

CC-7: HISTORY OF INDIA (c.1206-1526)

II. SULTANATE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

(C). EMERGENCE OF PROVINCIAL DYNASTIES: BAHAMANIS, VIJAYANAGAR, GUJRAT, MALWA, JAUNPUR AND BENGAL.

PART- III

BENGAL

Being a distant province, Bengal had always been a problematic province for the Delhi Sultanate. Though Bengal was annexed to the Delhi Sultanate, a number of times it gained independence. Bengal was the eastern most province of the Delhi Sultanate. Long distance, uncomfortable climate, poor means of transport and communication made it difficult for the Sultans of Delhi to control the province of Bengal.

Bakhtiyar Khilji, one of the military commanders of the Muhammad of Ghur was the first Muslim invader who annexed Bengal and Bihar by overthrowing the Sena dynasty of Bengal. After his death his successors declared independence. Later Balban, the Sultan of Delhi brought Bengal under the control of Delhi Sultanate and appointed his son Bughra Khan as the Governor of Bengal. But soon after the death of Balban his son declared Bengal as an independence province.

In order to solve the problems of the province of Bengal Ghyasuddin Tughlaq divided the Bengal province into three administrative units-Lakhnauti, Satgaon, Sonargaon. The problems of the Bengal province continued after finally Bengal emerged as an independent regional state in the 14th century.

The history of Bengal entered a new phase when Haji-Shamsh-ud-din Ilyas khan founded a new dynasty, the Ilyas Shahi dynasty which ruled for around 125 years up to 1538 though in phases. Haji-Shamsh-ud-din Ilyas khan unified the independent kingdom of Bengal. Besides he made incursions into Nepal and Orissa. Even Firoz Shah Tughlaq had no alternative but to make peace treaty with him which decided river Kosi as the boundary between the two kingdoms. His reign was marked the development of an impressive coinage system and large-scale construction of monuments. Pandua and Guar, the capitals of Bengal were adorned by magnificent buildings. Under Haji-Shamsh-ud-din Ilyas khan who ruled from 1342 to 1357 CE, Bengal emerged as the leading diplomatic, economic and military power in the subcontinent. He was a popular ruler and organised an inclusive and pluralistic administration. He died in 1357 CE and was succeeded on the throne by his son Sikandar Shah (1358-1389 CE) who also successfully defied Firoz Shah Tughlaq's attempt to subdue him in 1359 CE. After this Bengal was left alone for nearly two hundred years and was not invaded again till 1538 CE.

Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah (1389-1409 CE), the next Sultan of Bengal was an able and benevolent ruler. He was one of the important rulers of the Ilyas Shah dynasty who was known for his love for justice. He sent an ambassador to China and carried on a flourishing trade with the Far East through the port of Chittagong.

There was a brief spell of Hindu rule under Raja Ganesh who was a Brahmin Zamindar of Dinajpur (North Bengal), succeeded by his son Jadu Sen (Who was converted to Islam and given the name Jalalluddin), who in turn was succeeded by his son Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah. The dynasty of Raja Ganesh was in power from 1414 to 1435 CE. Later the old Ilyas Shahi dynasty was restored by Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah and his successors (1435-1487 CE). However, for a short period of seven years the Habshis came to rule over Bengal (1487-1494

CE), who were then overthrown by Alauddin Hussain Shah. He later proved to be one of the most remarkable rulers of Bengal. He was the founder of the Hussain Shahi dynasty of Bengal

Alauddin Hussain Shah (1494-1519 CE) is considered as the greatest of all the Sultans of Bengal as under him not only did Bengal frontiers expanded but he also brought a cultural renaissance in Bengal and the Bengali language enriched a lot. He conquered Kamarupa, Kamata, Jajnagar and Orissa. He was very efficient, liberal and very tolerant towards other religion. He paid great respect to the Vaishnava Saint Sri Chaitanya. He came into conflict with Sikandar Lodhi and had to make peace with him. On his death in 1518 CE his son Nasib Khan ascended the throne and took the title of Nasir-ud-din Nasrat Shah.

Nasir-ud-din Nasrat Shah (1518-1533 CE) continued his father's expansionist policies, adding more territories to his Sultanate during the early years of his reign. He was an able and powerful ruler. He was married to Ibrahim Lodi's daughter and gave refuge to Afghan Lords. During the invasion of Babur the Mughal emperor, he remained neutral and later made a treaty with Babur and saved Bengal from Mughal invasion. He was succeeded by his son Alauddin Firuz Shah, under whose reign Mughal army entered Assam and reached Kaliabor, but he was assassinated by his uncle Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah.

The reign of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah (1533-1538 CE) was marked by the struggle between Humayun and Sher Shah Suri and the ultimate fall of the Hussain Shahi dynasty. He was the last Sultan of the Hussain Shahi dynasty and was a weak, pleasure-loving and easy going ruler. Sher Shah Suri captured Gaur in 1538 CE and initiated a period of Afghan rule in Bengal under the Sur empire. Later in 1586 CE Akbar, the Mughal Emperor conquered Bengal and made it into a Subah (province) of the Mughal empire.

ADD THIS PART WITH



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PART- I

VIJAYANAGAR

The concept of Kingship among the rulers of Vijayanagar was very high. The king was the supreme authority in civil, military and judicial matters. There was a well-organised administration under the Vijayanagar kingdom. The king (Rayas) was the highest court of appeal. Succession to the throne was mostly on the principle of hereditary. The king was assisted by a council of ministers in his day to day administration. The kingdom was divided into rajyas or mandalam (provinces), below which there was nadu (district) followed by sthala (sub-district) which was followed by grama or village.

The empire of Vijayanagar was very rich. According to the accounts of the foreign travellers, the Vijayanagar kingdom was one of the wealthiest kingdom in the world at the time. Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people. The ruler made arrangements for irrigation facilities. New tanks were built and dams were constructed across the river like Tungabhadra. There were numerous industries and they were organised into guilds. There were a number of sea ports on the Malabar coast, the chief being Cannanore. Commercial contacts with Arabia, Persia, South Africa and Portugal on the west and with Burma, the Malay Peninsula and China on the east flourished. The chief export items were cotton, silk, spices, rice etc. The chief import items were horses, pearls, copper, etc. The art of ship building had developed.

Foreign travellers left vivid accounts on the splendour of buildings and luxurious social life in the city of Vijayanagar. The temple building activity further gained momentum during this period. The chief characteristic of the Vijayanagar architecture were the construction of tall Raya Gopurams or gateways and the

Kalyanamandapam with carved pillars in the temple premises. The most important temples of the Vijayanagar style were found in the Hampi ruins or the city of Vijayanagar. The Vittalaswamy and the Hazara Ramaswamy temples were the best examples of this style.

NOTES AND REFERANCE

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SUGGESTED READING

Chandra, S, History of Medieval India (800-1700)