purpose of the Ain was to present a vision of Akbar's empire where social harmony was provided by a strong ruling class.
 - ▶ Any revolt or assertion of autonomous power against the Mughal state failed.
- The account of the Ain can be supplemented by descriptions contained in sources emanating from regions away from the Mughal capital: -
 - ▶ The detailed revenue records from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.
 - ▶ The extensive records of the East India Company provide us with useful descriptions of agrarian relations in eastern India.

Peasants and their lands

■ Various Terms used for describing peasants

- ▶ The term which Indo-Persian sources of the Mughal period most frequently used to denote a peasant was raiyat or muzarian. In addition, we also encounter the terms kisan or asami.
- ▶ Sources of the seventeenth century refer to two kinds of peasants –
 1. khud-kashta
 - The khud-kashta were residents of the village in which they held their lands.
 2. Pahi-kashta
 - The pahi-kashta were non-resident cultivators who belonged to some other village, but cultivated lands elsewhere on a contractual basis.
 - People became pahi-kashta either out of choice or out of compulsion.
- When terms of revenue in a distant village were more favourable peasants moved to other villages. Sometimes they were forced by economic distress after a famine.

■ Possessions of peasants

- ▶ Average peasant of north India possessed a pair of bullocks and one plough. Others possessed two pairs of bulls and two ploughs; most possessed even less. In Gujarat peasants possessing about six acres of land were considered to be affluent. In Bengal, five acres was the upper limit of an average peasant farm.
- ▶ Cultivation was based on the principle of individual ownership. Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners.

Irrigation and technology

- There were three factors that contributed for the expansion of agriculture.
 1. Abundance of land
 2. Available labour
 3. Mobility of peasants
- Since the primary purpose of agriculture is to feed people, basic staples such as rice, wheat or millets were the most frequently cultivated crops.
- Monsoons remained the backbone of Indian agriculture. But there were crops which required additional water. Artificial systems of irrigation had to be devised for this. Irrigation projects received state support as well. In northern India the state undertook digging of new canals and also repaired old ones like the shahnahr in the Punjab during Shah Jahan's reign.
- Though agriculture was labour intensive, peasants did use technologies that often-harnessed cattle energy. One example was the wooden plough, which was light and easily assembled with an iron tip or coulter.
- A drill, pulled by a pair of giant oxen, was used to plant seeds, but broadcasting of seed was the most prevalent method.
- Hoeing and weeding were done simultaneously using a narrow iron blade with a small wooden handle.

An abundance of crops

- Agriculture was organised around two major seasonal cycles, the kharif and the rabi. This would mean that most regions produced a minimum of two crops a year (do-fasla) whereas some, where rainfall or irrigation assured a continuous supply of water, even gave three crops.
 - ▶ In the Mughal provinces of Agra produced 39 varieties of crops and Delhi produced 43 over the two seasons.

- ▶ Bengal produced 50 varieties of rice alone. However, the focus on the cultivation was basic staples such as rice, wheat, pulses and vegetables etc.
- ▶ The Mughal state also encouraged peasants to cultivate jins-i kamil (literally, perfect crops) as they brought in more revenue. Crops such as cotton and sugarcane were jins-i kamil par excellence.
- During the seventeenth century several new crops from different parts of the world reached the Indian subcontinent. Maize (makka) was introduced into India via Africa and Spain and by the seventeenth century it was being listed as one of the major crops of western India. Vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes and chillies were introduced from the New World at this time, as were fruits like the pineapple and the papaya.

2. The Village Community

- Agricultural production involved the intensive participation and initiative of the peasantry. Agriculture was based on the principle of individual ownership. But they belonged to a collective village community. There were three constituents of this community-the cultivators, the panchayat, and the village headman (muqaddam or mandal).

Caste and the rural milieu

- Despite the abundance of cultivable land, certain caste groups were assigned menial tasks and thus relegated to poverty. Such groups comprised a large section of the village population, had the least resources and were constrained by their position in the caste hierarchy, much like the Dalits of modern India.
- In Muslim communities' menials like the halalkhoran, those who cut meat were housed outside the boundaries of the village; similarly, the mallahzadas, boatmen in Bihar were comparable to slaves.
- There was a direct correlation between caste, poverty and social status at the lower strata of society.
- In Marwar, Rajputs are mentioned as peasants, sharing the same space with Jats, who were accorded a lower status in the caste hierarchy.
- The Gauravas, who cultivated land in Uttar Pradesh sought Rajput status in the seventeenth century.
- Castes such as the Ahirs, Gujars and Malisrose in the hierarchy because of the profitability of cattle rearing and horticulture.
- In the eastern regions, intermediate pastoral and fishing castes like the Sadgops and Kaivartas acquired the status of peasants.

Panchayats and headmen

- The village panchayat was an assembly of elders. In mixed-caste villages, the panchayat was usually a heterogeneous body. The panchayat represented various castes and communities in the village so it is called an oligarchy.
- The panchayat was headed by a headman known as muqaddam or mandal. Some sources suggest that the headman was chosen through the consensus of the village elders, and that this choice had to be ratified by the zamindar. Headmen held office as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the village elders. The panchayat derived its funds from contributions made by individuals to a common financial pool.
- **Functions of Panchayat**
 - ▶ The village headman supervised the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the accountant or patwari of the panchayat
 - ▶ The panchayat had to undertake welfare measures for the village people (community welfare) such as construction of bund or digging the canal which peasants usually could not afford to do on their own.

- ▶ The panchayat also made arrangements against natural calamities, like floods, famine, droughts etc.
 - ▶ One important function of the panchayat was to ensure that caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld. In eastern India all marriages were held in the presence of the mandal.
 - ▶ Panchayats also had the authority to levy fines and inflict more serious forms of punishment like expulsion from the community. It meant that a person forced to leave the village became an outcaste and lost his right to practise his profession.
 - ▶ In western India people of lower castes presented petitions to the panchayat complaining about extortionate taxation or the demand for unpaid labour (begar) imposed by the “superior” castes or officials of the state.
 - ▶ In the eyes of the petitioners the right to the basic minimum for survival was sanctioned by custom. They regarded the village panchayat as the court of appeal that would ensure that the state carried out its moral obligations and guaranteed justice.
 - ▶ The decision of the panchayat in conflicts between “lower –caste” peasants and state officials or the local zamindar could vary from case to case. In cases of excessive revenue demands, the panchayat often suggested compromise. In cases where reconciliation failed; peasants took recourse to more drastic forms of resistance, such as deserting the village.
- **Role played by the Jati Panchayat**
- ▶ In addition to the village panchayat each sub-caste or jati in the village had its own jati panchayat. These panchayats wielded considerable power in rural society.
 - ▶ In Rajasthan jati panchayats arbitrated civil disputes between members of different castes.
 - ▶ They mediated in contested claims on land, decided whether marriages were performed according to the norms laid down by a particular caste group and determined who had ritual precedence in village functions, and so on.
 - ▶ In most cases, except in matters of criminal justice, the state respected the decisions of jati panchayats.

Village artisans

- 25 per cent of the total households in the villages were artisans. The distinction between artisans and peasants in village society was a fluid one; as many groups performed the tasks of both. Cultivators and their families would also participate in craft production – such as dyeing, textile printing, baking and firing of pottery, making and repairing agricultural implements.
- Village artisans – potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, even goldsmiths – provided specialized services. In return, the village people gave them a share of the harvest, or an allotment of land, perhaps cultivable wastes, which was likely to be decided by the panchayat.
- Zamindars in Bengal who remunerated blacksmiths, carpenters, even goldsmiths for their work by paying them “a small daily allowance and diet money”. This later came to be described as the jajmani system, though the term was not in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A “little republic”?

- Some British officials in the nineteenth century saw the village as a “little republic”. Because villages were made up of fraternal partners of sharing resources and labour in a collective. However, this was not a sign of rural egalitarianism.

- There was individual ownership of assets and deep inequities based on caste and gender distinctions. A group of powerful individuals decided the affairs of the village, exploited the weaker sections and had the authority to dispense justice.

3. Women in Agrarian Society

- Women worked shoulder to shoulder with men in fields. Men tilled and ploughed, while women sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest. With the growth of nucleated villages and expansion in individualised peasant farming the basis of production was the labour and resources of the entire household.
- Biases related to women's biological functions did continue. Menstruating women, for instance, were not allowed to touch the plough or the potter's wheel in western India, or enter the groves where betel-leaves were grown.
- Artisanal tasks such as spinning yarn, sifting and kneading clay for pottery, and embroidery were among the many aspects of production dependent on female labour. In fact, peasant and artisan women worked not only in the fields, but even went to the houses of their employers or to the markets if necessary.
- Women were considered an important resource in agrarian society also because they were child bearers in a society which depends on labour. At the same time, high mortality rates among women – owing to malnutrition, frequent pregnancies and death during childbirth – often meant a shortage of wives.
- Shortage of women led to the emergence of new social customs in peasant and artisan communities that were distinct from those prevalent among elite groups. Marriages in many rural communities required the payment of bride-price rather than dowry to the bride's family.
- Remarriage was considered legitimate both among divorced and widowed women. The importance attached to women as a productive force also meant that the fear of losing control over them was great.
- According to established social norms, the household was headed by a male. Thus women were kept under strict control by the male members of the family and draconian punishments were given to suspected infidelity on the part of women. Women sent petitions to the village panchayat, seeking redress and justice. Wives protested against the infidelity of their husbands or the neglect of the wife and children by the male head of the household.
- Amongst the landed gentry, women had the right to inherit property. Instances from the Punjab show that women, including widows, actively participated in the rural land market as sellers of property inherited by them. Hindu and Muslim women inherited zamindaris which they were free to sell or mortgage. Women zamindars were known in eighteenth-century Bengal.

4. Forests and Tribes

Beyond settled villages

- Apart from the intensively cultivated provinces in northern and north-western India, huge swathes of forests – dense forest (jungle) or scrubland (kharbandi).
- According to estimates based on contemporary sources, an average of 40% of the land was covered by forests.
- Forest dwellers were termed jangli in contemporary texts. Jangli did not mean an absence of "civilization". The term described those whose livelihood came from the gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture. These activities of the forest dwellers were largely season specific in nature.
- For example, the Bhils used to collect forest produce in the spring season, fish in the summer, cultivate crops in the monsoon and used to hunt animals in the autumn and winter. This sequential procedure perpetuated mobility, which became a distinctive feature of forest tribes.

- Babur's remark on the forest dwellers. He considered the forest to be a subversive place—a refuge (mawas) for trouble makers to hide and avoid paying taxes.
- Babur says that jungles provided a good defence "behind which the people of the pargana become stubbornly rebellious and pay no taxes".

Inroads into forests

- The Mughal state required elephants for the army. So, the **peshkash** levied from forest people often included a supply of elephants. In the Mughal political ideology, the hunt symbolised the overwhelming concern of the state to ensure justice to all its subjects, rich and poor. Rulers went for regular hunting expeditions which enabled the emperor to travel across the extensive territories of his empire and personally attend to the grievances of its inhabitants.
- **Exchange of Commodities:**
 - ▶ The spread of commercial agriculture was an important external factor that impinged on the lives of those who lived in the forests. Forest products –like honey, beeswax and gum lac, elephants – were in great demand. Some, such as gum lac, became major items of overseas export from India in the seventeenth century.
 - ▶ The exchange of commodities took place via the barter system as well. For example, the Lohanis in the Punjab engaged with overland trade with countries like Afghanistan, along with trade within the Punjab region.
- **Social changes in the lives of forest dwellers:**
 - ▶ Social factors also brought changes in the lives of forest dwellers. Like the head men of the villages, tribes also had their chieftains. The chieftains of tribes became zamindars and some even became kings. Tribal Kings recruited people from their lineage groups or demanded that their fraternity in order to build up their army.
 - ▶ For example, Tribes in the Sind region had armies comprising 6,000 cavalry and 7,000 infantries.
 - ▶ In Assam, the Ahom kings had their paiks, people who were obliged to render military service in exchange for land. The capture of wild elephants was made a monopoly of the Ahom kings.
- **Transition from a tribal to monarchical system:**
 - ▶ The transition from a tribal to a monarchical system had started much earlier in India.
 - ▶ Ain-i-Akbari observes the presence of tribal kingdoms in the north east. War was a common occurrence between tribal kingdoms in the north-east.
 - ▶ For example, The Koch kings fought and subjugated a number of neighboring tribes in a long sequence of wars through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

5. The Zamindars

- Zamindars were landed proprietors and also enjoyed certain social and economic privileges. Caste was one factor for their elevated status. They performed certain services (khidmat) for the state.
- The zamindars held extensive personal lands (milkiyat, meaning property). Milkiyat lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars with the help of hired labour. The zamindars could sell or donate these lands at will.
- Zamindars also enjoyed the right to collect revenue on behalf of the state. They had control over military resources. They had fortresses (qilachas) as well as armed contingent comprising units of cavalry, artillery and infantry. They constituted the very narrow apex in the pyramid.

- Abul Fazl's account indicates that most of the Zamindars were from an "upper-caste", Brahmana or Rajput. It also reflects a fairly large representation of Zamindars from the so-called intermediate castes, as well as a liberal sprinkling of Muslim zamindaris.
- The dispossession of weaker people by a powerful military chieftain was quite often away of expanding a zamindari. It is, however, unlikely that the state would have allowed such a show of aggression by a zamindar unless he had been confirmed by an imperial order.
- Zamindars spearheaded the colonisation of agricultural land, and helped in settling cultivators by providing them with the means of cultivation, including cash loans. The buying and selling of zamindaris accelerated the process of monetization in the countryside.
- In addition, zamindars sold the produce from their milkiyat lands. There is evidence to show that zamindars often established markets to which peasants also came to sell their produce.
- Although there can be little doubt that zamindars were an exploitative class, their relationship with the peasantry was reciprocal and one of the paternalism.
- Two aspects reinforce this view
 - ▶ First, the bhakti saints, who eloquently condemned caste-based and other forms of oppression. They did not portray the zamindars as exploiters or oppressors of the peasantry.
 - ▶ Second, in a large number of agrarian uprisings which erupted in north India in the seventeenth century, zamindars often received the support of the peasantry in their struggle against the state.

6. Land Revenue System

- Revenue from the land was the economic mainstay of the Mughal Empire. It was therefore vital for the state to create an administrative system to ensure control over agricultural production, and to fix and collect revenue from across the empire.
- This system included the office of the diwan who was responsible for supervising the fiscal system of the empire. Thus, revenue officials and record keepers penetrated the agricultural domain and became a decisive agent in shaping agrarian relations.
- The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages – first, assessment and then actual collection. The jama was the amount assessed and hasil, the amount collected.
- Akbar decreed ordered amil-guzaror revenue collector that he should strive to make cultivators pay in cash, the option of payment in kind was also to be kept open. While fixing revenue, the attempt of the state was to maximise its claims.
- Both cultivated and cultivable lands were measured in each province. Efforts to measure lands continued under subsequent emperors. Aurangzeb instructed his revenue officials to prepare annual records of the number of cultivators in each village. Yet not all areas were measured successfully.

7. The Flow of Silver

- The Mughal Empire was the large territorial empires in Asia among the Ming (China), Safavid (Iran) and Ottoman (Turkey) empires that had managed to consolidate power and resources during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
- The political stability achieved by all these empires helped create vibrant networks of overland trade from China to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Voyages of discovery and the opening up of the New World (America) resulted in a massive expansion of India's trade with Europe.

- An expanding trade brought in huge amounts of silver bullion into India to pay for goods procured from India. This was good for India because it did not have natural resources of silver
- As a result, the period between the 16th and 17th centuries was also marked by a remarkable stability in the availability of metal currency, particularly the silver rupyā in India. This facilitated an unprecedented expansion of minting and circulating of silver coins.
- Italian traveller, Giovanni Careri, who passed through India c. 1690, provides a graphic account about the way silver travelled across the globe to reach India. It also gives us an idea of the phenomenal amounts of cash and commodity transactions in seventeenth-century India.

8. The Ain-i Akbari of Abu'l Fazl Allami

- The Ain-i Akbari was the culmination of a large historical, administrative project of classification undertaken by Abu'l Fazl at the order of Emperor Akbar. It was completed in 1598 after having gone through five revisions.
- The Ain was part of a larger project of history writing commissioned by Akbar. This history, known as the Akbar Nama, comprised three books. The first two provided a historical narrative. The Ain-i Akbari, the third book, was organized as a compendium of imperial regulations and a gazetteer of the empire.
- The Ain gives detailed accounts of the organization of the court, administration and army, the sources of revenue and the physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire and the literary, cultural, religious traditions of the people and quantitative information of the provinces.
- The Ain is made up of five books (daftars), of which the first three books describe the administration. The first book, called manzil-abadi, concerns the imperial household and its maintenance
- The second book, sipah-abadi, covers the military and civil administration and the establishment of servants. This book includes notices and short biographical sketches of imperial officials like Mansabdars, learned men, poets and artists.
- The third book, Mulk-abadi, is the one which deals with the fiscal side of the empire and provides rich quantitative information on revenue rates, administrative and fiscal divisions, total measured area, and assessed revenue (jama).
- After setting out details at the suba level, the Ain goes on to give a detailed picture of the sarkars below the suba in the form of tables, which have eight columns giving the following information.
 1. Parganat/mahal
 2. Qila (forts)
 3. Arazi and zamin-i paimuda (measured area)
 4. Naqdi, revenue assessed in cash
 5. Suyurghal, grants of revenue in charity
 6. Zamindars
 7. Columns 7 and 8 contain details of the castes of these zamindars, and their troops including their horsemen (sawar), foot-soldiers (piyada) and elephants (fil).
- The fourth and fifth books (daftars) deal with the religious, literary and cultural traditions of the people of India and also contain a collection of Akbar's "auspicious sayings".
- **Limitations of Ain-i-Akbari**
 - ▶ Although the Ain was officially sponsored to record detailed information to facilitate Emperor Akbar, it was much more than a reproduction of official papers. That the manuscript was revised five times by the author would suggest a high degree of caution on the part of Abu'l Fazl and a search for authenticity.

- ▶ For instance, oral testimonies were cross-checked and verified before being incorporated as “facts” in the chronicle. In the quantitative sections, all numeric data were reproduced in words so as to minimise the chances of subsequent transcriptional errors.
- ▶ Historians who have carefully studied the Ain point out that it is not without its problems. Numerous errors in totaling have been detected. These are ascribed to simple slips of arithmetic or of transcription by Abu'l Fazl's assistants.
- ▶ Data were not collected uniformly from all provinces. For instance, while for many subas detailed information was compiled about the caste composition of the zamindars, such information is not available for Bengal and Orissa.
- ▶ Further, while the fiscal data from the subas is remarkable for its richness, some equally vital parameters such as prices of commodities and wages of workers from these same areas are not as well documented.
- ▶ These limitations notwithstanding, the Ain remains an extraordinary document of its times. By providing fascinating glimpses into the structure and organisation of the Mughal Empire and by giving us quantitative information about its products and people.

KEY WORDS & MISCELLANEOUS

- **Corrupt mandals:** The mandals often misused their positions. They were principally accused of defrauding village accounts in connivance with the patwari, and for underassessing the revenue they owed from their own lands in order to pass the additional burden on to the smaller cultivator.
- **Pargana** was an administrative subdivision of a Mughal province.
- **Peshkash** was a form of tribute collected by the Mughal state.
- **Amin** was an official responsible for ensuring that imperial regulations were carried out in the provinces.
- **The Mansabdari system:** The Mughal administrative system had at its apex a militarycum-bureaucratic apparatus (mansabdari) which was responsible for looking after the civil and military affairs of the state. Some mansabdars were paid in cash (naqdi), while the majority of them were paid through assignments of revenue (jagirs) in different regions of the empire. They were transferred periodically.

9

KINGS AND CHRONICLES THE MUGHAL COURTS (C. Sixteenth to Seventeenth Century)

- The Mughal Kings commissioned court historians to write accounts of their achievements. These accounts recorded the events of the emperor's time. The writers collected vast amounts of information from the regions of the subcontinent to help the rulers govern their domain. Modern historians who write history in English have termed those accounts as chronicles; because the accounts give information in chronological order.
- Chronicles are an indispensable source for any scholar wishing to write a history of the Mughals. They were a repository of factual information about the institution of the Mughal state. They were intended as conveyors of meanings that the Mughal rulers sought to impose on their domain.

1. The Mughals and Their Empire

- The term Mughal is derived from Mongol. But the Mughal Kings did not call themselves as the Mughals. They called themselves as Timurids, the descendants of the Turkish ruler Timur. During the 16th century, Europeans used the term 'Mughal' to describe the branch of the family of Timur.
- **Zahiruddin Babur**
 - ▶ Zahiruddin Babur was the founder of the Mughal Empire. He was expelled from his homeland (Fargana) by Uzbeks. He first established himself at Kabul and then in 1526 moved further into the Indian subcontinent in search of territories and resources to satisfy the needs of his clan.
- **Nasiruddin Humayun**
 - ▶ Babur was succeeded by Humayun as the Mughal ruler in 1530. But Sher Shah Suri, an Afghan leader drove him to exile. Humayun took refuge in the court of the Safavid ruler of Iran. In 1555 Humayun defeated Sher Shah and regained his empire.
- **Jalaluddin Akbar**
 - ▶ Akbar is considered to be a great ruler of the Mughals. He expanded his empire and made it as the largest, strongest and the richest kingdom at the time of his rule. He was able to expand his empire up to the Hindukush Mountains and prevented the Uzbeks and Safavids.
 - ▶ Successors of Akbar Jahangir (1605-27), Shajahan (1628-58) and Aurangzeb (1658-1707).
- **Features of the Mughal Imperial Structure**
 - ▶ The institutions of an imperial structure were created in the 16th and 17th centuries.
 - ▶ It had effective methods of administration and taxation.
 - ▶ The court was the centre of the Mughal power where political alliances and relationships were made and status and hierarchies were defined.
 - ▶ The political system of the Mughals was based on a combination of military power accommodating various traditions of the subcontinent that the Mughals faced.

2. The Production Of Chronicles

- The Chronicles written during the Mughal period are an important source to study the Mughal Empire. They were written,
 - ▶ To convey a vision of enlightened kingdom to all those who came under its umbrella.
 - ▶ To convey to those who resisted the rule of the Mughals that all resistance was destined to fail.
 - ▶ To ensure that there was an account of their rule for posterity.
- The authors of the chronicles were court historians in the Mughal Empire. Histories written by them focused on events centred on the ruler, his family, the court and nobles, wars and administrative system.
- The titles of the chronicles such as Akbar Nama, Shajahan Nama, and Alamgir Nama indicate that the history of the empire and the court was synonymous with that of the emperor.

From Turkish to Persian

- The Mughals were chaghtai Turks by origin and Turkish was their mother tongue.
- The first ruler Babur wrote poetry and his memoirs Babur Nama in Turkish language.
- Persian developed as a leading language at the time of the Mughal rule in India. Persian was a court language and literary writings of the Sultans of Delhi and flourished with local variants like Hindavi.
- It was Akbar who consciously developed Persian as a leading language in the Mughal court.
- Mughal official histories such as Akbar Nama were written in Persian. Other chronicles such as Babur's memoirs were translated from the Turkish into Persian Babur Nama.
- The court historians of the Mughals translated Sanskrit texts such as Ramayana and Mahabharata into Persian. The Mahabharata was translated as the Razmnama (Book of Wars).
- Those who had command on Persian were conferred power and prestige. It was spoken by the king, the elite and people at the royal court.
- Persian language influenced other Indian languages such as Rajasthani, Marathi and Tamil. It became Indianised by observing idiom and vocabulary from the Indian languages.

The making of manuscripts

- Books written in Mughal India were manuscripts that were hand written. The work of manuscript production was carried out by the imperial Kitabkhana that could be translated as library but it was scriptorium that is, it was a place where emperor's collection of manuscript was kept and new manuscripts were produced.
- The creation of manuscripts involved many tasks.
 - I. Papermakers prepared folios of the manuscripts
 - II. Scribes or calligraphers copied the text
 - III. Guilders illuminated the pages.
 - IV. Painters illustrated scenes from the text
 - V. Book binders gathered the individual folios and set them within ornamental covers.
- The finished manuscript was considered as a precious object with intellectual work and beauty. The people who were involved in the production of manuscripts were recognized with titles and awards.
- The calligraphers and painters were held high in the status while the paper makers and book binders remained anonymous artisans.
- Art of handwriting is called calligraphy. Manuscripts of the Mughal were handwritten. It was considered a skill of great importance. It was practiced with different styles.

- Akbar's favourite handwritten style was the nastaliq which was a fluid style with long horizontal strokes. It was written using a piece of trimmed reed which had a tip of five to 10 mm called Qalam. The reed was dipped in carbon ink (siyahi). The nib of the Qalam was split in the middle to facilitate the flow of ink.

The Painted Image

- Painters were involved in the production of manuscripts.
- Chronicles that narrates the events of the Mughal Emperor had images, alongside the written text, that described events in visual form.
- The scribe left blank spaces wherever images were required and paintings were drawn separately by artists and inserted in proper place.
- Paintings enhanced the beauty of manuscripts and communicated ideas about kingdom and the power of kings. The historian Abul Fazl described paintings as "magical art".
- The paintings made the inanimate objects look as if they possessed life. The production of paintings portraying the emperor, his court and the people who were part of it, was a source of tension between rulers and representatives of the Muslim orthodoxy, the ulama.
- The latter did not fail to invoke the Islamic prohibition of the portrayal of human beings enshrined in the Quran as well as the hadis which described an incident from the life of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Here the Prophet is cited as having forbidden the depictions of living beings in a naturalistic manner as it would suggest that the artist was seeking to appropriate the power of creation.
- This was a function that was believed to belong exclusively to God.
- Yet; interpretations of the Sharia change with time.
- Various social groups interpreted the body of Islamic tradition in different ways.
- Each group put forward an understanding of tradition that would best suit their political needs. Muslim rulers in many Asian regions patronized artists to paint their images and court scenes.
- The artists were trained in workshops set up at court under the rule of Safavid kings.
- Artists such as Bihzad contributed to the spreading of the cultural fame of the safavid court far and wide. Artists from Iran came to India during the mughal rule.
- Artists like Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdal Samad accompanied Emperor Humayun to Delhi.
- Other artists migrated to Delhi in search of opportunities.

The Akbar Nama and The Badshah Nama

- Abul Fazl was the author of Akbar Nama. He was well versed with Arabic, Persian, Greek philosophy and Sufism.
- Moreover, he was a forceful debater and independent thinker who consistently opposed the views of the conservative ulama.
- These qualities impressed Akbar, who found Abul Fazl ideally suited as an adviser and spokesperson for his policies.
- Emperor's objective was to free the state from the control of religious orthodoxy.
- In his role as court historian, Abul Fazl both shaped and articulated the ideas associated with the reign of Akbar.
- Abul Fazl was murdered by Bir Singh Bundela an accomplice of Prince Salim (Jahangir) who conspired the killing.

- The Akbar Nama is one of the important illustrated official histories. The manuscript has an average of 150 full- or double-page paintings of battles, sieges, hunts, building construction and court scenes. In 1589, Abul Fazl worked on the Akbar Nama for thirteen years, repeatedly revising the draft. The chronicle is based on a range of sources, including actual records of events (waqai), official documents and oral testimonies of knowledgeable persons.
- The Akbar Nama is divided into three books. The first two are chronicles and the third is Ain-i-Akbari. The first volume starts from the history of mankind from Adam to one celestial cycle of Akbar's life (30 years). The second volume closes in the forty sixth regnal year (1601) of Akbar. The Akbar Nama was written to provide detailed information of the political events of Akbar's reign.
- The Akbar Nama was written to provide a detailed description of Akbar's reign in the traditional sense of recording politically significant events across time, as well as in the more novel sense of giving a synchronic picture of all aspects of Akbar's empire-geographic, social, administrative and cultural-without reference to chronology. In the Ain-i-Akbari the Mughal Empire is presented as having a diverse population consisting of Hindus, Jainas, Buddhists and Muslims and a composite culture.
- Abul Fazl wrote in a language that was ornate and which attached importance to diction and rhythm, as texts were often read aloud. This Indo-Persian style was patronized at court, and there were a large number of writers who wanted to write like Abul Fazl.
- A pupil of Abul Fazl, Abdul Hamid Lahori is known as the author of the Badshah Nama. Emperor Shah Jahan, hearing of his talents, commissioned him to write a history of his reign modelled on the Akbar Nama.
- The Badshah Nama is the official history in three volumes(daftars) of ten lunar years each. Lahori wrote the first and second daftars comprising the first two decades of the emperor's rule(1627-47). Sadullah Khan, Shah Jahan's wazir, later revised these volumes. The historian Waris chronicled third decade. British administrators began to study Indian history and to create an archive of knowledge about the subcontinent to help them better understand the people and the cultures of the empire they sought to rule.
- British administrators showed interest to study Indian history. They wanted to have an understanding about the subcontinent in order to understand the people and their cultures, so they could rule accordingly.
- Sir William Jones founded The Asiatic Society of Bengal and took the task of editing, printing and translation of many Indian manuscripts.
- The Asiatic Society of Bengal published and edited the versions of the Akbar Nama and Badshah Nama in the 19th century.
- The English translation of the Akbar Nama was published by Henry Beveridge. But the Badshah Nama has not been translated in English completely till date.

The Ideal Kingdom

A divine light

- Court chroniclers narrated that of the Mongol queen Alanqua, who was impregnated by a ray of sunshine while resting in her tent. The offspring she bore carried this Divine Light and passed it on from generation to generation.
- Abul Fazl placed Mughal kingship as the highest station in the hierarchy of objects receiving light emanating from God (farr-i izadi).Abul Fazl was inspired by a famous Iranian Sufi, Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (d.1191) who first developed this idea. According to this idea, there was a hierarchy in which the Divine Light was transmitted to the king who then became the source of spiritual guidance for his subjects.

- Paintings that accompanied the narrative of the chronicles transmitted these ideas in a way that left a lasting impression on the mind of viewers.
- Mughal artists, from the 17th century onwards, began to portray emperors wearing the halo, which they saw on European paintings of Christ and the Virgin Mary to symbolize the light of God.

A Unifying Force

- Abul Fazl describes the ideal of Sulh-i-kul (absolute peace) as the cornerstone of enlightened rule.
- In Sulh-i-kul all religions and schools of thought had freedom of expression but on condition that they did not undermine the authority of the state or fight among themselves.
- The ideal of Sulh-i-kul was implemented through state policies—the nobility under the Mughals was a composite one comprising Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Rajput's, and Deccanis—all of whom were given position and awards purely on the basis of their service and loyalty to the king.
- Akbar abolished the tax on pilgrimage in 1563 and jizya in 1564 as the two were based on religious discrimination.
- Instructions were sent to officers of the empire to follow the precept of Sulh-i-kul in administration.
- All Mughal emperors gave grants to support the building and maintenance of places of worship.
- Even when temples were destroyed during war, grants were later issued for their repair—as we know from the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. However, during the reign of the later, the jizya was reimposed on non-Muslim subjects.

Capitals and Courts

Capital Cities

- The heart of the Mughal Empire was its capital city. The capital cities of the Mughals were frequently shifted during the 16th and 17th centuries.
- When Babur brought the Lodi capital of Agra, the court was changed within four years of rule in the capitals.
- The fort of Agra was constructed by Akbar during 1560s with red stone. In the 1570s, he built a new capital Fatehpur Sikri. It was located on the direct road to Ajmer where the dargah of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti had become an important pilgrimage centre. The Mughal Emperors shared a close relationship with the sufis of the Chishti silsila.
- Akbar constructed a white marble tomb for Shaikh Salim Chishti near Friday mosque at Sikri. Akbar commissioned the construction of Buland Darwaza (arched gateway) to remind visitors of the Mughal victory in Gujarat.
- The capital was shifted to Lahore in 1585 in order to strengthen the control over north-west. Akbar monitored it closely for thirteen years.
- Shah Jahan pursued sound fiscal policies and accumulated enough money to indulge his passion for building.
- Building activity in monarchical cultures was the most visible and tangible sign of dynastic power, wealth and prestige. In the case of Muslim rulers, it was also considered an act of piety. In 1648, the capital was shifted to Shahjahanabad.
- It was a new addition to the old residential city of Delhi with Red Fort, the Jami Masjid, a tree-lined esplanade with bazaars (Chandni Chowk) and spacious homes for the nobility. Shahjahan's new city was appropriate to a more formal vision of a grand monarchy.

The Mughal court

- The Mughal emperor's court procedures reflected his status and power.
- The throne or takht was visualized as axis mundi i.e., pillar or pole supporting the earth.
- Canopy was a symbol of kingship. The status of the courtiers was determined by spatial proximity to the king. Once the emperor sat on the throne, no one was permitted to move from his position.
- Defined etiquette was to be followed in the court with respect to the form of address, courtesies, speech etc. The slightest infringement of etiquette was punishable on the spot.
- The forms of salutation were indicators of a person's status in the hierarchy. For example, deeper prostration was a symbol of higher status.
- Sijda or complete prostration was the highest form of submission. Chahar taslim and Zaminbos (kissing the earth) The diplomatic envoys also had to follow the norms of etiquettes at the Mughal court.
- It was expected from an ambassador presented to the Mughal emperor that he would greet the emperor in an acceptable form of greeting.
- These forms were: bowing deeply, kissing the ground or following the Persian custom of clasping one's hand in front of the chest.
- However, Thomas Roe the English envoy of James I greeted the Mughal emperor Jahangir according to European custom i.e., simply bowing before him.
- Moreover, he shocked the court by demanding a chair for sitting.
- The Mughal adopted grand titles at the time of coronation or victory in the war. These titles were mentioned on the Mughal coins. The Mughals granted titles to men of merit.
- A man's ascent in the court hierarchy could be traced through the titles he held.
- The title Asaf Khan was given to highest minister. The, Asaf Khan came from a legendary minister of the prophet king Sulaiman.
- The title of Mirza Raja was accorded by Aurangzeb to his two nobles of merit e.g Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh.
- The titles could be earned or paid for. For example; Mir Khan paid Rs.1 lack to Aurangzeb for the letter alif, i.e. A to be added to his name to make it Amir Khan.
- Other awards included robe of honour, which was a garment worn by the emperor (khilat), Sarapa(head to foot) consisted of a tunic, a turban and a sash(patka)and Jewellery were given by the emperor.
- On a rare occasion, the lotus blossom set with jewels (padma murassa) was given.
- A courtier while approaching the emperor, he offered either a small sum of money (nazr) or a large amount (peshkash).
- Offering gifts was regarded as a sign of honour and respect in diplomatic relations.
- The ambassadors performed the functions of negotiating treaties and establishing relationships between competing political powers. In such cases gifts had an important symbolic role.
- Thomas Roe, an English ambassador was disappointed to find that the ring presented by him as a gift to Asaf Khan was returned as it was worth merely 400 rupees.

The Imperial Household

- The domestic world of the Mughal was referred to as 'harem'. It is a Persian word meaning a sacred place. Harem consisted of the wives of emperors and concubines, his relatives and other family members. It also had servants both male and female slaves.

- The Mughal rulers maintained a distinction between wives with aristocratic backgrounds (Begums) and other wives (aghas) who were not noble by birth. The Begums were married by the emperors after giving huge amounts of cash and other precious things as dowry (mahr). Concubines (agacha) were given monthly allowances and gifts according to their status. The aghas and aghachas could rise to the position of a begum depending upon the husband's will.
- There were a number of male and female slaves in the Mughal household. They performed various tasks which required skill, tact and intelligence. Slave eunuchs (Khwajasara) served as guards and servants and also as agents for women selling goods.
- After Nur Jahan, the queens of Mughal rulers and princesses began to control important official resources. Jahanara and Roshanara, the daughters of Shah Jahan had annual incomes often equal to that of high imperial mansabdars.
- Besides, Jahanara received revenue from the port city of Surat which was a big centre of overseas trade. The resources enabled important women of the royal household to get constructed buildings and lay out gardens.
- Jahanara took special interest in many architectural projects of Shah Jahan in founding new capital, Shajahanabad (Delhi). Among these projects was the construction of imposing double storeyed Caravanserai with a courtyard and a garden. The bazaar of Chandini Chowk, the main centre of trade in Shajahanabad, was designed by Jahanara.
- Humayun's daughter Gulbadan wrote an interesting book giving glimpses of domestic world of the Mughals. She could write fluently in Turkish and Persian. When Akbar ordered Abul Fazl to write a history of his reign, he requested his aunt to record her memoirs of earlier times under Babur and Humayun.
- Gulbadan did not write the eulogy of the Mughal emperors. She rather described the conflicts and tensions among the princes and kings and the mediating role of the elderly women of the family played in resolving some of these conflicts.

The Imperial Officials

Recruitment and Rank

- The Akbar Nama of Abul Fazl provides detailed information about the recruitments of imperial officials. The corps of officers, known as nobility, in the Mughal Empire was recruited from diverse ethnic and religious groups in order to prevent any faction that would challenge the state.
- The imperial officers were described by the court historians as a bouquet of flowers (guldasta). During the rule of Akbar, for the imperial service, Iranian and Turani nobles were recruited.
- Two ruling groups of Indian origin entered the imperial service from 1560 onwards: The Rajput's and the Indian Muslims (Shai khzadas).
- The first to join was a Rajput chief, Raja Bharmal Kachhwaha of Amber, to whose daughter Akbar got married.
- Aurangzeb appointed Rajputs to high positions, and under him the Marathas accounted for a sizeable number within the body of officers.
- The recruited officers for the service in the Mughal Empire were given ranks (mansabs) with two numerical designations.
- Zat which was an indicator of the position in the imperial hierarchy and the salary of the official (mansabdar).
- Another term used to indicate the number of horsemen was sawar. In the 17th century, a mansabdar with 1,000 zat was ranked as noble (umara, a plural term for amir)

- The nobles sent their armies and participated in the military campaigns and served in the offices of the empire in the provinces.
- The military commanders recruited, equipped and trained the main wing of the Mughal army, i.e, the cavalry.
- He maintained horses which were branded on the flank by the imperial mark. (dagh).By serving in the imperial offices the nobles acquired power, wealth and reputation.
- A person who wanted to enter in service petitioned to the emperor through a noble. If his application was selected, a mansab was granted to him. The pay master general (mri bakshi) stood in the open court nearby the emperor and gave away the appointments or promotion orders which had its office seal and signature as well as those of the emperor.
- There were two other important ministers at the centre: the diwan-I ala (finance minister) and Sadr-us sudur(minister of grants or madad-i-maash, and in charge of appointing local judges or qazis)The three ministers occasionally came together as an advisory body, but were independent of each other. Akbar with these and other advisors shaped the administrative, fiscal and monetary institutions of the empire.

Information and empire

- The keeping of exact and detailed records was a major concern of the Mughal administration. The mir bakshi supervised the corps of court writers (waqia nawis) who recorded all applications and documents presented to the court,and all imperial orders(farman).
- Agents (wakil)of nobles and regional rulers recorded the entire proceedings of the court under the heading “News from the Exalted Court” (Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla) with the date of the court session(pahar).
- The akhbarat contained all kinds of information such as attendance at the court, grant of others and titles, diplomatic missions, presents received, or the enquiries made by the emperor about the health of an officer.
- News reports and important official documents travelled across the length and breadth of the regions under Mughal rule by imperial post.
- Round the clock relays of foot-runners (gasid or pathmar) carried paper rolled up in bamboo containers. The emperor received reports from even distant provincial capitals within few days. Agents of nobles posted outside the capital and Rajput princes and tributary rulers.

Provincial administration

- The administration system of the provinces (subhas) also had the same method like that of the centre. In the provinces ministers were assisted by their subordinates such as diwan, bhakshi and sadr).
- The governor or the subadar was the head of the provincial administration. He had to report to the emperor directly.
- Each subha was divided into sarkars with the jurisdiction of faujdars(commandants).
- The local administration was looked after at the level of pargana(sub-district) by three officers-the qanungo, keeper of revenue records, the chaudhari-in charge of revenue collection and the qazi.
- The administration of each department was maintained by many staff of clerks, accountants, auditors, messengers and other functionaries with good technical skills with highly standardized rules and procedures.
- Persian was the language of administration, but local languages were used for village administration. Beyond the frontiers (Diplomatic relations of the Mughal Emperors)
- The Mughal Emperors assumed many high sounding titles such as Shahen shah(King of kings). The title adopted by individual kings were such as Jahangir (world Seizer), Shah Jahan (king of world) and Aurangzeb Alamgir (ruler of the world).

- These titles indicate the claims of the Mughal Emperors to uncontested territorial and political control.
- The contemporary historians in their accounts describe the political relations and conflicts of the Mughal rulers with their neighbouring political powers.

Beyond The Frontiers

- The fortress town of Qandahar was always a bone of contention between the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals. Initially Qandahar had been in the possession of Humayun. It was reconquered by Akbar in 1595.
- While the Safavid rulers staked claims on Qandahar but they did not break their diplomatic relations with the Mughals.
- Jahangir sent a diplomatic mission to the court of Shah Abbas, the ruler of Iran, to plead the case for retaining Qandahar but the mission returned disappointed. In 1622, the Safavid ruler of Iran recovered Qandahar.

The Ottomans: Pilgrimage and Trade

- The Mughal relations with Ottomans were marked by the concern to ensure free movements for merchants and pilgrims in the territories under Ottoman (Turkish) control. It was especially true of Hijaz which was situated in the ottoman Arabia where Mecca and Medina were located.
- The Mughal rulers combined religion and commerce by exporting valuable articles to Aden and Mokha, both Red sea ports and distributed proceeds of the sales in charity to the keepers of shrines and religious me there.

Jesuits at the Mughal court

- With the discovery of a new sea route to India at the end of the 15th century, Portuguese merchants were able to establish trading stations in Indian coastal cities.
- The king of Portugal was interested in trade with India as well as in spreading Christianity with the help of missionaries of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits).
- During the 16th century the missionaries came to India. Mughal Emperor Akbar was interested in knowing about Christianity and dispatched an embassy to Goa to invite Jesuit priests. The mission of Jesuit under the leadership of Monserrate visited the Mughal court in 1580 at Fatehpur Sikri.
- The Jesuits discussed with Akbar about the virtues of Christianity and with the ulama. Two more missions visited in the Mughal court at Lahore in 1591 and 1595.
- The Jesuits wrote their accounts based on their personal observation and gave detailed information about the character and mind of the emperor. They were given very close seat very near to the emperor at public assemblies. They went along with the emperor at the time of campaigns and accompanied him during his leisure time.

Questioning Formal Religion

- Akbar participated in the debates held in the Ibadat khana at Fatehpur Sikri in order to have a clear understanding of religions. Debates were between learned Muslims, Hindus, Jainas, Parsis, and Christians. Akbar's religious views matured by questioning the scholars of different religions and sects and gathered knowledge about their doctrines.
- In course of time, he moved away from the orthodox Islamic ways of understanding religions and followed a self-conceived eclectic form of worship focusing on light and the sun.