UNIT 26 REGIONAL POWERS IN SOUTH INDIA AND DECCAN

Structure

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26.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the polity of South India from the 13th century to mid-14th century. After reading this unit you would learn about:
- the political set-up in South India,
- the conflicts among the Southern kingdoms,
- the relations of the Southern kingdoms with the Delhi Sultanate,
- their administration and economy, and
- the emergence of new independent kingdoms in the South.

26.1 INTRODUCTION

In Block 3, we have already discussed the polity, society and economy of the Indian subcontinent till the beginning of thirteenth century. Now we would discuss the history of the region in the subsequent period. For our purpose, South India includes the region to the south of the Vindhyas which includes the Deccan and peninsular south. In Units 11 and 12, we have already discussed the physical geography of the region in general.

The history of South India from the 13th to the 15th centuries presents two distinct phases:

i) The beginning of the 13th century is marked by the disintegration of the Chola and the Chalukya empires. On their ruins emerged four independent kingdoms in this region. There were the Pandyas and the Hoysalas in the south, the Kakatiyas and the Yadavas in the north of this region. These kingdoms lasted for more than a century.

ii) In the second phase, beginning from the 2nd quarter of the 14th century, there emerged two powerful states; the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar. These two controlled almost the whole of South India for about two hundred years.

Our discussions for the first phase will centre on the history of the four kingdoms; their relationship with each other; their polity, society and economy. In the 2nd phase, we will discuss their relations with the Delhi Sultanate.
26.2 THE FOUR KINGDOMS

The decline of the Chola and the Chalukya empires gave rise to a number of smaller kingdoms and principalities in the South. The four important ones were:

i) the Yadavas
ii) the Kakatiyas
iii) the Pandyas
iv) the Hoysalas

26.2.1 The Yadavas and the Kakatiyas

During the 14th century, the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas succeeded in establishing their hegemony over an area almost equal to the modern Andhra Pradesh and the Deccan.

The Yadavas

The history of the Yadava dynasty may be traced to the 9th century. For around 300 years, they ruled as the feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas. With the decline of the latter, they emerged as independent rulers with a big territory under their control.

Bhillama V, the feudatory of the Chalukya ruler, Somesvara IV, acquired independent status in A.D. 1187 and laid the foundation of the Yadava rule. During Simhana’s reign (1210-46), the Yadava boundaries extended to southern Gujarat; Western Madhya Pradesh and Berar; parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, the Western half of Hyderabad State and the northern districts of Mysore. Krishna (1246-60 A.D.) and Ram Chandra (1271-1311 A.D.) were other important rulers of the Yadava dynasty. With the latter’s death came the end of the Yadava power itself (1311-12 A.D.).

The Kakatiyas

The Kakatiyas were the feudatories of the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Kakati Rudradeva (Prataprudra I), the founder of the Kakatiya state, succeeded in overpowering the Chalukya ruler, Tailapa III, during the second half of the 12th century (c. 1162 A.D.). He also succeeded in capturing Kurnool district from the Velananti chiefs sometime around 1185. Ganapatila (1199-1262), Rudrambe (1262-96) and Prataprudra II (1295-1326) were other important rulers of the dynasty. Their rule extended over most of the Andhra region up to Godavari, Kanchi, Kurnool and Cudappah districts. Ulugh Khan (later Muhammad Tughluq) overran the whole of Telingana in 1322 and thus sealed the fate of the Kakatiya rule.

26.2.2 The Pandyas and the Hoysalas

These two kingdoms controlled the region beyond the Deccan and almost the whole of Southern peninsula.

The Hoysalas

The Hoysala rulers Narasimha II, (1234-63), Narasimha III (1263-91) and Ballala III (1291-1342), had to defend themselves against the aggressive designs of Pandya and Yadava rulers.

The Pandyas

The Pandya kingdom included parts of modern Tamil Nadu and almost the whole of the present Kerala. The kingdom enjoyed the independent status around the first quarter of the 13th century and came to an end by the first quarter of the 14th century. The first independent king was Maravaraman Sundara Pandya (1216-1238). Other important rulers of the dynasty were Maravaraman Sundara Pandya II (1238-51), Jatavaraman Sundara Pandya I (1251-68), Maravaraman Kulsekha Pandya (1268-1310) and Jatavaram Sundara Pandya II and Jatavaram Vir Pandya II.
26.2.3 Conflicts between the Four Kingdoms

During this period, all the four kingdoms were at war with one or the other. We will not go into the details of these conflicts. Here we would mention in brief the nature of these struggles.

- The main conflict was between the Kakatiyas, Hoysalas and the Pandyas for supremacy over the Chola territories.
- The Yadavas were constantly at war with the Kakatiyas. In these struggles none could completely overwhelm the other. Similar was the case with the Yadavas and the Hoysalas, and also with the Kakatiyas and the Pandyas.
- Apart from the conflicts between these kingdoms, there were other wars also. The most prominent expeditions across the south were undertaken by the Yadavas and the Pandyas. The founder of the Yadava dynasty, Bhilama V, led expeditions to Malwa and Gujarat. The Yadava king Simhana and Ram Chandra also waged wars against Malwa (A.D. 1215), and Gujarat without any decisive victories.
- The Pandyas sent expeditions to Ceylon (1283-1302). King Parakramabaha III (A.D. 1302-1310) of Ceylon submitted to the Pandyas and the relations between the two remained peaceful thereafter.

26.3 SOUTHERN KINGDOMS AND DELHI SULTANATE

After consolidating their hold over North India by the end of the thirteenth century, the Delhi Sultans turned their attention towards the South from the first half of the 14th century.

You have already read in detail in Unit 15 about the Sultanate's expansion under the Khaljis and the Tughluqs in the Deccan and the deep south. Here our emphasis will be on the main features of the expansionist policy of the Delhi Sultans and its impact on the Deccan polity. We will discuss the relations of southern kingdoms with the Sultanate in two phases:

i) During Alauddin Khalji's reign, and
ii) After Alauddin's death to the end of Muhammad Tughluq's reign.

26.3.1 First Phase: Alauddin Khalji's Invasion of South

During the reign of Jalaluddin Khalji (1290-96), his nephew Alauddin undertook the first Muslim expedition to Deogir (Devagiri) the capital of the Yadava kingdom. The Yadava ruler was defeated and large booty was collected by Alauddin. The Yadava king, Ram Chandra, promised to pay an annual tribute also. Thereafter, for almost a decade, no invasion took place. After the accession of Alauddin Khalji, a definite policy to subjugate South was planned. From 1306 to 1312, in a series of campaigns, all the four kingdoms of south were subjugated.

i) Devagiri

Alauddin deputed his trusted commander Malik Kafur to invade South in 1306-07 since the Yadava king had ceased to pay tribute. Malik Kafur defeated Raja Ram Chandra. After collecting a large booty, he returned to Delhi with the Raja as captive. The Raja was later reinstated as king on the promise of paying regular tribute to the Sultan.

ii) Warangal

In 1309, Malik Kafur, invaded the Kakatiya kingdom. The purpose of the campaign was just to subjugate the king as is clear from Alauddin's instructions to Kafur as described by Barani:

"You are going to a far off land; do not remain there long. You must put in all your efforts to capture Warangal and overthrow Rai Rudradeva. If the Rai gives up his treasures, elephants and horses, and promises a tribute for the future, accept this arrangement."

The ruler sent his treasures to the Delhi and promised a regular tribute.
iii) Dwarsamudra
The next target of attack was Dwarsamudra, the Hoysala kingdom (1310-11). The ruler Ballala Deva submitted without much resistance and arrangement was made on the lines of the two other southern kingdoms.

iv) Madura
A conflict between two brothers—Vir Pandya and Sundar Pandya—who were claimants to the Pandya kingdom provided an opportunity to Malik Kafur to invade it. Vir Pandya after capturing the throne had expelled Sunder Pandya. The latter sought the help of Alauddin Khalji. After devastating the Hoysala kingdom, Malik Kafur marched to Madura and inflicted a defeat on Vir Pandya and collected heavy booty.

In 1312, Malik Kafur attacked the Yadava kingdom. Once again, since Ram Deva's death, his son Sankar Deva ceased to pay tribute. Sankar Deva was defeated and almost the whole of the territory between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra was captured by Kafur. When Alauddin called Kafur back to Delhi, he handed over the charge to Ainul Mulk.

Let us look at the characteristic features of Alauddin's Deccan policy:

- Almost the whole of south was conquered without much resistance.
- Alauddin was not in favour of annexing the Southern kingdoms because it was difficult to administer it from distant Delhi. After their defeat, the Southern kingdoms were asked to accept the suzerainty of the Delhi Sultan and to pay regular tribute. The ruling dynasties were not displaced.
- Financially, the Delhi Sultanate gained immensely from the southern campaigns.

26.3.2 Second Phase
After the death of Alauddin Khalji, the southern kingdoms refused to accept the subordinate position and stopped paying tribute. This gave rise to fresh attacks from Delhi Sultanate and a definite shift in policy towards the South emerged.

Alauddin during his last years had given the charge of the Deccan kingdoms to Malik Kafur. Alauddin's successor Mubarak Shah Khalji (1316-20) took an expedition to Devagiri and annexed major portions. The Sultan appointed his officers there and gave small territories (iqta) to them. These officers were called sadah amirs or 'commanders of 100'. These amirs were asked to collect land revenue and maintain law and order in their territories. Besides, he also ordered them to invade Warangal. After the defeat of the Raja Prataprudra Deva, some portions of his kingdom were annexed.

After the death of Mubarak Khalji, the tribute from Warangal was again stopped. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq sent a large army under the command of his son Ulugh Khan (Muhammad Tughluq) to conquer the region of Telingana. After some setbacks, Ulugh Khan defeated the king of Warangal, Prataprudra Deva. Now the whole of Telingana was annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. Ulugh Khan divided the region into several administrative units and placed them under Sadah amirs who were under the direct control of the Sultanate. Ma'bar was also conquered in 1323, and Sharif Jalaluddin Ahsan was appointed its governor with Madura as the headquarters. When Muhammad Tughluq became Sultan, he realised that the southern portions of his kingdom were not being managed efficiently. He, therefore, decided to develop Deogiri as second administrative centre of the Sultanate on the lines of Delhi (1327-28). Deogiri was named Daulatabad and large number of nobles, merchants, learned men and other sections of the population were encouraged to settle there.

The Deccan policy of Muhammad Tughluq was distinct from Alauddin Khalji. He annexed large portions of the Deccan and set-up the Sultanate land revenue and administrative system.
Check Your Progress 1

1) Name the kingdoms and their regions that emerged on the debris of the Chola and the Chalukya empires.

2) Mark right (√) or wrong (×) against the following:
   i) The Yadavas were the feudatories of the Pandyas.
   ii) Prataparudra I was the founder of the Kakatiya kingdom.
   iii) The Pandyas kingdom comprised modern Andhra Pradesh.

3) What was the major shift brought about by the Tughluqs in Alauddin Khilji's Deccan policy? Discuss in five lines.

26.4 ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMY

We have already discussed the administrative set-up and the economic structure of the region till the 13th century in Units 11 and 12 of Block 3. Most of the administrative institutions and economic activities of the earlier period continued. Major changes developed after the establishment of the Bahmani and the Vijayanagar empire. We will study about these in Units 27 and 28. Here, we will very briefly discuss the minor changes introduced during the period of the four kingdoms.

26.4.1 Administration

Monarchy was the usual political institution of these kingdoms. Along with this, the practice of feudatories, too, was a common feature. In the Deccan region (the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas), the provincial heads were selected from the successful military chiefs called nayakas. They generally controlled the feudal chiefs of lower status, collected land revenue and maintained law and order. According to one source, the king assigned only small villages to the samantas or the nayakas. The big ones were kept aside to maintain the army. The Kakatiyas were always apprehensive about the growing powers of the nayakas. They, therefore, did not allow the nayakas to remain at one place for long and strike local roots. It seems that the nayankara system, which became very prominent under Vijayanagar, had come into existence during this time.

There were a number of ministers to look after the various departments of the kingdom. The smallest unit of administration was village which was run by the village panchayat under a headman. Groups of villages were also organised into administrative divisions (called sthala under the Kakatiyas, and groups of sthala were called nadu). All these administrative units and administrative heads were called by different names in different kingdoms. The brahmadeya system still continued and the temples also played some role in administration and economy.

26.4.2 Economy

The tax on agricultural produce continued to be the main source of state income. Efforts were made by the state to bring more land under cultivation. Tanks (called
samudrams in the Kakatiya kingdom) and dams were constructed for irrigation. There is no definite information available on the magnitude of land revenue demand. With the establishment of the Sultanate’s control over Daulatabad, a number of new practices were introduced in the land revenue system (for details see Unit 28). The state also claimed ownership of pastures, forests and mines and taxes were collected from them. Customs and taxes on merchandise were other sources of state income (called sunkams under the Kakatiyas). Under the Kakatiyas, taxes were imposed on possession of certain goods such as carriages (bandi), slaves (banisa) and horses. The Pandya kingdom was famous for its pearl-fisheries which is testified by Marco Polo. Pearl divers had to pay 10 per cent of the finds as royalty to the king. With the coming of the Arab merchants and later the Europeans, trading activity in many parts of south India was accelerated. The income from these trading activities contributed to the richness of the southern kingdoms in a big way. The merchant guilds played an important role: they helped the state in deciding the policies on taxation and related matters. The Chettis were the most important group of merchants in the whole of southern region.

26.5 RISE OF INDEPENDENT KINGDOMS

As referred earlier, during the second quarter of the 14th century three independent kingdoms were established in the South:

i) The Ma’bar
ii) The Bahmani
iii) The Vijayanagar

These kingdoms emerged after a long period of instability and conflicts. The contact of the Delhi Sultanate with the south played a significant role in their rise. In this section, we will discuss the process of the emergence of the kingdom of Ma’bar while the emergence of the Bahmani and the Vijayanagar kingdoms would be discussed in the subsequent Units 27 and 28.

3 Ma’bar

As you know, Ma’bar was conquered in 1323 and was placed under Sharif Jalaluddin Ahsan as Governor. For some years, Jalaluddin remained loyal to the Delhi Sultans. Taking advantage of the distance and poor communication network, he declared himself independent by 1333-34 and assumed the title of Jalaluddin Ahsan Shah. Because of the Tughluq Sultans’ problems with other parts of kingdom no serious effort was made by the Tughluq Sultans to recapture it. The independent kingdom survived for more than four decades and was finally conquered by Vijayanagar in 1378.

Check Your Progress 2,

1) Discuss the role of the nayakas in the southern kingdoms.

2) What were the main characteristic features of the economy of the southern kingdoms?
In this unit, we have discussed the political set-up that emerged in South India and the Deccan after the fall of the Chola and the Chalukya empires. The region witnessed the emergence of four independent kingdoms, viz. the Yadavas, the Kakatiyas, the Pandyas and the Hoysalas. After enjoying independent status for about hundred years, these kingdoms were subjugated by the Delhi Sultanate. The main architect of Sultanate's victory was Alauddin Khalji’s commander Malik Kafur. But, during this period, these kingdoms continued to enjoy autonomy.

During Muhammad Tughluq’s reign, almost the whole Deccan and some portions of the peninsular south were annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. The important town of Devagiri was made the second capital city. This situation did not last long. During Muhammad Tughluq’s rule, new political forces surfaced giving rise to three new independent kingdoms, viz. the Mabbar, the Bahmani and the Vijaynagar. The last two lasting long and became the main arena of political activity in this part of the subcontinent.

**26.7 KEY WORDS**

Brahmadeya: Religious grants to the Brahmins (see also Block I)

Chetti: A merchant community in South India.

**26.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

Check Your Progress 1
1) See Sub-sec. 26.2.1, 26.2.2
2) (i) × (ii) √ (iii) ×
3) See Sub-sec. 26.3.1, 26.3.2

Check Your Progress 2
1) See Sub-sec. 26.4.1.
2) See Sub-sec. 26.4.2