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The present Block situates the medieval society in the urban settings. In this Block we will discuss the nature of society and the changes it underwent in the light of contemporary political and economic changes. Under Turkish and later on during the rule of the Mughals a highly centralised bureaucratic structure emerged. It facilitated the pace of trade and commerce, urbanisation, and monetization. This was the period when Islam makes inroads in India in a big way coupled with the emergence of sufi and bhakti traditions.

The Block begins with a discussion on clan and confederacies in Western India (Unit 19). Here an attempt is made to highlight the emergence of clans and confederacies in Western India. While some historians view it as a political process others look at the growth in the patron-client relationship. The distribution of land among ruling lineages apparently represented a process which gradually developed and was associated with the spread of a clan. This facilitated the horizontal extension of political control among the ruling lineages. These clans/lineages normally starting from a local agrarian base, in the course of time, emerged into big regional powers by integrating other local lineages.

Units 20 & 21 focus on the changing social structure during the medieval period. You will find as a result of fusion of Indo-Islamic culture and new technologies various new social groups emerged. However, the focus is largely on the discussion on urban elites for want of source material. These urban elites were multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-regional. There emerged dominant classes of iqtadars, mansabdars, nayaks, watandars and palaiyakkarars. They enjoyed the highest economic and social benefits and indulged in conspicuous consumptions. The emergence of slavery, slavemarket and slave labour was an important feature of the medieval society.

This period is also important for the growth of bhakti and sufi movements in India (Unit 22). Bhakti movement primarily became instrumental in bringing radical changes in the contemporary social structure. They questioned the fundamental basis of the caste system and the dominance of brahmanical ideology. The voices of dissent achieved significant breakthrough and popular support. The role of bhakti and sufi movements in releasing syncretic forces can not be ignored. It led to cultural synthesis.

Unit 23 traces the transition of Indian society on the eve of Colonialism. The unit largely addresses the issue whether during the eighteenth century social structures started collapsing with the disintegration of the political power of the Mughals or they remained intact? Whether the pyramidal structure developed under the vast umbrella of Mughal authority started crumbling away and society reached on the brink of ‘chaos and anarchy’? Or the forces released as a result of decline consolidated themselves further under the aegis of regional powers. Other issues under discussion would be the emergence of strong intermediate classes, gentrification of the service class and the use of the power of the merchants and moneylenders. Here we will also analyse from the perspective that should it be viewed as sign of growth or decline.
Medieval Society-2
UNIT 19 CLANS AND CONFEDERACIES IN WESTERN INDIA

Structure
19.0 Introduction
19.1 Clan Formation As a Political Process
19.2 Clan Formation: Patron-Client Framework
19.3 Developmental Cycle Framework of Richard Fox
19.4 Summary
19.5 Exercises

19.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will examine the early medieval and the medieval period of growth of Rajput clans and confederacies in Rajasthan. This will be done mainly through two accounts. One of B.D. Chattopadhyay’s early medieval story of emergence of the Rajputs and second of the medieval period by Norman Ziegler. The two accounts based on different sets of evidences may be compared to gain an insight into the process of clan formation of Rajputs. It would be evident that even the perspectives of the two scholars differ on this issue. For B. D. Chattopadhyaya the use of the concept political in delineating the emergence of the Rajputs is critical. The rise and achievement of Rajputs into the fold of warriors of honour is seen essentially as a political process. For Ziegler on the other hand the transition from kin based clan structures to service and exchange networks is the key to understanding the Rajputs in the Mughal times. He uses the patron-client framework to designate this process. Now these two frameworks have often been at clash in the writing of Indian history. However, recently it has been argued that at local level patron-client framework is useful in understanding social phenomenon. Ziegler through the use of local Marvari chronicles and khyat records does just that. Chattopadhyay on the other hand uses genealogical lists, contemporary accounts, inscriptions and hero-stones to construct his picture.

19.1 CLAN FORMATION AS A POLITICAL PROCESS

Study of the origins of Rajput dynasties in western India in the early medieval period reveals that it must have been a political process. Here there is an agreement between different scholars on the issue. However the nature of the origin of the Rajputs is very much controversial. Their gotrochara makes them kshatriyas of the lunar family (Somavanshi) while on the basis of old kavyas some maintain that they were of solar race. The myths of origin regard them as kshatriyas created in kaliyuga to wipe out the mlecchas (foreigners). Rajasthani bards and chroniclers regard them as fire-born (agnikula).

According to the agnikula version of origins which comes to us from a court poet, the founder of the house of Paramaras came from the firepit of sage Vashistha on Mount Abu. The man who came out of fire performed the first act of wresting the wish-granting cow of sage Vashishta from sage Vishwamitra and restored it to former. It was sage Vashishtha who gave him the name of paramara - slayer of the enemy. The myth then goes on to posit that from him sprang a race which obtained the esteem of good kings. The Rajasthani poets and story tellers ascribed the fire origin not only to the Paramaras but also to the Pratiharas, the Chalukyas of Gujarat and the Chahamanas.
As some scholars point out that the problem of origin “when viewed in its totality instead of viewing it from the angle of any particular dynasty would help us understand its political significance”. The practise of new social groups claiming kshatriya status became, as they argue, widespread in the early medieval period. Kshatriya status was one of the symbols that the emergent social groups sought for the legitimisation of their newly acquired power. The early medieval and medieval Rajput clans representing a mixed caste and constituting a fairly large section of petty chiefs holding estates, achieved political eminence gradually. There was “corresponding relationship between the achievement of political eminence by Pratiharas, Guhilas, Chahamanas and other clans and their movement towards a respectable social status for example acquiring a kshatriya “lineage”. It has been pointed out that “in this context it is important to note that these dynasties claimed descent from ancient kshatriyas long after their accession to power”. It has been pointed out that the Gurjara Pratiharas one of the earliest Rajput dynasties claim origins from Lakshmana, the brother of epic hero Rama, only in a 9th century inscription of king Bhoja. The entry to the Rajput fold was then possible through the acquisition of political power and this was legitimised by claiming linkages with the kshatriya lines of the mythical past.

The distribution of political power, as some scholars point out, did not follow a uniform pattern. The process of emergence of the political power in western India shows that the distribution of political authority could be organised by a network of lineages (kula, vamsha) within the framework of monarchial form of polity. B.D. Chattopadhyaya also asserts that the emergence of Rajputs may be seen in the context of existing hierarchies of political structure. The evidence is from dynastic accounts of Chahmanas of Rajasthan and Parmaras of southern Rajasthan, Gujarat and Malwa.

The formation and consolidation of lineage power as we stated did not develop in a uniform way. One of the indicators of the lineage power formation was the colonization of new areas as can be seen from expansion of the number of settlements. Colonization came about from annexation of the new territories by means of organised military strength. The Chauhan kingdom of Nadol known as Saptshata is said to have been made into Saptashasrika by a Chauhan chief who killed chiefs at the boundaries of his kingdom and annexed their territories. Territorial expansion of the western Indian powers was accomplished on some areas, at the expense of tribal settlements. Kakukka of Mandor Pratiharas is credited with resettling a place inhabited by Abhiras. Suppression of tribal population like Shabaras, Bhilas and Pullindas in western and central India also took place. Similarly, the Guhila kingdoms in south Rajasthan, according to bardic tradition, succeeded the earlier tribal chiefdoms of Bhils. The movement of Chauhans from Ahicchatrapura to Jangaldesa (Shakambhari) led to colonization of that ‘inhospitable area’. A tenth century record cites that Lakshmana, the son of Vakpato-I of Shakambhari Chahamana lineage started with a few followers and fought against the Medas who had been attacking the people around Naddula with their raids. This pleased the brahmana masters of the area and they appointed him the guard of the towns. Gradually, Lakshamana gathered a small band of troopers and challenged the Medas in their own territory. The Medas agreed to keep away from the villages paying tribute to Lakshamana. He became a master of 2000 horses and extended his dominions and went on to build a grand palace at Nadol. This leads B.D. Chattopadhyaya to suggest that process of origin of Rajputs may be seen in terms of transition from tribalism.

The link to brahmanas is further made by B.D. Chattopadhyaya who asserts that “when we look at the different stages in which the genealogies were being formulated, it further appears that the majority of the new emerging royal lines, brahmaksatra (Brahman-Kshatriya) was a transitional status, which once acquired was not however entirely given up, and explanations continued to be given for the supposedly authentic transition from Brahman to kshatriya status. If it be accepted, on the strength of their
relatively later records, that both Guhilas and Chahmanas were originally of Brahman descent although no claims to such descent have been made in their early records—then the status was being projected in order to legitimize their new Kshatriya role. Chattopadhyaya argues further that, ‘it may also well be that the brahmaksatra was a relatively open status, as can be gathered from its wide currency in India in this period, which was seized upon by the new royal families before they could formulate a claim to pure Kshatriya origin’.

B.D. Chattopadhyaya also suggests that detailed genealogies of ruling clans which came to be formulated only in the period of change from feudatory to independent status ‘can hardly be extrapolated for an assessment of actual origins. Further, the different stages in the formulation of genealogical claims thus also reveal a political process, that of upward mobility from an initial feudatory position. Here examples of the Gujarat Gurjaras who in their claims and titles suggest allegiance to the Valabhi king or Guhilas of Kishkindha and those of Dhavagarva are cited as starting from an original feudatory position. The transition from feudatory to independent status was ‘clearly through the growth of military strength.’

Thus in contrast to the origin myths which suggest a sudden and a brilliant debut of the Rajputs on the North Indian political scene, it is important to examine them in the existing hierarchies of the existing political structure. Points out Chattopadhyaya that, ‘an understanding of this initial political stage is important on more than one count. It provides us the vantage point from which to examine further processes namely, how from their initial feudatory position the Rajput clans, in their bid for political ascendancy moved towards creating economic and social bases for their interlocking interests’.

What were the features of this economic basis of Rajput clan network? First, was the distribution of land among royal kinsmen. This was mainly associated with the spread of the clan of Chahamanas. Terms such as Vamsapotakabhoga (estate to be enjoyed by the descendants of the lineage) occurring in the Rajogarh inscription of Gurjara – Pratihara Mathana of Alwar have been understood in the sense of clan patrimony. Clan exclusiveness was also denoted in the Harsh inscription of AD 973 from the Jaipur area. Here we get reference of svabhogas (personal estates) of king Simharaja, his two brothers Vatsraja and Vigraharaja, and his two sons Chandaraja and Govindraja. The inscription also mentions another assignee, probably of Guhila clan, holding a bhoga (estate). A duhsadhya (official) had his own estate too within the kingdom, but his rights were obviously limited in as much as his authority to grant land depended on the approval of the king. On the other hand the others did not need such a sanction and made grants on their own. This process went through further development till the 12th century when under the Nadol Chahamans the assignments, termed variously as grasa, grasabhumi, or bhukti came to be held by the king, the kamara (the crown prince), the rajapatras (the sons of the king), the queens and in one case the maternal uncle of the king who obviously was not a member of the same clan.

The second important feature of Rajput economic basis in this period is the construction of fortresses. These seem to have occurred in a large number of cases during this time and appears to be a marked characteristic of Rajput territorial expansion of this period only. Inscriptions suggest their location in different parts of Rajasthan. Some of these forts were in Kamyakiyakottta in Bharatpur area, Rajayapura at Rajor in Alwar, Mandavayapura-durga at Mandor near Jodhpur, Chitrakulamadurga at Chitor, etc. The fortresses were not only for defence but as Chattopadhyaya notes had, as the composition of population in some of them will show, wider functions. They represented the numerous foci of power of the ascendant ruling families and appear to have had close links with landholdings in the neighbouring areas. These forts then could have been the means to control the rural surroundings and are therefore an indication of the assumption of control and consolidation of the clan over these areas.

Clans and Confederacies in Western India
Perhaps an economic exchange between the forts and the rural areas also can be envisaged. This exchange would then be controlled by the forts.

The consolidation of clans at the level of social relations can be gauged from the marriage network among the clans. Here Chattopadhyaya is drawing upon inscriptions and genealogical lists. The recording of some few marriages in the genealogical lists leads one to assume ‘with certainty that they have been recorded because of their significant political implications for the family’. Chattopadhyaya in examining the marriage evidence chronologically detects a change in the marriage network patterns in which not only the supposed origin of family plays an unimportant part, but there is also a development towards an understandable pattern of inter clan relationship’. In an inscription of 837 AD of the Pratihara family from the Jodhpur area, the originator of the family is mentioned as having married a Bahaman and a Kshatriya wife. In a later inscription in 861 AD the Brahman wife is dropped from the account of ancestry. Similar genealogies suggest intermarriage between the Pratihara and Bhatti clans. Similarly, Chahamana inscriptions suggest a preference towards Rashtrakutas, Ratraudhas and Rathors for marriage network.

Chattopadhyaya suggests that inter-clan relationship through marriages could, at a certain point of time, be limited to two clans and ‘any consistency in the pattern may have been due to the nature of political relations between such clans or as in the case of Guhilas, it could be quite expansive’. Further ‘the network operated mostly among such clans as came to constitute the Rajput category’. The choice was essentially political, he suggests, because the evidence cited here is from that of the ruling elites of early medieval Rajasthan.

Chattopadhyaya further argues that ‘inter-clan relationship through marriage seems to have had wider social implications as well. It could provide social legitimacy to such groups as Hunas, who had acquired sufficient political power in western India by this period, leading finally to their inclusion in the Rajput clan lists’. Inter-clan marriage relations ‘may have (also) led to collaboration in wider areas of social and political activity’. Here the evidence of Guhila Allata is cited who was married to a Huna princess and had a Huna member in a goshti (assembly) in the kingdom of his son Naravahana. In another instance, Ana belonging to the family of the Hastikundi Rashtrakutas, was involved in activities of a religious institution in the kingdom of Paramara Dharavarsha who was married into the Hastikundi family. These examples show how essentially a political process of legitimization through which the Rajputs began, turned towards a social process which though had a political dimension, still indicates a different stage in the process of emergence of the Rajputs.

Proliferation of Clans

B. D. Chattopadhyaya further argues that gradually the term rajaputra along with maharajkumara (sons of king) came to denote descent groups and ‘not necessarily an exalted political status’. Asopa has cited a Chitor inscription of AD 1301 which mentions three generations of rajaputras. This according to Chattopadhyaya suggests ‘that by the close of 13th century the term rajaputra conveyed not merely a political status but an element of heredity as well’.

That there was proliferation of the Rajputs in the early medieval period is indicated by a variety of sources, points out Chattopadhyaya. He cites Hemachandra’s Trisastisalakapuru-sacarita which refers to rajaputrakah or numerous persons of rajaputra descent. A Mount Abu inscription of late 11th century tells us of all the rajaputras of the illustrious Rajaputra clan. The term rajaputra then came to cover a wide range, ‘from the actual son of a king’ to the lowest landholder’. Kumarpalcharita and Rajtarangini suggest that the number of clans recognised as Rajputs had become substantial in number. These texts suggest, according to Chattopadhyaya, not a definite number of clans but the idea of descent as marking out the rajaputras from the other.
The feudatory terminologies of Samanta and Maha-Samanta are used less and less from the 12th century onward. The most common terms used later on were rajaputra, rauta, rauta, rajakula or tavala, ranaka, etc. To these official titles are added the titles samanta or mahamandalesvara ‘indicating the ranks that the rajaputras and such others may have attained in the administrative arrangement’. The inscriptions also suggest that the term rajaputra or rauta were not confined to a few clans as is evident from expressions like rauta of the shri lineage. These indicate, says Chattopadhyaya, ‘a measure of the flexibility of the system in which new groups could be accommodated by virtue of their political initiative and power’.

This proliferation is accompanied by two distinct phenomena in this period as Chattopadhyaya points out. The first was undermining of the political status of the early kshatriya groups ‘who were taking to less potent occupations’. This is indicated by inscriptions which show that kshatriyas were taking to professions of artisans and merchants. The preferred term for the ruling stratum now was mostly Rajput and not ‘kshatriya’. The second phenomenon was the growing ‘inter-clan collaboration’ between different Rajput clans. The evidence of this comes from their participation in various military exploits. Here Chattopadhyaya examines evidences from the memorial stones of this period. These stones indicate a wide variety of social groups who came to participate in these activities. Here the memorial to violent deaths relate mostly to such groups as ‘came to be recognised as Rajputs’. The names of clans found in these stones include Pratihara, Chahamana, Guhila, Parmara, Solanki, Rathor, Chandel, Bodana, Mohila, Devara, Doda, Daiya, Bhich, Dharkata, etc. The stones also indicate titles such as rajaputra, rana, rauta, etc. to indicate the political and social status of those commemorated. Argues Chattopadhyaya ‘the way these memorial stones were fashioned and the contexts many of them represent in early medieval Rajasthan relate largely to the new kshatriya groups which together made up the political order of Rajasthan’.

19.2 CLAN FORMATION: PATRON-CLIENT FRAMEWORK

As Chattopadhyaya succinctly puts it, ‘in this expansion of mere ‘dynastic’ relations towards a wider arena of social relations that seeds of the future growth of the Rajput network in space and time are to be found.’ (Idea of Rajasthan Vol 1 p. 186.)

Norman Ziegler writing of the Mughal times found the a movement from kinship and descent relations to service and exchange networks amongst the Rajputs. What follows is a description of the expansion of Rajput social structure based mainly on Ziegler. We will tie this up with accounts of Rochard Fox later on.

Ziegler points out that by the medieval period there were two primary units of reference and identification for the Rajput. These were his brotherhood (bhaibandh) and his relations by marriage (saga). Broadly speaking the brotherhood was a patrilineal unit of descent represented by clan (vamsahalan), which included all those related by ties of male blood to a common ancestor (vadero). The clan was itself spread over different territories within Rajasthan and it was not the classical corporate group that enjoyed joint control over a specific territory. The corporate groups on the ground were the kham or the nak. These consisted of members from three to five or six generations and included all members related by close ties of male blood, their wives, sons and unmarried daughters.

The brotherhood was territorially linked to lands obtained through division of shares among brothers (bhai-vant). This territory was referred by the brotherhood as its birthplace or homeland (vattan/janm-bhoomi). The birthplace was both the centre of brotherhood’s origin and expansion, and the land from which it was felt to derive its sustenance and strength. Ziegler points out the ‘two entities brotherhood and land
were felt to be inseparably linked and mutually supportive.’ B.D. Chattopadhyaya points to, in the earlier period, a new land unit which appears to have consisted of six villages and multiples thereof. The use of this land unit was by no means limited to Rajasthan even so incidence of its use in this period appears to have been higher in western India than elsewhere. Then ‘the earliest references to units of 84 villages seem to be available in Saurashtra which was held by Gurjara-Pratiharas towards the close of 8th century and its spread to Rajasthan was perhaps intended to facilitate the distribution of land and political control among the ruling elites. By the later part of the 14th century the ‘chaurasia holders of 84 villages had become a well known class of chiefs’. Chattopadhyaya further points out ‘the chaurasia arrangement was not always strictly adhered to in the territorial system of Rajputs but it did provide a “theoretical frame” to that system in which the hierarchy of units and linkages between clan members and units could be worked out fairly well’.

Ziegler points out that the other primary unit of reference and identification for the Rajput was his *saga*, those to whom he gave daughters and/or from whom he received wives in marriage. This relationship was of particular importance for at the same time, ‘the act of marriage was seen to unite a woman with her husband’s brotherhood, it was also seen to create an alliance.’ However the brotherhood of father of the woman continued to refer to her as ‘sister’ and in the classical Levi Strauss conception of kinship there is evidence of strong affection between ‘a mother’s brother (*mama*) and her son.

Ziegler further points out ‘the importance of *bhaiibandh* and *saga* as primary or primodial units of reference and identification persisted during the Mughal period because of their centrality in defining who the Rajput was. They were also units of natural affinity which called forth immediate settlements of reciprocity, support and assistance, and in this sense organised the basic loyalties of most Rajputs. They did not necessarily command all his allegiances, however, for the complex of loyalties within territories which particular brotherhoods dominated display complexities generated by structural features of these groups themselves’.

From the account of Ziegler the institution of kinship remained dominant in this period. This is evident according to him in the Rathor brotherhood of western Marwar. Within their unilineal descent and the principal of equality among brothers with right of access to land prevailed. Internal differences among brothers concerning positions of rank and authority also remained minimal. However, these Rathor brotherhoods were relatively independent of Mughal or Rajput rulers. Elsewhere as Ziegler points out, ‘brotherhoods were more highly stratified and their membership internally differentiated on the basis of wealth and access to positions of power and authority’. Ziegler points out the organisation of these brotherhoods was ‘also greatly influenced by two additional institutions, namely rulership and clientship. These institutions were closely interrelated and in contrast to the relatively undifferentiated corporate brotherhood were not defined in terms of kinship and associated territory but in terms of hierarchical ties and common allegiance among residential groups and individuals to a superior – the local ruler (*thakur*). It was these ties and allegiances which both defined a local kingdom of Rajput ruler and determined the extent of his territory. They also formed the primary basis of solidarity within that kingdom’.

Ziegler, as we mentioned, uses the concept of patron-client to describe the relationship between different clans and individuals and clans. Now the concept of patron-client has been often used in Indian history. Studies such as that of David Hardiman show that the concept may capture a local reality very well but we need to use it with some caution. Meta generalisations like the ‘great Indian faction’ should not be used for example. We should then cautiously accept Ziegler’s contention that ‘outside the immediate family of the ruler, clientship was the prime determinant of both access to land and to positions of authority’.

Ziegler further points out the value of the concept in saying ‘clients as a body included not only Rajputs of the same clan and Brotherhood
as that of the ruler, but also other Rajputs from different clans and brotherhoods’. He points out that the, ‘texts generally refer to them as Cakar which carries the general meaning of ‘servant’ but in Marvari usage designates a ‘military-retainer’, one who held rights over villages on the condition of provision of arms to a superior or who was included as a member of his patron’s personal household’. Moreover ‘hierarchical ties of patronage and clientship extended throughout all levels of Rajput society.’

Clientship was an important institution in Rajasthan because it superceded kinship as a basis of organisation. In addition, it not only regulated access to land and to positions of authority but also made available to a local ruler, upon whom clients depended for favours and rewards, a coercive force which he could in turn employ to support to strengthen the local hierarchy itself’. Ziegler notes here that, ‘while the institution of internship and clientship existed in Rajasthan prior to the Mughal period, they developed greatly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at the expense of kinship as a basis of organisation’. The development of these institutions he attributes to the Mughal policy of indirect rule. This assumed the right to appoint successors to positions of rulership in Rajasthan and in turn ‘supported them with arms and resources in the form of jagirs of ancestral land (vatan-jagirs) inside Rajasthan and other lands outside’. It is with these resources that allowed local rulers to consolidate their own areas of authority and centralise their administration. Thus it is in this period (early 17th century) based on these developments that we see the ‘first true Rajput states in the sense that there was a defined and institutionalised locus of power from whom regulations emanated with appropriate sanction and enforcement’. It is also in this period that the Mughal rulers granted local rulers with more extensive authority over the primary source of honours and rewards in the local hierarchical system to access to land. It is thus Ziegler argues that, ‘as local rulers gained wider control over lands which representatives of their own class had traditionally dominated, they sought to transform relationships on these lands from those based on kinship and customary access by birthright, into relationship based on service and exchange.’ This met with resistance as is evident from local khyat records. This resistance ‘generally took the form of challenging the basis upon which a ruler claimed dominance over an area or high right to precedence at all and often ended in armed conflicts.’ This conflict then between descent based ties and emerging cakar (patron-client) ties then symbolises the change taking place in the Raiput confederacy and ‘evoked sentiments of the brotherhood and values of equality and rights to inheritance of and dominance over land by birth’. Ziegler argues, ‘these sentiments and values form an undercurrent during the Mughal period which resurfaced periodically, and it is important to note that differing interpretations of rights to particular lands play a role not only locally, but also in connection with Rajput adherence to the Mughal throne.’

Bureaucratisation

Another aspect of changing Rajput relationships to land in this period is the increasing bureaucratization of these relationships as administrative procedures became more refined. In Marvar a beginning was made with issuing of written title deeds (pato/pata) to villages. Ziegler notes, ‘already by the early Mughal period, the possession of such deeds had acquired a legitimacy which superceded prior claims to land on descent or based on verbal grant’.

The pato was a deed modelled on Mughal prototypes for granting of jagirs and was a ‘movable grant based on prebendal tenure’. It not only granted access to villages but also included a valuation (rekh) of these villages for the ‘determination of troopers and animals the thakur was to supply for military service.’ A tax on succession (nazrana) was also imposed on thakurs based upon a percentage of the total valuation (rekh) of their villages.

Ziegler points out, ‘by the time of Maharaja Jasvant singh (1638-78) deeds were issued not only to heads of families but also to junior members and individual Rajputs who were regularly transferred from one village to another like the Mughal mansabdar.'
From genealogical evidence, it also appears that while in the early years local rulers confined grants to particular local areas where individual brotherhoods were concentrated, later on they moved their Cakars about increasingly wider areas, effecting by this mechanism the break up of local lineage territories. It also appears by this time that cakars, clan brothers or not, all performed service as candidates for receipt of patas before they actually gained access to lands.

It is important to note as Ziegler tells us that spatial expansion of Rajputs also occurred in this period through ties of marriage. Individual Rajputs it seems also gained access to lands in the process of alliances formed in marriage ties. These ties as explained by him through the institution of gifts in sala-katari created alliances which ‘acted to create a sentiment of corporate territority which cross cut that of the brotherhood, but was in many respects similar to it. Inherent in both were expected rights of access to and use of land’. The two phenomenon of service and exchange networks and the marriage alliances need to be distinguished but as Chattopadhyaya had pointed out for earlier period were instrumental in placing Rajputs within the wider arena of social relations.

Ideaology

The co-existence of descent kinship based networks, marriage networks and service and exchange networks often led to inconsistent interpretation of norms and conduct of the Rajputs placed within these networks.

Ziegler tells us that in the seventeenth century the traditional Rajput literature put forth the appropriate norms of conduct in terms of general rules. These rules were as it were the Rajput dharma which was felt ‘to be an inborn, moral code for conduct which each individual inherited by birth along with an innate potential to fulfill it’. With inconsistencies in the expectations after the move to service and exchange networks one of the cardinal principles of refraining from gotrakadamb i.e. refraining for killing of members of one’s own gotra (clan sub-group) came into crisis. The question was, which was supreme, protecting members of the gotra or protecting the master to whom one was a cakar. Ziegler notes a shift in the ideology of honour here when he examines cases in the Mughal time which increasingly stress the demerit of gotrakadamb. This shift was facilitated by the very way in which the Rajputs viewed their origins Ziegler point out. According to the myth the rajputs came up in times when traditional hierarchical order had collapsed. It was only with great effort and the opportunities provided by the Rajput rulers and the Mughals that they had rebuilt themselves. In moving towards this new society where they were actually coming to their own by blessings of various kul devtas and deities of their rulers and later on Mughals that the Rajputs had reestablished themselves. In such a situation then this process of rebuilding was given primacy and a traditional concept like gotrakadamb was demerited.

19.3 DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLE FRAMEWORK OF RICHARD FOX: AN ADDENDUM

It may be useful to bring in Richard Fox here. The picture of Rajput clan formation which we are getting from Ziegler is that of a unilinear movement from descent to service and exchange networks. Based on local records of Rajasthan it presents one kind of picture. Though Fox is talking of Rajput lineages in U.P. and in a different time period (19th century) he gives us the scenario in a broader perspective. Broadly speaking he conceives the development of Rajput lineages in developmental stages. That is, he considers, the interaction of closed brotherhoods, with the raja or the state as different stages in the development of the lineage. These stages may be considered a part of the developmental cycle as it were with the possibility of lineages returning to earlier stages depending on the context or the situation. This basically means we
may see the movement of lineages from descent to service networks as going back to descent as well. He calls this ‘traditional circularity’. As Fox himself puts it ‘the developmental cycle of Rajput lineages has four interrelated factors. Some of these concern the ecological and demographic dispositions of the lineage. Others concern its relationships with the central authorities’. These factors he identifies as firstly the extent of land available for territorial expansion. He explains ‘territorial expansion consisted of either of bringing waste or underpopulated lands under cultivation or physical conquest of populous cultivated regions. Virgin tracts existed in the terai region. Waste lands arose due to famine, epidemics or wars when cultivators left their land or were decimated. Outright conquest depended largely on the population and process of the lineage. Territorial frontier conditions greatly influenced the internal organisation of Rajput lineages and were an indication of their relationship with the central power. In general, territorial frontiers existed only when the state was weak because anarchic period created waste-lands and the state when powerful could militarily restrict or control lineage expansion’. In Rajasthan such vast tracts were already available as the frontier for expansion as B. D. Chattopadhyaya points out.

The second factor was the ‘population, cohesiveness and military success of the lineage’. Fox points out, ‘a large population usually aided military process in the initial stages of the lineage’s development or when the central power was weak. However, a large population often caused the kin body to be less cohesive and corporate. Since kin cooperation was necessary for military success, population and cohesion were balanced or else the lineage fissioned. The cohesiveness which underlay the military folk of a kin group was sometimes based on kinship etiquette and genealogical appeal. Later cohesion was the result of the internal stratification of the lineage which gave the raja and elite a predominant authority. Similarly, military cooperation at first emerges mainly from kinship discipline; later on it is due to feudalization’ of military service owed to the lineage elite.

The third factor is ‘the nature and power of the lineage elite. This factor is closely tied to the level of stratification within the lineage. Sometimes internal rank and economic differentiation within a lineage was small. When this occurred, the minimal lineage of the hereditary or elected lineage leader was no more elevated than other minimal lineages of the kin brotherhood. The lineage leadership merely represented the interests of the lineage as a whole, and its bargaining ability with central authority depended on the military threat of the entire kin body. At other times, stratification within the lineage was great and the lineage raja and his close kinsmen formed a powergroup which often seized the proprietorship and other prerogatives of their kinsmen. In such lineages internal hostility ran high the disenfranchised lineage members rebelled and palace revolts occurred in the lineage elite. Whether or not a raja proved powerful, depended in some measure on his charismatic definition of his office. But, more important, it depended on the favourable occurrence of the factors of population, military success, territorial expansion and the organisation of the state’.

The fourth factor in the developmental cycle is the ‘nature and power of the state’. Fox points out ‘when the influence of the state at the local level was weak, the state had little power to control local events or counter a strong lineage. When strong, the state might decide to subsidize newcomers to reduce a turbulent lineage and its elite to cultivators or the state could undertake military punishment of dissident lineages. The kin segmentation or military success of a lineage was often greatly influenced by the actions of central authority. If the state was powerful, it could restrict the expansion of a lineage even though waste lands or natural frontier existed. A strong state hindered the internal stratification of the lineage’.

Now these four factors influenced, as Fox points out, the traditional circularity of the lineages in a major way. It may happen that some lineages may stay on at one stage or undergo a situation in which two or more stages may confluence. At any rate, we
get a picture of clan formation of Rajputs which is more dynamic and takes into account a wider range of factors. His account though restricted to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century provides us with critical element of diversity in the state and lineage interaction. While Ziegler is content with a patron-client relationship Fox is able to take into account factors such as population, ecology, and the fluctuating nature of state power to posit a rich theory of clan development amongst the Rajputs. Ziegler however is richer in his use of local records. But then a gap remains.

19.4 SUMMARY

In this Unit, we placed before you two accounts of Rajput clan formation by B. D. Chattopadhyaya and Norman Ziegler. These two authors have examined evidences from early medieval India and medieval India about the rise of the Rajput clans. This will help you in understanding the processes of clan formation in a comparative perspective. Admittedly the perceptions of the two authors differ in characterising this process. But both focus on questions of process as opposed to the questions of origin. It is this focus which helps us in understanding the concreteness of clan formation in both the periods. Richard Fox is brought in as an addendum to get a wider perspective on clan formation of the Rajputs.

19.5 EXERCISES

1) How did the Rajput social structure move from political to social in the early medieval period?
2) Do you think if Ziegler had used the concept of political instead of patron-client framework his analysis would have been richer?
UNIT 20 URBAN SOCIAL GROUPS IN NORTH INDIA

Structure
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20.1 INTRODUCTION

When we visualise urban society few things immediately came to our mind - people, their inter-class and intra-class affiliations and associations vis-à-vis contradictions, tensions and conflicts, social stratification, and so on. Medieval period is significant on number of counts - a new ruling elite, coming from an alien environment, governed by own sets of rules; emergence of bhakti and sufi movements; introduction of new technologies as a result of distinct needs and requirements of the new ruling elite resulting in emergence of certain new crafts; and above all fusion of two distinct cultures that led to a new kind of social formations distinct from the age old tradition. Diffusion of new techniques during the 13th century onwards points towards great adaptability of Indian society. Political ‘unification’ of the country, expansion in trade and commerce, urban character of the new ruling elite, monetization, commercialisation of agriculture, cash nexus all contributed to vibrant town activities. Cities like Delhi emerged as ‘chief centre’ of cultural activities in the whole Islamic world. The turmoil in Central Asian and Persian polities also resulted in large scale migration of men of letters. Minhaj-us Siraj comments that, ‘This city (Delhi) through the number of grants and munificence of the pious monarch (Iltutmish) became the retreat and the resting place of the learned, the victorious and the excellent of the various parts of the world’. Isami also describes Delhi as hub of foreigners – ‘Many genuine descendants of the Prophet arrived there from Arabia, many artisans from Khorasan, many painters from the country of China, many ulema (learned men), born in Bukhara, many saints and devotees from every quarter (of the world). There also came craftsmen of every kind and every country,... many experts knowledgeable in precious gems, innumerable jewel merchants, philosophers and physicians of the Greek school. In that happy city they gathered like moths around a burning candle’. The process that began with the Turkish conquests continued unabated throughout the medieval period. Mughals also, rather with greater fervor, patronised men of arts and culture of Central Asia and Persia. Delhi continued to enjoy the centre-stage among the Islamic cities throughout the medieval period.

As a result of growth of money economy towns witnessed great mobility in the social structure during this period. Medieval ruling elite was largely urban based. This urban
orientation resulted in the emergence of a distinct ‘town-centred culture’ that Mohammad Habib describe as ‘urban revolution’.

20.2 ELITES IN THE URBAN SETTING

Medieval period is important for this is the period when several new social groups emerged on account of the entry of the Turks and the Mughals on the scene and the ranks of the ruling elite (nobles) swelled phenomenally. Qasbas and towns were filled with petty government officials. Since the new ruling elites (nobles) were largely urban based and they evolved ‘national cultural ethos, which became the standard of high culture and social intercourse.’ (Satish Chandra, 2005) Musical concert, poetical recitations, and religious festivals became the life-breath of the city culture. ‘The city and the court also acted as a school of manners’. However, issues were not settled or else the elites were not divided on the basis of religion. Even during the war of succession among Shahjahan’s sons the ruling elite was not divided on religious lines. Delhi emerged as the chief centre of liberal literary tradition.

We do not possess much information pertaining to common masses (other than the nobles), therefore, in this Section we will confine our discussion largely on ruling elites. Here our concern is not to highlight the political role played by the nobility but to analyse their role and position in the contemporary society as a prominent group.

20.2.1 Iqtadars, Mansabdars and Jagirdars

Iqtadar and mansabdar were two major categories of the ruling estates that evolved during the Sultanate and Mughal period respectively. A detailed account of the growth of the iqta and mansab systems and the power and positions of the iqtadar and mansabdars are already dealt in our course MHI-04. Here our purpose to incorporate them as a distinct social category is to acquaint you with the dominant position iqtadars and mansabdars enjoyed as important social groups during the medieval period.

Turkish rulers paid their nobility in the form of iqtas (revenue assignments) and its holders came to be known as iqtadar, wali or muqti. These assignees were allotted a specified territory (iqta) and they were supposed to collect the revenue and sent the fawazil (surplus) to the state. Iqtadars were supposed to maintain law and order in the territory and extract land revenue. Generally, the provincial administration was headed by these muqtis and walis. Iqtas did not imply right over land, nor they were hereditary. Iqtas were transferable as well. However, Firuz made iqtas hereditary and permanent.

The Mughal ruling elite can be grouped into one single category of mansabdars. All Mughal nobles, were the mansabdars. The term mansab itself denotes a place or position. All Mughal nobles at their entry were allotted a mansab (rank). Mansab determined the status of nobles in the Mughal hierarchy. However, mansabdars were not a ‘homogeneous’ category. Under Babur we do not come across this category, instead the term wajhdar was used. It received its proper shape during Akbar’s reign. Mansab is dual in nature – zat and sawar. While zat determined personal pay and his status in the hierarchy, sawar solely indicated the number of horses and horsemen to be maintained by the mansabdar. Granting mansabs was the prerogative of the emperor. Lineage and performance were two major criterion for promotion. The most favoured category belonged to the sons and close kinsmen of those already in the imperial service. This group was known as khanzads.

Largely these mansabdars were paid in the form of jagir, thus holder of the jagirs were known as jagirdars and tuyuldars under the Mughals. The nobles were assigned a territory to collect a portion of the produce (revenue; mal-iwajib) in lieu of their salaries in a specified areas. One should keep in mind that these jagirs were
neither hereditary nor permanent. They were frequently transferred and *jagirdars* enjoyed no proprietary right over the land so assigned to him. *Jagirdars* used to appoint their own agents (*gumashta, amils*) to collect revenue. However, imperial officials used to keep strict vigilance over the activities of these *jagirdars*. The *diwan* of the *suba* were to keep close watch to prevent oppression of the peasants at the hands of the *jagirdars*. However, often these *jagirdars* oppressed the peasants. Bernier (1656-68) mentions that on account of the oppression of the *jagirdars* peasants often fled to the territories of the Rajas.

20.2.2 Social and Racial Composition of the Elites

K. M. Ashraf divides the nobility into two major categories a) *ulema – ahl-iqalam* (intelligentsia; largely constituted the religious classes), and b) *umarah – ahl-itegh* (soldiers). Here we will primarily focus on the second group. Ashraf argues that the nobility hardly existed without the ‘personality of the sovereign’ for the nobles completely owed their position to the sovereign – the Sultan. Mohammad Habib has defined the organisation of early Indo-Turkish nobility in terms of ‘joint family organisation’ since nearly all recruit were of the Turkish origin; though a few were Khaljis (Bakhtiyar Khalji) and Tajiks (foreigners). Largely early Turkish nobles were slaves, who later achieved the distinction of *amirs, maliks, khans* depending upon the meritorious services performed by them. Khaljis opened the door for all irrespective of race, birth or creed thus breaking the monopoly of Turks in the nobility. This phenomenon is largely viewed as ‘Khalji revolution’ by the historians. Tughluq discouraged favouring any particular racial group. Instead they encouraged all – foreigners, Hindus, Mongols, Khorasans and the Arabs. Thus it was not ‘racial’ composition but ‘loyalty to sultan’ which became the crucial determining factor to gain power. However, if ‘racialism’ was the hallmark of early Turkish nobility ‘hereditary’ succession became the chief feature of Tughluq nobility, particularly from Firuz Tughluq’s reign onwards. In the Mughal nobility also a large number of nobles were of foreign origin. According to *Ain-i Akbari* under Akbar 70 per cent of the nobles were foreigners. However, Athar Ali points out that after Akbar there was a declining trend of nobles of foreign origin. 

**Turks**

Early Turks (Ilbarites) were largely slaves, even the most favoured Shamsi Maliks, the *turkan-i chihilgani* (‘Group of Forty’; nobles of Iltutmish), were slaves. There were Tajiks (free born) as well. These Turks considered themselves belonging to ‘high-birth’ as against the Indian Muslims. Their cause was championed by Barani who looked down upon the ‘low-born’ (*jawahir-i lutrah* i.e. Indian Muslims) and resisted giving them high positions. Barani praises Balban for appointing only people of ‘noble birth’ in the state service. Barani lamented when Alauddin Khalji appointed Malik-ut Tujjar (chief of the merchants) to the post of chief *qazi* (*Quzzat-i Mumalik*) and Muhammad Tughluq entrusted charge of *diwan-i wizarat* to Pira Mali (gardener).

Under the Mughals Turanis were Turkish speaking Central Asians. Babur himself boasts of possessing Turkish descent from his father’s side. During the initial reigns of Babur and Humayun Turks were dominant social group among the Muslim elite, controlling the highest offices. However, following Mirza’s rebellion (1581) the position of Turkish nobles drastically declined. Turanis, during the Mughal period, generally hailed from Badakhshan and were regarded ‘uncultured’ compared to their Irani counterparts.

**Iranis**

Iranis, also called Khorasans and Iraqis, were first introduced in the Sultanate nobility by Muhammad Tughluq. He called them *aizza* (the dear ones). They were appointed as *sadah amirs* in the Deccan who later established their independent kingdom.

In the Mughal nobility Irani element was introduced by Humayun, particularly after his return from Persia. On his return, out of fifty seven nobles twenty seven were
Turans while twenty one were Iranis. Iranis received special favour from Jahangir’s reign onwards and enjoyed prominence throughout the Mughal period.

Afghans

At the beginning of Medieval period Afghan tribes are reported to have lived on the frontiers of north-west region. They got converted to Islam during the reign of Sultan Mahmud (998-1030) and by 12th century their conversion to Islam was almost completed. Minhaj-us Siraj (1259) records them as ‘ferocious’ and ‘rustic’. Amir Khusrau (13-14 centuries) also speaks of them as ‘uncultured’. By mid-thirteenth century they are reported to have entered in the service of the Sultanate as soldiers. Balban entrusted them the charge of his newly established thanas (police posts) around Delhi. By 14th century they appeared to have assumed the position in the nobility. Under Muhammad Tughluq they specially attained prominence. In the fifteenth century Malik Khurram Nuhani (Afghan) was the first Afghan who succeeded in carving out an independent kingdom at Jalor (Rajasthan). Afghans rose to prominence especially during Suyyad (1414-51), Lodi (1451-1526) and Sur (1540-55) periods. However, they faced a great jolt to their position during the Mughal period. They were particularly distrusted by the Mughals. They did improve their position under Jahangir (1606-1627) when Khan-i Jahan Lodi emerged prominent. But soon they receded into the background after Khan-i Jahan Lodi’s rebellion. They could only recover during the closing years of Aurangzeb’s reign (1656-1707) as a result of influx of Afghan nobility from Bijapur kingdom.

Indian Muslims/Shaikhzadas

Indian Muslims, during the Mughal period were known as Shaikhzadas. They emerged into prominence from Nasiruddin Mahmud’s reign (1246-1266) onwards when Imaduddin Raihan was raised to the highest position. But he had to face stiff resistance from Balban, a Turkish noble of the select ‘Shamsi’ group.

Kambohs were originally Hindus of Punjab and largely belonged to the peasant community. In Multan region they embraced Islam under the influence of suhrawardi saint Shaikh Bahauddin Zakaria. By 15th century they emerged as prominent ulama (scholars) and mashaikhs (sufi saints). Shaikh Samauddin Cambo even achieved the status of a patron saint of the Lodi dynasty (1451-1526). Shaikh Samauddin Cambo’s son-in-law Shaikh Jamali assumed the status of poet in the court of Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). Imam-ul-Mulk Kambo headed the department of amir-i ariz under Sher Shah (1540-45).

Under the Mughals Saiyyids of Baraha emerged prominent. However, Saiyyids of Baraha had to face the wrath of Aurangzeb since they supported Dara Shukoh during the war of succession. Towards the closing years of Aurangzeb’s reign Kashmiris emerged prominent. Inayatullah Kashmiri was one of the favourite noble of Aurangzeb.

Hindu Elites

Under Alauddin Khalji Hindu nobles received special patronage. Rai Ram Deo of Deogir was one of the prominent nobles of his reign. He received the title of Rai Rayan. Malik Naik was made muqta of Samana and Sunam. Hindus also received patronage under Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-51). Ratan, a great scholar of mathematics received the title of Azim-us Sindh and Muhammad Tughluq appointed him governor (wali) of Sind.

Marathas

Marathas emerged as prominent group during the seventeenth century. They played an important role in Deccan affairs. Marathas were enrolled in the Mughal nobility from Shahjahan’s reign (1627-1656) onwards but they became a sizable group during Aurangzeb’s reign.
Rajputs

Rajputs were among the most prominent social group under the Mughals. They maintained cordial relations with the ruling class, particularly from the reign of Akbar. They continued to enjoy prominent position throughout the seventeenth century. Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Jaswant Singh were the two most prominent Rajput nobles under Aurangzeb.

Other Groups

Alauddin introduced Mongols into his nobility. Muhammad Tughluq also enrolled Mongol commanders of 10,000 (amiran-ituman), commanders of 1,000 (amiran-ihazara) into his nobility in large numbers.

Abysinians also left their mark during the reign of Sultan Razia (1236-1240). Jamaluddin Yaqt – the famous Abysinian, was raised to the prominent post of amir-i akhur (master of the royal horses) during the reign of Razia (1236-1240).

Jains

Jains attained high position during the Sultanate period. Alauddin Khaliji appointed Pheru Jain, a gemmologist, as superintendent of royal mint. Jains emerged prominent in the Nagaur region (western Rajasthan). They maintained close contacts with the Muslim elite. Like Muslim elite they also constructed schools for children to instruct them in the traditional sciences. Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517) granted a land-grant to a Jain saint Janbuji.

20.2.3 Power and Position of the New Ruling Elite

The new ruling elite enjoyed immense wealth, power, and status in the society on account of being closer to power. A. Jan Qaisar (1965) has calculated the amount of wealth concentrated in the hands of the higher category mansabdars (rank-holders). During Shahjahan's reign concentration of resources in the hands of the mansab-holders of 500 and above were 61.5 of the total jama (estimated-revenue); while mansab-holders of 2500 and above enjoyed 37.6 per cent of the total jama.

Apart from their salaries these nobles frequently tried their fortunes in overseas trade. Tavernier (1640-67) mentions that, ‘on arrival for embarkation at Surat, you find plenty of money. It is the principal trade of the nobles of India to place their money on vessels on speculation for Harmuz, Bassora, and Mocha, and even for Bantam, Achin and Phillipenes’. Aurangzeb’s noble Mir Jumla was so rich that he even used to advance money to the English factors. His ships used to ply between Arakan, Southern India and Persia. Shaista Khan was another important noble involved in the internal trade during Aurangzeb’s reign.

Besides trade, these nobles also maintained huge karkhanas. As early as Firuz Shah’s reign (1351-1386) we find the kings’; princes’; and nobles’ interests in establishing the karkhanas. Bakhtawar Khan (Aurangzeb’s period) established number of karkhanas in various towns. Even Princess Jahan Ara Begum (Shahjahan’s daughter) maintained her own karkhana.

These elites were equally involved in the public welfare activities and charitable works. Our accounts are full of descriptions of havelis, sarais (resting places), mosques, tombs (rauza), gardens, tanks, etc. built by the nobles. Fakhruddin, the famous kotwal of Delhi Sultanate was known for his charity. He patronised orphanages and even used to pay dowry money to the poor to facilitate the marriages of their daughters. A. Jan Qaisar argues that there appears to be a linkage between the ‘social values’ and the building activities of the Mughal ruling elite. He highlights that social prestige and desire to be remembered by the posterity appear to be the major factors behind such large scale building activities of the Mughal nobles. Murtaza
Khan, Shaikh Farid Bhakkari (Akbar’s period), Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan, (Akbar-Jahangir’s period) were great builders. They were also involved in establishing new townships (puras) and markets (katras). Modern Faridabad near Delhi is attributed to be Shaikh Farid Bukhari’s contribution. Mir Muhammad Baqir Azam Khan during his tenure as faujdar (commandant, incharge of law and order over a group of parganas) of Mathura constructed a township (pura) near the city. In the vicinity of Agra, during Jahangir’s reign, two townships were constructed by his nobles – Itimad Khan Khwaja Sara built Itimadpur and Miyan Rup Khawas, founded Rupbas. Similarly, Maharaja Jai Singh of Amber constructed Jaisinghpura and Jaswant Singh of Marwar (d. 1678) Jaswantpura in the outskirts of Shahjahanabad, Delhi.

20.3 NEW SOCIAL GROUPS

The hallmark of the period was the emergence of new social groups. With the establishment of the Turkish and Mughal power during the medieval period large number of groups/individuals accepted Islam. There were forcible conversions as well as some were motivated by political patronage; while some were also possibly guided by material gains. Some got converted willingly, largely as a result of sufi influence and interactions. This process of acculturisation resulted in the formation and emergence of new social groups. The important question is, as S.C. Misra puts it, ‘In societal, cultural and personal lens, to what extent was the mark of the new faith imprinted upon the neo-converts – in other words, what was the degree of Islamization’? S.C. Misra argues that there emerged, ‘two social systems’. ‘The upper classes were however nearer to the sources of Islamic culture, as defined by the law-givers and their contemporary interpreters. The faith of the lower was a graft on the popular forms of the abandoned faith’.

Some social groups accepted Islam on account of their clan affinity. Once their clan chief got converted the entire clan followed the suit. Qaim Khanis were one such social group who accepted Islam through this process. They were the Chauhan Rajputs of Danera. During Sultan Firuz Tughluq’s reign (1351-1388) under the influence of Firuz’s noble Saiyyid Nasir, Karam Chand, their chief accepted Islam and christened Qaim Khan. Thus the entire clan came to be known as Qaim Khanis. Interestingly, those who followed Muslim lifestyle came to be known as Muslim Qaim Khanis and those who continued with their traditional customs and practices were known as Hindu Qaim Khanis. Qaim Khanis continued to take in marriage the daughters of non-Qaim Khani Hindu Rajputs. Rao Jodha of Jodhpur (1438-1489) gave his daughter to Shams Khan Qaim Khani. But it appears that ordinary Qaim Khanis found it difficult to marry among non-Qaim Khani Hindu Rajputs. Initially they tried to have matrimonial ties with high class Muslims – Pathans, Saiyyids – but their response was not positive. Therefore, with the passage of time this group of Muslim Qaim Khanis developed into more ‘homogeneous and close caste society’. (Zaidi, 1993) Another such important group was those of the Mewatis/Meos. They were originally Meenas/Meds who accepted Islam. For long they continued to marry within their own ‘clan’.

However, the story of individually getting absorbed within the society after accepting Islam appears to be somewhat different than those where entire ‘clan’ adopted new religion. Inayat and Sunita Zaidi (1993) have highlighted an interesting case of the emergence of a new social group as those of the Sipahis as a result of such conversions in Rajasthan-Gujarat. They appear to be Rajputs of different clans. Zaidis argue that, ‘to get absorbed in the caste-based society, these Rajputs of different gotras coalesced to form a caste which they named after their profession, that is, sipahi. They served the state as retainers and enjoyed the rights of the landed gentry. This process also gave them a homogeneous character, and, to strengthen it further they remained endogamous’. There also emerged another group of Qasbati Sipahis in Gujarat. But on account of their distinct geographical location and environment these Qasbati
Sipahis who were more exposed to commercial world, in their Islamic traits appears to be stronger than their Rajasthani counterparts and they appear to be more heterogeneous and exogamous in character.

Similar group, of the converted Muslims from Rajput clans which emerged during this period was those of the Nayaks (distinct from the Nayak rulers of Medieval South India). These Nayaks were incharge of the keys of the pols (gates) of the Jodhpur fort. These Nayaks belonged to different clan groups – Rathor, Chauhan, Sisodia and Joya – of the Rajputs. To maintain their higher status in the social hierarchy they continued to marry within their own social group. (Zaidi, 1993)

Equally important are the Deswali Muslims who were Rajput converts, but they largely followed Hindu customs and rituals except marriage customs (they performed nikah) and death rituals (they bury their dead). On account of the geopolitical situations the Deswali Muslims of eastern and western Rajasthan on account of their proximity to Agra and Delhi, converted to Islam more. The Hindu Deswalis while did not mind eating at their Muslim counterpart’s house in western Rajasthan; in eastern Rajasthan Hindu Deswalis did not dine together. Even the eastern Deswali Muslims generally adopted Muslim way of life.

20.4 PROFESSIONAL CLASSES

Emergence of Middle Class

The notion of ‘middle-class’ developed quite late in Europe in the fourteenth century. This class generally constituted not only the merchants but also the professionals (medical practitioners, craftsmen, etc.) who worked independent of the state control. During the medieval period in India we do not find modern professionals like lawyer, educationists and journalists instead people in the profession of medicine, learning, literature, art, music and lower bureaucracy primarily formed the middle class.

Historians have debated over the existence of middle class during the medieval period. The issue came to be debated with Bernier’s (1656-68) often quoted statement that under the Mughals there existed ‘no middle class’. Karl Marx, and Max Weber also reject the idea of the presence of proto-capitalists or middle class during the medieval period in India. Moreland argues that, ‘The educated middle class was very small, and the physician or artists or literary men could hope to obtain an adequate income only by attaching himself to the imperial court or to the principal governors’. In 1944 C. W. Smith’s article – ‘The Middle Class in the Mughal Empire’ (Islamic Culture) brought the issue to the fore. He recognised the presence of numerous groups of merchants, bankers and professionals. Iqtidar Alam Khan in his study on the middle classes (‘The Middle Classes in the Mughal Empire’, Social Scientist, Vol. 5, Nos., 1976) highlights the presence of ‘middle class’ during the Mughal period. Other than the merchants and bankers he includes in his list the physicians, architects, teachers, scholars, poets, painters, musicians, master craftsmen, members of lower bureaucracy (state functionaries holding the rank of 500 zat or less).

Professional Classes

Medieval period saw the emergence of new classes of professionals – medical practitioners, artists, petty bureaucrats, etc.

Kayasthas emerged into prominence during the early medieval period. By medieval period they almost dominated the scene as skilled scribes and revenue record keepers. They were employed by the Mughal state in large numbers.

Khatris emerged prominent largely in Punjab-Delhi region during the 14th century. They were recorded as experts in accountancy and arithmetic and largely employed...
in the revenue department. Malik Shah Khatri, Jivan Khatri, and Rai Das Khatri were the trusted nobles of Muzaffar Shah, founder of the Gujarat kingdom in the 14th century. Under Saiyid ruler Khizr Khan (1414-1421) and his successor Sultan Mubarak Shah Khatris enjoyed high positions. Babur was astonished to see that the revenue department was almost wholly dominated by the ‘Hindus’. By seventeenth century Khatris were the most noticeable merchant group that emerged during this period in the Punjab region. They were also recorded as petty government officials.

This period also saw the emergence of medical practitioners employed in various capacities by the state. Masalik-ul Absar mentions twenty hospitals in Delhi. Shihabuddin Ahmad Abbas refers to number of court physicians to 1200. Hakims also received mansabs (rank) and thus formed part of the Mughal bureaucracy. Hakim Mamina Shirazi got the mansab of 1000 zat and an annual allowance of 20000 rupees by Jahangir. Similarly, Hakim Daud who was earlier court physician of Abbas Safavi, King of Persia, Shahjahan bestowed upon him the mansab of 1500/200 and rupees 20000 in cash. Later he rose to a mansab of 4000. Hakim-ul Mulak was another physician of Shahjahan with a mansab of 2000. Though tabibs and jarrahs were not bound by any obligation to stick to the same employer, often they joined Mughal nobles’ services in large numbers. Ali Nadeem Rezavi’s (Kumar, 2001) calculations suggest the wide range of salaries were given to this class. He has tabulated that the salaries varied from Rs. 3600 per annum to Rs. 100,000 per annum. Iqtidar Alam Khan points out that physicians and jarrahs also earned their livelihood by treating people. Pir Hassu Teli clearly mentions the availability of their services at the markets of Lahore.

By the seventeenth century the class of astrologers and astronomers became so common that Niccolao Manucci (1651-1712) mentions the presence of this class in each nobles’/elites’ household. He adds ‘bazar swarmed with these folk’.

Iqtidar Alam Khan (1976) highlights the ‘exceptional’ prosperity of the accountants, clerks and other petty bureaucrats connected with revenue administration. Qutoing Taqkira Pir Hassu Teli (1644-47) he mentions that Khwaja Udai Singh, a petty official, constructed a well attached to a dargah at Lahore at the cost of Rs. 3000.

20.5 TRADING GROUPS

Merchants and pedlars was a common sight in the medieval period. As early as 1304-5, when Cambay was finally annexed to the Sultanate, we find that Cambay emerged as centre of activities of immigrant Muslim merchants. They possessed beautiful fortress like mansions and constructed beautiful mosques. Ibn Battuta’s account clearly points out the power and prestige enjoyed by this class during Muhammad Tughluq’s period (1325-51). He mentions that even Sultan entrusted the administration of Cambay in the hands of leading merchant, Malik-ut Tujuar Pirwiz of Gazrun (Iran), succeeded by another merchant Malik-ut Tujuar Tajuddin al-Kawlami. These merchants even established charitable institutions. Khwaja Ishaq set-up a khanqah (hospice) at Cambay where travellers were served free food and destitutes received alms.

There appears to have existed hierarchy among the merchants. In western Rajasthan fadiyas were retailers; below them were bichhayats (itinerant) of the localities. Similarly, bypari used to operate across parganas and were generally not local merchants but outsiders; while mahajans were local merchants. There were separate merchants (baldiyas or banjaras) who specialise in grain trade. Evidence from western Rajasthan suggest that sah merchants dealt in grain trade and maintained direct links with the peasants. Barani also mentions about the sahs of Delhi who used to lend money to the nobles. Sahukars dealt in wholesale transactions and ensured continuous supply of grain to the urban markets. They maintained kothas and bhakharis
at the urban markets for storage of commodities. Even the state viewed them differently and separate taxes were imposed on them. While *bichhayats* had to pay both *mapa* (sales tax) and *biswa* (a tax), *Mahajans* had to pay *dan* (transit dues). Even when these *bichhayats* brought goods from within the locality they were charged ¼ *ser* per maund, while goods brought from outside had to pay both *dan* and *biswa*. *Banias* possessed *kothis* in the urban areas and called *kothiwals* in western Rajasthan. Bernier mentions wealthy merchants living in double storied houses with beautiful terraces.

### 20.6 URBAN ARTISANS

The establishment of the Islamic Sultanate by the Turks and the Mughals brought far reaching changes in the existing social structure, particularly as a result of distinct needs of the new ruling class which created demand for new products resulting in the introduction of new technologies and services. Mohammad Habib has viewed the radical changes in the urban society as ‘urban revolution’. He emphasises that the Turkish conquest liberated the town-based artisans. There appears to be no restriction for mobility. This is very much evident in the Punjabi saying, ‘Last year I was a weaver, this year I am a Sheikh, next year if prices rise I shall be a Saiyyad.’ (Chetan Singh, 1991). Sultan Mahmud Begara raised one Bailu (a local carpenter who constructed for him a beautiful garden based on Khorasani technique) to the status of a grandee and rewarded him with *khilat-i khas* (special robe of honour). During this period several new towns emerged. New cities attracted skilled workers and artisans. When in 1506 Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517) made Agra his capital, ironsmiths from Rapri and stone cutters from Nagaur also settled down there. *Sarrafs* got attracted to the city by trading prospects. Thus process of urbanisation helped in the expansion of artisans and trading castes. Chetan Singh’s study for Punjab shows that largely the arisans in Punjab were Muslims – 92 percent of the Julahas were Muslims; *kamangar* (bow-makers) were largely Muslims; similarly, *raj, kalal, rangrej*, and *teli* were also Muslims.

Mulla Daud in his *Chandayan* (1379) refers to *panchawan* (fifth varna) – the outcastes. He also mentions the presence of *pauni-praja* (low castes, service and artisan groups) in large numbers in the city. A comparison of *Chandayan*’s *pauni-praja* with *Ardhakathanak*’s (mid-seventeenth century) thirty six *paunis* presents an interesting contrast. One clearly finds swelling up of the ranks of this class. There is no mention of *Rangbaz* (Rangsz; dyer), *Dhunia* (cotton-carder), *Lakhera* (lac-workers), *Chitera* (painter), *Kundigar* (presser of cloth), *Raj* (construction worker; brick-layer) *Sisgar* (glass-worker) *Thathera* (metal-worker), *Sakligar* (sharpener of knives), *Kalal* (wine-distiller), *Silawat* (stone-cutters), *gilkars* (workers in pearls and diamonds for strings), *Kalal* (wine-distiller), *Silawat* (stone-cutters), *gilkars* (workers in lime). It clearly indicates the emergence of new social groups largely as a result of new technologies. These new castes were identified on the basis of professions – *Julaha, Chimpa, Pijjara, Chungar, Baghaban, Sqaqa, Qalaigars, gilkars*, etc. Spinning-wheel revolutionised entire textile industry and one finds that many addition of new social groups emanated from the textile workers. The caste of Khammar (distillers) rose into prominence. During Muhammad Tughluq’s reign Azizuddin Khammar enjoyed higher status among his nobles.

With the introduction of distillation on a wide scale, Kalals emerged prominent. Barani calls them *khumars* (wine-makers) and *araqis* (distillers). Some of its members appear to have accepted Islam. During Muhammad Tughluq’s reign Aziz Khumar, revenue collector of Amroha belonged to this caste. Zafar Khan, founder of the Sultanate of Gujarat and his brother Shams Khan Dandani, were sons of Saharan, a Kalal. These Kalals appeared to be quite a rich community. A 1436 inscription records that Bhola Maharaj Khumar got a step-well constructed in Jahtra for the benefit of the people. In Malwa they are reported as traders in utensils.
It appears that there emerged new forms of industries, specialisation and division of labour during the medieval period. We do not get references of carding or ginning as separate activity prior to Turkish period. With the introduction of cotton gin and cotton carder’s bow during the Turkish period we find the emergence of a new class of Dhunia that later assumed the status of a caste. In eastern India we get references to new sub-castes of weavers – Jola, Shavaka – these castes were unknown prior to 12-13th centuries. (Majumdar, 1969) Art of dyeing probably assumes specialised form during this period. Thus emerged the new caste of Rangrez.

With the specialisation in sugarcane production, on the basis of the type of sugarcane produced different castes were identified. In eastern India the caste engaged in jaggery making from sugarcane was that of Modakas and those who prepared jaggery from date palms were called Siuli. With the introduction of paper by the Turks during the thirteenth century not only a distinct profession of paper-making emerged, there also emerged a distinct caste Kagazi during this period. Teli were very much present prior to the Turkish conquest, but in Punjab they were mostly Muslims. This suggest that the profession was opted by Muslims in large number.

With the introduction of separating zinc (jasta) from ore sometime in the fifteenth century, emerged a class of tinsmiths (Qalaigars). Zinc was used by them to protect copper vessels from caustic acid reaction.

There appears to be a distinct hierarchy among the artisan class. Position of ustad was definitely superior and respectable in the society.

Artisans appear to have enjoyed respectability considering the fact that Abul Fazl in his classification put merchants and artisans after warriors and above the intellectual and religious classes.

Even caste and clan affiliations played a role in social interactions. Hindus were largely divided on the basis of castes such types of caste groupings were generally absent among the Muslims. However, we do get references of Muslim biradaris (brotherhoods) in the fifteenth century on the lines of Hindu ‘caste’ system. The Afghans were also divided into biradaris.

20.7 SLAVES/SLAVERY

Irfan Habib draws a parallel between the introduction of new crafts and the growth of slavery/slave market in India as a result of diffusion of new technologies during the medieval period. He argues that, ‘the need for establishing new crafts led to a premium on slave-labour that could be used whatever way the master wished; in the short term, at least, the large scale immigration of artisans from Islamic lands was accompanied by extensive forcible enslavement inside the country and the formation of a large slave market at Delhi’. (Habib, 1980)

Under Islamic law slave was property of the master. Slaves were employed for every kind of work from domestic to the rank of high officials. Even they succeeded in assuming the status of a king. Early Turkish Sultans, from Qubuddin Aibak to Balban, all were slaves. Thus, during the medieval period slaves emerged as competent statesmen. Malik Kafur, architect of Alauddin’s southern campaigns was a slave. Thus slavery was no hindrance assuming the highest office during the medieval period. Slaves even took active part in the wars of succession siding with one or the other group. Female slaves were employed for singing, dancing, and beautiful one’s even served as concubines in the elite establishments. These slaves were treated like a family members. Skilled slaves were employed as artisans in the karkhanas. In the establishment of Firuz Shah Tughluq there were 1,80,000 slaves out of which 12,000 were employed as artisans. Irfan Habib (1987) argues that in course of time
when these slaves got manumitted (became free) ‘they probably created, along with artisans, the core of many Muslim artisan and labouring communities’.

During Sultanate period an ordinary slave girl could be obtained at 8-15 tankas to as high as 20000 tankas depending upon their qualities and beauty. One could get slave boy at as low a price as 4 dirham.

Mithila documents (north Bihar) refer to sale/purchase of slave girls (Gaurivatka-patras); sale of slaves (bahi-khatas); emancipation of slaves (ajatpatras) during the seventeenth century. (Thakur, 1959) The important aspect of these documents is that they indicates that the slaves were the property of their masters and could be bought and sold like a commodity. However, these deeds refer more to domestic slavery than the slaves who were employed as artisans and those who occupied high ranks in the Turkish nobility.

Asit Kumar Sen (1956) argues that ‘the slavery was a drag on Mediaeval Society. The Slaves in Mediaeval India no doubt received generally better treatment at the hands of their master’s than the slaves of Afro origin in the Nineteenth century. But economically slavery was a source of cheap supply of labour, politically it helped the aristocracy, morally it proved unjustifiable’.

**20.8 WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL SOCIETY**

In the traditional law-books women were treated inferior to men. Probably the concept of equality between men and women were alien to medieval period. Writings and views of bhakti poets give us some information on the status of women during this period. Mulla Daud in his Chandayan (1379) advocated against giving much freedom to women and argued in favour of keeping them under control. In Kabir’s perception also women were ‘subordinate’ to men. Kabir applauded women as pativrata (devoted to husband only). We hardly get any radical voice of Jaisi in his Padmavat in favour of contemporary women. Jaisi appears to be in agreement with the view that ‘land and women can only be kept under control by strength’. (Shobha, 1996) In Jaisi’s ideal sati symbolises total devotion of a wife for her husband. Jaisi appears even in total agreement with popular prejudices that they were generally matitheen (fool) and men who generally took their advice were presumed to be foolish. But in Mira there appears a dichotomy. She herself is viewed by the society as violator of social norms taking a bold step by leaving Rana’s house; nonetheless she hardly questioned the traditional role of women in contemporary society. Surdas’ depiction of women as freedom loving and rejecting traditional matrimonial bondage suggests him somewhat supporter of ‘freedom’ of women folk. But here we have to keep in mind that Surdas was depicting Ahir society whose women were already co-sharer in the process of production. In contrast, Tulsi Das, representing the elite ‘urban’ women feels that marayada (modesty) should not be transgressed. For him women were an ‘article’ and should be looked down upon: ‘A drum, a villager/rustic, a shudra, and an animal, and a women deserve chastisement’. (Shobha, 1996)

Islam bestowed upon Muslim women comparatively greater rights. In Central Asia, in Timurid and Mongol tradition alike women were taken in high esteem. Mongol queens usually shared the seats in the court and freely ate and drank. But by the 12-13th centuries when Islam made inroads in a big way in India the laws of the new ruling elite (Muslims) were in no way drastically different. In the Muslim law as well women were considered intellectually inferior to men. However, sufi attitude towards women was somewhat radical. Sufi saints did accept women as murids (disciples) and considered them worthy of religious guidance. Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag Delhi, successor of Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia even desired that his relics should be distributed among his four disciples; out of them one was a woman. Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia even fixed the allowance for the destitute and needy widows. Shaikh Farid Ganj-i
Shakar (d. 1269) was so much impressed by the religious piety of his daughter Bibi Sharifa that he used to say, ‘Had it been permitted to give Khilafatnama (grant of authority by a sufi master to his disciple to enrol his murids in the silsilah of the Shaikh and his sajjada to a woman, I would have given them to Bibi Sharifa...If other women had been like her, women would have taken precedence over men’. (I.H. Siddiqui, 1993)

Early marriage and dowry was a common feature of medieval society. The main female character Chanda in Mulla Daud’s Chandayan got married at the age of four. Akbar tried to restrict the age at 16 for boys and 14 for girls. Dowry was more common among the higher castes/rich and the elite. Polygamy also appears to be common and accepted norm in the society. The hero of Chandayan, Lorik, had two wives, Maina and Chanda. While divorce was permitted by Muslim law and also prevalent among the lower caste Hindus, among higher castes, rich and the elite it was not approved of. The practice of purdah, though already existed in India from long time, its rules became more and more stringent among the elites. Widows’ position was somewhat precarious. However, Savitri Chandra Shobha feels that perhaps ‘poor treatment of the widows was confined to brahmana household’.

Some women were also highly educated. Main character of Usman’s Chitravali appears to be a good painter. She possessed an art studio of her own. We do hear of some women hakims during the Mughal period. Umdat-un Nisa and Satti Kunwar were famous hakims.

Elite women wielded great influence in the political arena. The well-known names in this regard were Sultan Razia, Akbar’s mother Maham Anga, Jahangir’s wife Nurjahan and Shahjahan’s daughter Jahanara Begum. Jahandar Shah’s famous concubine Lal Kunwar and her associate Zohra’s influence over Jahandar Shah is well known. Farrukhsiyar also appointed Kokiji as his minister.

Compared to their elite counterpart (both rural and urban) peasant women appear to have enjoyed greater freedom during the medieval period. Surdas’ description of the Ahir women of Braj joining freely in the raslila is suggestive of the freedom enjoyed by them. Savitri Chandra Shobha argues that ‘this freedom was based on their active and almost predominant role in the economic life of the community’. Surdas presents a graphic description of the involvement of these gopis (milkmaids) of Braj in the activities of milking the cows and selling the milk and the milk products in the streets.

The most cruel and wicked custom prevalent in all parts of India during the medieval period was sati. Foreign travellers’ accounts were full of such horrendous tales of burning of women on their husband’s pyre. Though instances of sati among the lower strata were not uncommon, it was more rampant among the higher strata. Teixeira records in 1611 that on the death of Nayak of Madura his 400 wives set themselves ablaze. Alberuni (11th century; for north India), Frier Odoric (c. 1321-22), Careri (for Rajasthan) state that generally women of age and having son/children were exempted from self-immolation. But on the contrary, Pelsaert (c. 1626) informs us that even women having a year old baby and another having three months old baby sacrificed her life. Even women of ten or twelve years were not spared. It appears that women were provided with intoxicants to dull her senses. At times they were tied with the logs so that she may not escape. She was set ablaze amidst lots of noise and drum beating which drowned her cries. In this act the role played by the Brahmans was utterly ignoble. Bernier has addressed them as merciless. Sushil Chaudhuri argues that there were some material gains involved in it. For all the jewellery worn by the sati customarily belonged to the Brahmans. However, Ibn Battuta informs us that she also possessed the right to give them in charity. Abul Fazl refers to four different forms of sati performed: a) those performed out of sheer love for her husband; b) fear of reprimand; c) bound by tradition and custom; and d) by force. The root cause
behind the prevalence of *sati* appears to be the miserable condition of widow and absence of widow-remarriage in the medieval society, particularly among the elites and upper castes. Practice of *sati* was looked down upon both by the Turkish and the Mughal rulers alike. Muhammad Tughluq was the first Turkish Sultan who raised his voice against the evil custom and ordered to take licence or permission to perform *sati*. Humayun also issued such orders prohibiting the performance of *sati* on women who crossed child bearing age. But the order was soon cancelled. Akbar took conscious efforts to stop the prevalence of such evil practice by issuing order that ‘women should not be forced to perform *sati* against her will. Though his successors Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb continued his policy, the practice continued to prevail during the medieval period.

20.9 RELIGIOUS CLASSES

*Ulema* constituted the intellectual elite group, termed by K. M. Ashraf as *ahl-i-qalam*. They enjoyed state patronage and privileges. In turn state needed their support for legitimization of their power and actions. Though *ulema* never participated directly in political affairs, they did lend their support to one or the other, in the tussel for the ‘crown’. Ahmad Khan Sarang Khani, governor of Jaunpur under Sikandar Lodi was the disciple of Shaikh Husain Nagauri. Shaikh Ghiyasuddin Khalji also, on his visit to Mandu offered him treasure. Shaikh Husain Nagauri’s many disciples were weavers and dyers who achieved the stature of *dervishes*. They received revenue grants in large numbers known as *madad-imaash* or *suyurghal*.

At the centre, the ulema functioned as the religious benchmark of the political empire – apart from acting as judges [mostly in civil cases], *alims* were sometimes appointed as principals of madrasas [educational institutions] such as Minhajuddin Siraj, the author of the *Tabaqat-i Nastri*, who was appointed to head the Nasiriyya Madrasa in Delhi. Through these formal and informal channels, the primary aim of the *ulema* was to spread the religious Word, and uphold the Islamic religio-moral order as far as was possible. This was often a contentious issue since the Sultan’s ultimate objective was never the glorification of Islam but the success of the political life of the Sultanate. Given the fact that the majority of the subject population was non-Muslim, the sultan was more keen to act in a politically tactful way rather than solely upholding the banner of religion. (MHI-04, Block 6)

This brought the interests of the *ulema* and the sultan in direct clash on frequent occasions, and the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq is particularly significant in this regard. Muhammad bin Tughluq had appointed a number of non-Muslims in royal service since they were meritorious, and *alims*. Ziauddin Barani strongly condemned it in his writings. Fakhr-iMudabbir’s *Adabu’l Harb Wa Shujaa’* written in the honour of Sultan Iltutmish also lays emphasis on the noble birth of state officials. Muhammad Tughluq’s policies show that the upholding of religious ideals was not always the priority of the Sultan. Moreover, the interests of the Sultan and the *ulema* and the learned hardly coincided (MHI-04, Block 6).

*Sufis* enjoyed considerable influence during the medieval period. (See Unit 21 for the growth of *sufism* in India) Ibn Battuta informs us that at Cambay Shaikh Ali Haidary Qalandar enjoyed great respect among common masses, even foreign merchants paid visit to him. *Sufi khanqahs* (hospice) also helped in social mobility. On account of their association with prominent *sufis* their *murids* (disciples) also assumed importance and status. One of the disciple of Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri was a sweep who later turned a devout *sufi*. During medieval period there developed a tradition of imperial visits to *sufi* shrines. This suggests rulers’ acknowledgement of religious and spiritual authority of the *sufi* saints. Babur after his success in the battle of Panipat in 1526 paid visit to the *sufi* shrines of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. Such visits became the regular feature of the Mughal
period. Abul Fazl remarks that Akbar paid visits to the shrines to ‘strengthen his heart by the influences of holy recluses’. Ebba Koch emphasises that, ‘The imperial Mughal ritual of pilgrimages to Chishti dargahs reflected the specific relationship between sufis and kings as exponents of worldly and spiritual power which was already an object of continuous reflection and discussion during the Delhi Sultanate’. Akbar constructed dargah of Shaikh Salim Chishti as part of his Sikri, the new capital of Agra. Even Akbar used to regularly visit the dargah of Shaikha Muinuddin Chishti, the revered saint at Ajmer.

20.10 SUMMARY

The present Unit deals with the urban social groups during the medieval period. We have already seen in Unit 17 how the existing ruling elite receded to background giving way to the emergence of new classes of elites – the iqdadars, jagirdars and mansabdars. Muslims formed a big chunk of class of urban elites. As a result of introduction of new technologies, we find there emerged several new professional classes. Urbanisation, monetization, commercialisation and presence of highly centralised bureaucracy paved way for the emergence of middle class during the medieval period. Slavery was another important feature of this period.

20.11 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the powers and position of the urban elites during the medieval period in north-India.
2) Analyse the emergence of middle class during the medieval period in north-India.
3) Examine the emergence of new social groups during the medieval period in north-India.
4) Write a note on the emergence of slavery during the medieval period.
5) Discuss the position of women during the medieval period.
UNIT 21 CHANGING SOCIAL STRUCTURE
IN PENINSULAR INDIA

Structure
21.0 Introduction
21.1 Political Elites
21.2 Landed Elites
   21.2.1 Watandars
   21.2.2 Landed Elites in the Tamil Region
   21.2.3 Palayakkarrars
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21.8 Exercises

21.0 INTRODUCTION

There were certain factors that accelerated changes in society during the medieval period in the region of Deccan and South India. These factors were related to political, economic and religious developments that often led to the rise of new social groups and changed the nature of the pre-existing one. The decline of the Yadavas around tenth century AD, rise of the Kakatiyas in eastern Deccan, the establishment of the Bahamani kingdom in the fourteenth century followed by the establishment of the four Deccani sultanates of Adil Shahi, Nizam Shahi, Qutub Shahi and Barid Shahi and Imam Shahis, the Mughal invasion and expansion of Deccan in the seventeenth century and finally the establishment of the Marathas—all led to changing political configurations that influenced the society at the village and urban levels. Marathi, Kannada and Telugu speaking groups apart from having their individual spheres of interaction also interacted and influenced each other. The development and growth of Dakhani language and culture that began even before the establishment of the Bahamanis in1347 AD was accelerated with its establishment and introduced new aspects in the social life. Dakhani Urdu emerged as the local language in the Deccan region and was influenced by Marathi, Kannada and Telugu linguistic and cultural forms. In order to enhance their resource base, the state polities expanded agricultural areas and activities. The expansion of agriculture in the hilly and the forested areas and the settlement of new villages influenced the social composition significantly. (This has been discussed in the Unit 18, Block 5) In Eastern Deccan, in the region of the Kakatiyas of Warangal (1000-1326 AD) in Andhra Pradesh, the expansion of the agrarian base and transformation of the rural society involved construction of new temples. Numerous donations of land, especially the uncultivated forested ones, were made by the local chiefs, merchants, and the members of the royal family. These lands were cleared of forests, irrigation tanks were built on them and cultivation was initiated. Several tribes who inhabited these forests were converted to peasants and incorporated into the lower rung of the rural society. The temple served as the ‘social and political integrator’. It employed the peasants, artisans and pastoralist on the temple lands and for various temple activities and incorporated these different
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communities of the rural society within a single framework of religion. From the fourteenth century onwards, the various bhakti and Sufi cults in the Deccan due to their popular social base and a broad religious outlook represented in their interaction with the society a process of ‘acculturation’ that involved interaction and diffusion of cultural values and traditions between the various social groups, resulting in the development of new cultural characteristics.

Similarly, political changes in the peninsular region led to changing social situations. A period of transition can be seen during the gradual decline of the Cholas in the twelfth- thirteenth centuries, the invasions of the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century and the rise of the Vijayanagar Empire in the fourteenth century. Especially, the Hoysala occupation of the Tamil region and the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire by AD 1336, led to the integration of the three cultural zones of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. As a result, a network of relations developed between wetland agricultural settlements and dry upland zones with a narrow resource base. This brought into focus the Telugu warriors as well as the dominant agricultural community of the Velamas from the arid northern zones of the Deccan plateau and a new warrior class, subsequently known as the nayakas. Consequently, unsettled forested areas and hilly tracts situated on the peripheries of agricultural settlements gradually evolved into major political and economic centres. The population of these inhospitable tracts comprised of hunting tribes whose martial tradition became the basis of their recruitment in the Vijayanagar and nayaka armies. Subsequently, military recruitment began to attract a socially diverse group of troopers from beyond the boundaries of South India. A large number of North Indian, Deccani and Rajput warriors migrated southwards to join these armies. According to Susan Bayly, a ‘large number of Islamic motifs’ filtered through to South India during the Vijayanagar period (AD1336-1576) through this avenue of migration. (Susan Bayly, Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 31-68).

Simultaneous with the changing political conditions was the expansion and growth of trade, trading networks and urbanization. The merchant and the artisan class were much more mobile, territorial barriers being of little significance to them. For instance, Kannula and Komatti traders and Pattanulkar (silk weavers) from Saurashtra finally settled in the Tamil region during the Vijayanagar period. Particularly, the Pattanulkars migrated from Saurashtra, briefly settled in the city of Vijayanagara in northern Karnataka, from where they again moved out, and finally settled in the pilgrimage centers of Kancipuram, Madurai and Ramesvaram. The emergent mercantile communities were the followers of different religious traditions – Saiva, Vaisnava and Islam and their complex network of economic interaction influenced the society in the medieval period.

21.1 POLITICAL ELITES

The new warrior class, subsequently known as the nayakas, emerged as the patron of temples and mathas that promoted various religious systems during the medieval period. The nayakas were also involved in the management of the temples. Although the nayakas are primarily associated with the Vijayanagar Empire, the beginning of this social group as significant political elite is first noted in the Kakatiya kingdom of eastern Deccan. In the Kakatiya kingdom various landed elements especially the powerful chieftains of the Andhra rural society were incorporated into the political network. They were of non-noble ranks and their incorporation was at the expense of the older, established princes and chiefs of noble lineage. These chiefs already possessed hereditary rights over their own plots of land and had a fixed share in the agricultural produce of the village. In lieu of their services to the Kakatiya state, they were granted additional land that was assessed at concessional rates. They had the
power to remit taxes within their localities and held military titles like angaraksha, lenka and nayakas. (Cynthia Talbot, 2001. *Pre-colonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp.48-84) Such tenure was called vritti. Further, in order to incorporate the chiefs and warriors into the political framework, the Kakatiya state created a new type of teneurial right over territories called nayankaramu.

Changing political boundaries, ever mounting military requirements of the kingdoms, especially of the Vijayanagar Empire and the expansion of the agricultural frontier contributed to the increasing migration of the Telugu warrior class to the river valleys and peripheral areas of potential development. Referred to as the nayakas, they impinged upon the pre-existing local power groups and their respective spheres of control and emerged as the major benefactors of the temples and mathas. These nayakas were also called amaranayaka. According to Fernao Nuniz and Domigo Paes, the two Portuguese travellers who visited the Vijayanagar Empire during the sixteenth century in the reign of Krishnadevaraya refer to the nayakas as the agents of the Vijayanagar rulers, the rayas. The nayakas collected taxes from the territories on the raya’s behalf and rendered military service. They had a certain number of troops under their control and possessed revenue rights over land and territory called amaram. They also had the obligations of giving gifts to the temples, repairing and building tanks and reclaiming land for agriculture. Later on these nayakas became powerful and established independent states during the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

According to Noboru Karashima, the nayakas were large military commanders who were granted land by the king in the fifteenth century and functioned somewhat ‘like the feudal lords of medieval Europe and Japan.’ He says that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the legitimacy of the nayaka’s territorial rule was initially derived from the authority given by the king. The nayakas during this period were important officials like governors, mahamandaleshvara, generals, dandanayakas; revenue officers, adhikari and administrators. It is only in the sixteenth century according to Karashima that, they displayed more feudal characteristics. They had clear cut territories called nayakkattanam. “This feudal relationship was seen not only between the kings and the nayakas, but also amongst the nayakas themselves, between superiors and inferiors, which is also well reflected in the references to the merit given by the under lord for the benefit of the lord. At the bottom level, this feudal hierarchy embraced the big landholders in the village.” (Noboru Karashima, 1994. *Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. pp.35-38). Therefore there was a hierarchical network of lord-vassal relations which reached down the landlords and the occupant cultivators of the village.

Several historians like D.C. Sircar do not agree with the view that the nayakas and the nayankara system represented a feudal structure, for ‘fealty’, ‘homage’ and ‘subinfeudation’ associated with feudalism seems to find little evidence here.

An analysis of the nayaka rule shows that under them, there was political and economic stability and there was an expansion of manufacture and trade. They encouraged artisans and merchants and gave them protection as shown by the tax remission given to the kanmalas, and talarikkam collected from the weekly fair.

The political elites in the Deccan comprised of various sections of nobility and the iqtadars. In the Bahamani court, one of the influential factions within the nobility was the Afaqs. The term means universal that is those who do not have any roots. The Afaqs were therefore foreigners. The Afaqs migrated from Iran, Transoxiana and Iraq and became influential in the Bahamani court from the fifteenth century onwards. This created resentment amongst the older nobility called the Dakhanis. The Sultans
of the Bahamani kingdoms and the subsequent Deccan Sultanates often tried to support one group of nobility against another, so that neither group became strong enough to overwhelm the Sultan. These recurring factional fights imparted an unstable character to the polity and often led to the decline of that particular state.

After establishing his sovereignty in the Deccan, Hasan Bahaman Shah appointed all his allies who had helped him to drive out the Tughlaqs and establish the Bahamani kingdom with administrative posts. They were given revenue assignments known as the iqta. The institution of iqta resembled the iqtadari system of the Delhi Sultanate. The iqta holders had to maintain the troops and equipments and these were to be proportionate to the size of the iqta. The iqta given to various power groups by the Bahamani and the Deccani Sultanates were transferable assignments.

Though not so initially, the iqtadars in the Deccan subsequently emerged as absentee landlords based in the cities. The iqta in the Deccan were centred around the towns and forts and attracted trade and commerce as they provided security for the movement of the traders, cash and goods. There are evidences to show that the Bahamani iqtadars often gave iqta from their own assignments to the local zamindars that represented the powerful indigenous class of hereditary landholders. This has been seen as a process of sub-infeudation since it was not the central government that granted iqta to the local zamindars, but one of its own iqtadars. Therefore, the iqta became a mechanism by which the Bahamani state controlled the villages by absorbing the rural elites as a part of the political frame work.

**21.2 LANDED ELITES**

In this Section we will primarily focus on landed elites who happen to possess urban base as well.

**21.2.1 Watandars**

In the Deccan region, one of the powerful agrarian classes was that of the watandars. The holder of a watan was called the watandar. Watan meant a patrimony which was not only hereditary but also saleable and transferable. Watandars of pargana, like the deshmukhs and deshpandes were superior to the watandars of the village, the patils and kulkaranis. The watan was valued, for it was not only a lucrative source of income, but a symbol of social prestige. Despite acquiring political power and position in the state hierarchy, the Marathas were always keen to retain their original village watan which compared to the political power was permanent in nature. Several holders of temporary land tenures like saranjam, jagir, mokasa were always anxious to get these tenures converted to watan or inam that could remain with their family in perpetuity. Village officers, viz., the deshmukhs, deshpandes, patils, kulkarani and one of the balutedars, that is the village servants the Mahar communities held large landed holdings and were entitled to certain rights and privileges called haklavajma. All these privileges along with their respective administrative positions were called the watan. The position of the watandars in the agrarian hierarchy and their rights and privileges has already been discussed in detail in the unit on the rural society.

**21.2.2 Landed Elites in the Tamil Region**

In the Tamil region there were agrarian elites of diverse social background whose status in the agrarian hierarchy as well as in the political structure of the various states kept on changing. The river valleys from the sixth century onwards, witnessed a proliferation of the brahmadeyas and the temples at the royal initiative that recognized the potential of these two institutions for restructuring and integrating the economy and society. Therefore, a class of brahmana landed elites emerged. Since they were the repositories of better irrigation technology and farming methods, the land granted
to them became a mechanism for the extension of agriculture into unsettled areas and extraction of the surplus from various peasant groups. The significance of the brahmanas in the brahmadeyas stemmed from their Vedic-Puranic-Sastraic discourse that provided the social rationale for integrating diverse peasant and tribal groups through the institution of caste. Therefore linking peasants, local chiefs and other groups to the royalty, both the brahmana and the brahmadeya also utilized as the institutional channels of transmission and dissemination of the royal ideology. The proliferation of brahmadeyas in the river valleys was also instrumental in extending agriculture. The brahmana landed class implemented the royal irrigation projects and this gave them the crucial right to organize and manage the production and water resources, often with the vellala community, i.e. the powerful non-brahmana landowners Therefore, the brahmana landed elites often by their presence, in the non-brahmana villages promoted the royal strategy for ensuring the loyalty of the various social groups there and provided the much-needed manpower for the vast irrigation projects.

Political and economic changes further influenced the caste equations within the rural society, when the brahmana landed elites in the brahmadeyas were replaced by several non-brahmana groups as the powerful landed elites. For instance, in a village called Ukkal situated in the lower Kaveri valley of the Tamil region, the brahmanas were prosperous landholders controlling the agricultural production till twelfth century. However, by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they were selling their lands. The immediate cause was the heavy taxation imposed by the Vijayanagar rulers. The non-brahmanas bought the land in Ukkal, thereby emerging as new landed magnates of the village towards the end of Chola rule.

During the Chola period, there was an influential non-brahmana landed group called the nattavars or nattars meaning the people of the territory of the nadus. But inscriptions refer to only the influential representatives of the nadus implying that the nattavars were the landed elites and the representatives of the big landholders. They collected dues, imposed forced labour and have been portrayed as an exploitative class. (Noboru Karashima, Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; pp.42-61). They were actual controllers of local production, having under them small landholders, cultivators and perhaps artisans and merchants. Nattavars controlled funds for worship in the temples and conducting repair works. Their power was rooted deeply in the locality. The Chola period nattavars were mainly the Vellalas tied to each other by kinship network. Some of the locally entrenched Vellala landed communities emerged as big landowners with titles like nadudaiyan or nadalvan. Some of them also had titles like arayan, used by the big landholders in the later Chola period. The nattavars included the Pillais, Mudalis, Reddis, and Vanniyas.

In the Vijayanagar period their status underwent transformation due to changes in the land holding system and influx of the migrants. One of the nattavar groups, the Vanniyas from fourteenth century onwards joined the Vijayanagar army. They had appropriated the kaniyatchi rights or proprietary rights of several villages and became the local leaders. While the nattavars in the Chola period were mostly Vellalas, those in the Vijayanagar Empire, belonged to several different communities, like, artisans, merchants and so on. The exploitative attitude of the nattavars is ascertained by the inscriptive evidence when the Valangai-Idangai groups, that is the left-hand and right-hand castes (to be discussed in the following section) comprising of producers and merchants revolted in 1429 against the landholders and the Vanniyas. (Noboru Karashima, 1994, p.57) Thereafter, the power of the nattavars were substantially reduced and with the consolidation of the nayaka regime by sixteenth century the nattavars were marginalized, though some of them continued to function as the local link between the state and the villagers.
Nattavars often collaborated with the nayakas in making grants to the temples. However, their status had declined for the taxes which they collected like nattuviniyogam, nattu-kanikkai, nattayam were no longer seen in the epigraphs of the sixteenth century illustrating a decline in their status. Besides, during the Vijayanagar period, the importance of naidu as a territorial unit for local production had decreased. Probably, this was because of a new trade centre petti or the reorganization of the local production system after the establishments of the nayakkattams. The term nattavars was used but the actual unit of local administration shifted from the naidu to the area called parru. Consequently in many localities the nattavars’ original character as the corporate unit of landholders in a locality must have been lost.

Thus, a multi community composition of the agricultural elite emerged who related the local society to the political authorities. These diverse agricultural communities contributed to the building of sub regional agrarian domains around important towns in developing agricultural zones. The medieval configurations of the naidus vanished, replaced by a set of sub regions defined as hinterlands of towns along routes of transport and communication.

21.2.3 Palaiyakkarars

Amongst the rural landed elites were also the warrior peasant communities during the sixteenth century. In the dry upland zones, the agriculturists came into conflict with the hunters and pastoralists that often led to the incorporation of the latter into the agricultural community. These changes provided the context for the emergence of a warrior peasant class, both economically and politically powerful and primarily non-brahmana and Telugu in composition. These warrior peasant groups later developed into palaiyakarars or poligars. They are called so because in the sixteenth century they were made incharge of military camps called the palaiyams. Later these camps evolved into ‘small kingdoms’ ranging from three villages to almost 2,000 square miles. They were probably the descendants of the local chieftains, araiyars. Nicholas Dirks refers to them as the ‘little kings’. The palaiyakarars comprised mainly of the Telugus, Kannadigas, Kaladi, Kallars, Vokkaligas, Maravas, Vadugas and so on. The warrior chiefs reclaimed vast stretches of land and developed them into towns. They used to impose heavy taxes on the peasants, artisans and merchants that often led to rural tensions. The rise of these poligars displaced the older Tamil peasants and landholders; especially the brahmanas already settled there and created a new class of landed magnates.

With the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire in the seventeenth century and the nayakas in the early eighteenth centuries, these palaiyakarars with their small political systems gained importance. Caste and territorial loyalties were important for them as on the basis of kinship networks they consolidated their respective status. The nayakas especially of Madurai attempted to bring the poligars into the fold of the ruling elite.

21.3 VALANGAI-IDANGAI (RIGHT HAND AND LEFT HAND CASTES)

The expansion of agriculture led to an increase in landed transactions, private and temple holdings, particularly in the non-brahmana villages. This created a hierarchical structure of the landed rights with the increasing prominence of the Vellalas as the dominant agricultural community vis-à-vis the lower agricultural groups. The agrarian hierarchy escalated the tensions within the agrarian community. Simultaneously, the growth of urban centers and intensification of mercantile activities led to the rising importance of the nagarams, merchants, craftsmen and weavers, especially the kaikkolas. Hence, the rising social importance of the various non-brahmana groups led to a movement towards a higher caste status, especially the claims of the artisans...
to a twice-born caste status with a respectable ritual space in the temples. This bid for social mobility in the twelfth century culminated into a “societal crisis”. The conflicts that escalated this social crisis were usually between the artisans and agriculturists, sub-castes of the artisans like the kaikkolas and saliyas, hill and forest people and the different merchant groups. The existing social structure weakened and led to the crystallization of the non-brahmana communities into a dual vertical division of the Valangai (Right hand castes) and Idangai (Left hand castes), within the traditional structure of the caste society. However, the Vellalas and the brahmanas remained outside this dual division. Further social tension manifested in 1429, when the Valangai and Idangai groups revolted against the brahmanas and the Vellalas.

21.4 TRADERS AND ARTISANS

One of the direct consequences of the agrarian expansion was the escalation of commercial activities in the ninth century that led to the growth of market centers, nagarams and a network between them that linked towns and villages, to the managaram, usually a royal centre and a port. Due to commercial activities of overland and inland trade, new trade routes and urban centres came up linking the remote and newly conquered regions with the nuclear areas and the coast. The spread of guild activities and trading associations, namely the Ayyayole 5000, Tamil Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurruvar, foreign merchant organization, Anjuvannam brought forth the mercantile community with its diverse groups of traders, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and itinerant traders. One such prominent trading community that became prominent in the ninth century was the Nagarattar, whose members applied the chetti suffix. Often the mercantile communities invested in agriculture, gifted to the temples, further strengthening the ties of integration, and inter dependence. One such weaver community, the kaikkolas had significant links with the temples and became an important social group that the religious traditions attempted to incorporate in order to project a liberal outlook. In several places, the kaikkolas formed their own-armed bands and emerged as the ‘merchant- warriors’.

By ninth century, clusters of brahmadeyas and temples had developed into centers of urban growth, thus connecting villages, urban centers and royal capital, diverse population and religion within the same complex. The multi-temple complex of Kanchipuram and Tanjavur emerged as important politico-urban centers. The economic outreach of the temple at Tanjavur covered the whole of Cola kingdom and even northern part of Sri Lanka. The emergence of different mercantile classes and weavers due to migration has been discussed at the beginning of this unit. From the eighth and ninth century onwards, due to trading interaction with the Arab merchants, numerous towns along the Coromandel coast developed. Pulicat, Karaikal, Nagore, Nagapatnam were some of the well known trading settlements along the coast. Since most of these port towns had trading relations with the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean, they cam ‘to be identified as centres of formal Islam in South India. By thirteenth century a significant number of Tamil speaking Muslims could be recognized. Muslim traders were involved in the trade of gem stones, pearls, cotton goods and most important horses that were supplied to the Pandyas, Cholas and the Vijayanagar states. These traders had well developed international links in south-east and West Asia. The maritime trading towns came to be dominated by the Sunni trading families known as the maraikkayars. They were primarily ship owners. Another group of Sunni Muslims who were based in these towns were the Labbais. They were pearl divers, fishermen, weavers and artisans by profession. Migration in the seventeenth century to the Tamil trading towns brought a group of Dakhani speaking Muslims, the Naviyats. The Naviyats were elite Shafai Muslims who were in Mughal service in the Deccan during seventeenth century. The Mughal occupation of Deccan resulted in the migration of the Pathan warriors, Pathan merchants and

21.5 RELIGIOUS GROUPS

There were several religious groups during the medieval period who were attached to the temples, mathas, khangahs and dargahs. A large number of them had a popular social base and some of them were exclusive in their following. Amongst the religious groups two were significant, the Sufis and the matha and sectarian leaders attached to the temples. A discussion on the rise of Sufis as a social class and their increasing power is provided in the next section.

In the Deccan, the complex network between the court and the different Sufi silsilahs, Sufis and the ulamas and Sufis and the larger society, broadened the sphere for the Sufis from mere pious saints engaged in religious contemplation. Some Sufis emerged as orthodox groups whose aim was to purify Islam of its folk elements. There were some Sufis, who were important writers. They wrote numerous mystic and popular literatures, which became an important vehicle of integrating the non-elites, especially the non-Muslims. Another kind of Sufis were those who accepted land grants from the state and emerged as the landed elites or inam dars. These landed Sufis were called the pirzadas, literally meaning born to a saint. For these Sufis, the court politics, royal attitudes and patronage were important. Such conservatism and preference for court patronage produced a reaction from some of the Sufis. These Sufis were known as dervishes and ranged from spiritual heretics to non-conformists. They were hostile to the pirzada inamdars as they found them to be too compromising.

The dervishes rejected Islamic orthodoxy and its urban materialistic orientation and withdrew partially or totally from the ‘structural relations’ of the world. At no point of time were the Sufis involved in conversion. Sufis were not Muslim ‘missionaries’ as they made no conscious attempt to gain non-Muslim followers. Most of the devotees who regularly visited the dargahs and their shrines came usually from a marginalized social background and gradually came under the influence of Islam.

Along with the temples, the institution of the mathas assumed further importance in this period. As a powerful institution within the larger structure of the temple, the mathas were either a competitive unit vis-à-vis the temple authorities or participated along with them in various transactions. The religious leaders or the acharyas and the mathadhipatis were the vital link between the local population and the new class of rulers, thereby enabling the establishment of political authority over the newly conquered areas. The gifts were made to the deities and the sectarian leaders or the acharyas and the head of the mathas were the instruments through which the gift was made. In return, they were the recipients of privileges from the ruling class and also gained greater control over temple organization and administration. Thus, these sectarian leaders established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimizied themselves as central figures of the community. A guru commanded a large group of followers, thereby linking the different groups in the society into the mainstream of the community. The guru initiated the disciple into the community and was instrumental in the dissemination of the theology. The acharyapurushas as well as the mathas had their respective retinue of servants, system of recruitment and organization comparable to any political system. The influence of the jiyers and acharyas was so pervasive that they were even deified and worshipped.
21.6 SUFISM IN DECCAN

Sufism refers to various mystical tendencies within Islam. The main idea of Sufism is to develop religious experience in direct communion with god, based on the spirit of Quranic piety. The Sufis while accepting the Sharia did not confine their religious practise to formal adherence. In order to have religious experience with god; the Sufis advocated the importance of traversing the Sufi path, tariqa, under the guidance of a spiritual person known as shaikh, pir or murshid. The shaikh himself should have successfully traversed the Sufi path and established direct relationship with god. The disciple was called murid who had to pass through series of stages, maqamat and changing psychological conditions, hal to attain concentration, zikr and consequently attain communion with god.

There developed a number of orders within Sufism called silsilahs, in and outside India with their distinct characteristics. The centre of the Sufi activities was the khanqahs or hospices, where the pir imparted spiritual training to his murids. The popularity of the khanqahs depended upon the reputation of its pir. Some of the well known silsilahs in the medieval period were the Suhrawardi, Chishti, Qadri, and Shattaris. Out of these, except Suhrawardi silsilahs, the rest flourished in north Indian as well as the Deccan region. The Sufis organized impassioned musical recital, sama to induce a mystical state of ecstasy. However, there were differences of opinion amongst the Sufi orders over the forms of sama.

With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the beginning of the thirteenth century, various Sufi orders migrated from Central Asia, where they were originally based. The attack of the Mongols in Baghdad that subsequently ruined the city and the execution of the Abbasid caliphate by the Mongols in 1258 AD, created a situation of insecurity and persecution. Under these circumstances, the Sufis along with other refugees migrated to India. They established several khanqahs in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in various parts of India, including Deccan. Although an offshoot of Iranian and Central Asian philosophy and practice Sufis, as it developed in India, was influenced by environment of the sub-continent. The various silsilahs were located in different socio-economic and political context and responded to that context in their own way. Hence, each silsila had its individual phases of growth, stagnation and revival.

Three Stages of Sufis Order

Scholars (J.S. Trimingham, The Sufis Orders in Islam, Oxford, 1971) have identified three stages in the Sufi institutional orders:

1) The Khanqah Stage: This stage was a period of Sufi mysticism, from ninth to the twelfth century, when contemplation and introspection on matters of religion produced prolific mystical literature. The Sufis led a simple and often an austere life. The Sufi orders were undifferentiated, where the relation between the master and disciple was not formal and neither did the master in any way claim to be the mediator between god and the student.

2) The Tariqa Stage: From the thirteenth century onwards, the Sufi orders underwent significant transformations. The mystical techniques that were the means to achieve communion with god were systematized through specific spiritual exercises. There were spiritual lineages or silsilahs which were a distinct school of thought and had respective founders. A person had to take a vow of spiritual allegiance, baiat from the pir, who usually represented a particular spiritual lineage and was the head of the khanqah. The spiritual lineages went right up to Prophet himself. This vow of allegiance (baiat) carried with it several rituals, like bestowing the khilafat-nama (a written certificate), khirqa (a patched frock) and other objects of spiritual succession. Thus, initiation involved the consecration of the initiate in a formal ceremony.
A hierarchy emerged with the formalization of the teacher-disciple relationship. Veneration and worship of *pir* became important. *Pir* was now the mediator between god and man and became a saint, or *wali*, literally meaning a friend of god. Thus, the *Sufi* orders gradually transformed from spiritual school to saint-centered cults in which the spiritual power or *barkat* of the individual *pir* was significant. As the system got consolidated the succession was based on family ties, where the descendants of the *pir*’s family became the successor. In India, they were called *pirzadas*, i.e. born of a *pir*.

3) **The Taifa Stage:** This stage can be discerned from fifteenth century onwards. *Barakat* or spiritual power that qualified a saint was transmitted to his grave, which now structurally became a tomb. This tomb, known as the *dargah*, emerged as the centre of pilgrimage attraction. Therefore, *Sufism* now emerged as a devotional movement, the object of devotion being the saint. It no longer remained a mystical movement. The cult of saint had greater attraction for a common man who would find it difficult to grasp the abstract ideas of mysticism and spirituality.

However, this classification has certain limitations. It does not help to understand the relations of the *Sufis* with the *ulemas*, court and the non-Muslim population. Some *Sufis* belonged to more than one order; others belonged to the same order but interacted in a contradictory way with the society. (Richard Eaton, 1978, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India*. Princeton)

### 21.6.1 The Historical Background and the Development of *Sufism* in the Deccan (Fourteenth to Seventeenth Century AD)

In 1327 AD, the Tughulq ruler of Delhi Sultanate, Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq, ordered the transfer of capital from Delhi to Daultabad which was situated in the Deccan. This transfer also involved the shifting of bases of the residents of Delhi. One such group who were ordered to migrate was the *Sufis*. *Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib* (d.1340), of the Chishti *silsilah* was one such well known *Sufi* who migrated to Daultabad and subsequently made it his centre of activities and introduced the Chishti order there. Another well known saint who migrated was Gesudaraz. Gesudaraz at that time was a child. However, after sometime he returned to Delhi only to leave it after several years for Deccan, when Delhi was invaded by Timur in 1398. Both the saints belonged to the Chishti *silsilah*.

Of all the *silsilahs* the Chishti *silsilah* was most popular in the north as well as in the Deccan, especially during the period of the Bahamini Sultanate (1347-1489AD). The Chishti *silsilah* originated in Herat and was introduced in India by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti who migrated to India and finally settled in Ajmer in 1206. He had a large number of Muslim and non-Muslim followers. His successor was Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi, Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagrai in Nagrai in Rajasthan, Bakhtiyar Kaki had several well known descendants. His immediate descendant was Khwaja Fariduddin Masud, also known as Ganjshakar or Baba Farid. He ultimately settled in Ajodhan in Punjab. Baba Farid’s disciple was Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1236-1325) who made Delhi the most famous centre of the Chishti order. Later his successors spread the Chishti order to various parts of the country including Deccan. Shaikh Burhanuddin Gharib was Nizamuddin Auliya’s successor. Some Chishti saints like Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi, were also popular in Delhi during Mohammad bin Tughlaq’s period. However, since he never appointed a successor, the Chishti *silsilah* after his death did not have any commanding figure. Gesudaraz was one of his disciples.

With the decline of Delhi Sultanate, the *Sufis* dispersed to stable provincial kingdoms and established their *khangabs* there. One such area which attracted the *Sufis* was the region of the Deccan plateau. The migration of the *Sufis* to the region of Deccan, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries should be seen against the
background of the establishment of the Bahamani kingdom and the subsequent five Sultanates in the Deccan, viz., the Adil Shahis (AD 1490-1686) of Bijapur, Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar (1496), Barid Shahis of Bidar (1504), Imad Shahis of Berar (1510) and the Qutub Shahis of Golkanda (1543). Hasan Bahman Shah who was the founder of the Bahamani kingdom was one of the governors of the Tughlaq provinces in the Deccan. He asserted his independence against the Tughlaqs, drove them out and established a new political state. The various Telugu chieftains of eastern and southern Deccan who had fought against the Tughlaqs, some of them successfully, assisted Hasan Bahman Shah in founding the Bahamani state in Western Deccan. Since Bahman Shah was in service of the Tughlaqs, this gave him political authority and legitimacy to generate support amongst the Telugu chieftains, and therefore, the Bahamani could be considered as the Tughlaq successor state in Deccan.

During the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the plateau had emerged as a stable political, social and cultural centre. The development of the Dakhani culture imparted a distinct identity to the region. The cities like Gulbarga, Bidar and Bijapur were the centre of political and cultural activities. This attracted a large number of Sufis, who primarily had an urban orientation. For instance, as already stated, Gesudaraz, the Chishti saint migrated from Delhi to Gulbarga. A number of Qadri Sufis migrated from Arabia to Bidar. Several Sufis came from Safawi Iran. However, the Adil Shahi dynasty, despite being well established by sixteenth century failed to attract any Sufis, for it was dominated by Shias, who were antagonistic to Sufis. (Richard Eaton, 1978, p.286). The Qadri Sufis were affiliated to the Sunni sect and the Shattari Sufis were antagonistic to the Shias. It is only in the reign of Sultan Ibrahim II (1580-1627) that Sufis entered Bijapur. The reasons were mainly two. First, the disturbances in Gujarat and Bidar in late sixteenth century drove some Sufis towards Bijapur. Second, there was a significant transformation in the state religion from isna-ashari Shi’ism to Sunnism. This meant that the political power shifted from foreign Iranis to native Deccanis. Besides, the Sultan himself adopted a broad outlook, encouraging both Muslim and non-Muslim traditions. Hence numerous Sufis, especially of the Qadri and the Shattari silsilahs were attracted to Bijapur. Most of these Sufis were first generation immigrants from places outside Deccan, mainly from the Arab world.

Therefore, the court politics, royal attitudes and patronage were important for the Sufis. Several tombs were built during the Adil Shahi period indicating a transition from tariqa to taifa Sufism in Bijapur.

In connection with this, the attitude of the Chishtis is important as there was a shift from earlier indifference towards politics to interest in it and finally distancing from the state and its mundane affairs. During the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries in the period of the Bahamanis, the Chishtis developed close relations with the Sultan, accepted court patronage and were important in politics. This was a departure from their earlier attitude in Delhi where they often declined court patronage. The Bahmani kings realizing the spiritual potential of these Sufis and their close network with the society and popular social base gave them land grants and built magnificent Sufi shrines. The most prominent of these Chishtis was Muhammad Banda Nawaz Gesudaraz (1321-1422). Sultan Feroz Shah Bahamani (1397-1422) granted him four villages. After his death, his descendants continued to receive land grants from the Bahamani Sultans and they eventually became the landed elites in Deccan. His tomb later developed in to a popular pilgrimage site. Theurg at the dargahs especially of Gesudaraz had become a major festival by the seventeenth century attended by the ruling and non-ruling classes. Gesudaraz brought about changes in the Chisti philosophy especially those aspects that were not in favour with the ulemas. He was an orthodox Sufi and declared the supremacy of the shariat over all Sufi stages.

The changing trends in politics and shifting royal patronage finally led to the decline of the Chishti order in the Bahamani kingdom. The change of Bahamani capital from
Gulbarga to Bidar in 1422 and the pro-foreigner and anti-Deccan attitudes of the Bahamanis at Bidar encouraged the immigration of the foreign Sufis, who were now being patronized at the expense of the Chishtis as the latter were considered to be too ‘Indian.’ Thereafter, from the end of the fifteenth century, the Chishtis again thrived in Deccan till seventeenth century. They distanced themselves from the court politics of the Adil Shahi kingdom as can be seen in the location of their new centre, the Shahpur Hillock, which was outside Bijapur, the capital of the Adil Shahis. The Chishtis reverted to their original attitude. They maintained distance from the court and the ulamas and drew inspiration from the local influences, hence resembling the earliest Chishti saints of Delhi. It is for this reason that the Chishti silsilah unlike the other Sufis silsilahs were not affected by the sectarian conflict between the Shias and Sunnis in the Adil Shahi politics because they no longer depended upon the court patronage and were not interested in political affairs. The Shahpur Hillock had a single khanqah where several Sufis congregated, unlike the Shattari and Qadri Sufis, who had several hospices in the city patronized by the state.

By eighteenth century, with the decline of the Adil Shahis, natural calamities and epidemics and the Maratha invasions in Bijapur reduced the city to ruins and the urban culture almost disappeared. This was a setback for the Sufis and Sufism, which primarily had an urban orientation, as has been mentioned earlier. Hardly any khanqah remained in Bijapur as functioning unit. The landed elites amongst the Sufis known as the pirs were forced to migrate to Hyderabad and Arcot for state patronage, without which they could not survive. However, the Chishtis continued to be in the Shahpur Hillock outside Bijapur and emerged as a significant and popular Sufi order.

21.6.2 The Political Role of the Sufis

It was widely recognized in the medieval politics that because of their special spiritual powers, barakat, their direct communication with god, and their popular social base, the Sufis had the authority to grant moral legitimacy to a state and make them a legitimate part of the Indo-Islamic world. This political role of the Sufis in granting legitimacy to the state was based upon the following developments:

1) For the Sunni Muslims, the spiritual leadership formally rested with the Caliph and informally with the Sufis. However, with the downfall of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 1298 AD due to the Mongol invasions, the Sufis were now considered virtually the spiritual leaders, who had the capability to authenticate the political leadership of the Sultan and his sovereignty, i.e. hukumat over his domains.

2) The wilayat or the spiritual territory of a Sufi shaikh theoretically had no territorial limitations. Hence, it followed that the Sufis could bestow moral legitimacy to any state anywhere in the world.

3) If a Sufi shaikh authenticated a state, then the character of that state transformed from Dar-al-Harb, i.e. the Abode of War to Dar-al-Islam, i.e. the Abode of Peace, implying that the state could no longer be attacked by any Islamic polity and the rebellion, which often became the basis of the foundation of the state could now be justified.

The importance of the above mentioned aspects were particularly crucial for a newly established state like the Bahamani, whose founder, Hasan Bahman Shah rebelled against the Tughluqs and acquired power in 1347 AD. Further this legitimacy provided an ideological support to Bahman Shah for expanding and consolidating his political and social network. In association with this, the prophecy of the Sufi shaikh in predicting the political future of an individual especially the Sultan was taken virtually to be an appointment. It was understood that the shaikh was conveying the divine will, since he was already in direct communion with god to ‘lease out the political
sovereignty.' This is illustrated in the recorded sayings, i.e. *fażkira* of Nizam-al-Din Auliya, the Chishti saint in fourteenth century Delhi. Having just met with Sultan Mohammad bin Tughluq at his *khanqah*, and while Hasan Shah Bahamani, then in the service of the Tughlaqs was waiting outside, Nizam al-Din Auliya is supposed to have remarked, ‘One Sultan has just left my door; another is waiting there.’(Richard Eaton, 2000, *Essays on Islam in Indian History*, Oxford, p.168. The evidence is from Saiyid Ali Tabataba’s *Burhan-i-Maathir* and Muhammad Qasim Firishta, *Tarikh-i- Firishta*).

When Hasan Bahman Shah revolted in 1347 and became the ruler, Nizam al-Din’s prophecy was used as an ideological mechanism for declaring the rebellion and the foundation of the state a legitimate one that could be accepted by the larger society. Hasan Bahman Shah recognised this and patronized various Chishtis in the Bahamani kingdom and made lavish endowments to the shrine of Burhan al-Din Gharib, the disciple of Nizam al- Din who had migrated to Deccan. The shrine was located in Khuldabad in north Deccan. Such gifts to the shrine implied that Sultan was also acknowledging Burhan al-Din Gharib’s as his own *pir* or master, Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi, especially when Delhi was still under the control of the Tughlaqs. Such an acknowledgement was to highlight Nizamuddin Auliya’s prediction about Hasan Shah becoming a Sultan that became the basis of the ruler’s authority.

Hence the Chishti *shaikhs* played crucial role in the state formations in Deccan. There were several reasons for the importance of the Chishtis in polity and society in medieval India, especially the medieval Deccan. Unlike the other *Sufi* saints whose tombs were located outside India, in Central and West Asia, those of the Chishti saints were located within the sub-continent. This was important for the *khanqahs*, tombs and shrines were the focus of pilgrimage and *Sufi* activities. This gave the Chishtis the double advantage of having an Indian as well as Islamic character. Such a broad based outlook of the Chishti *silsilah* was useful for the Deccani states to establish their legitimacy vis-a-vis the political partners and the local population of the Deccani society, amongst whom the Chishtis were already popular.

Another factor that affirmed the spiritual power of the *Sufis* in the political sphere was their tendency to be highly mobile. Wherever the Delhi Sultanate extended itself, and appointed imperial governors in the far flung areas, the *Sufi* shaikhs, especially the Chishtis accompanied them and established their *khanqahs* in these areas. These imperial governors were the future rulers as it happened in the case of Hasan Bahman Shah. Under these circumstances, Chishti *shaikhs* who had already developed a wide social base, “indigenized and legitimized new, satellite Indo-Muslim polities.”

Apart from the state, the society also recognized the *Sufis*’ political potential. The popular perception was reflected in Abd al-Malik Isami’s *Futuh-i-Salatin*. According to Isami the well being of the sultan and the prosperity of his domain was dependant on the blessings and auspicious presence of the *Sufi shaikhs*. He illustrated this by giving the example of Nizam al-Din Auliya, on whose death in 1325, Delhi was reduced to a city of chaos. Further, Daultabad in the Deccan plateau prospered when Burhan al Din Gharib migrated there. His successor was Shaikh Zain al-Din Shirazi, who was the contemporary of Hasan Shah Bahmani.

However, despite the relations of mutual dependence between the Sultan and the *Sufi* saints, there conflicts and contradictions too, often made this relationship tense. The very spiritual authority on the basis of which the predictions were made and legitimacy was bestowed became a source of conflict between *shaikhs* and the Sultans. For instance, Feroz Shah Bahamani (1397-1422) and Gesudaraz had numerous differences. The most important issue that soured the relation between the two was that of succession. The Sultan wanted his son Hasan Khan to be anointed as the successor by the *shaikh* and the *shaikh* clearly favoured the Sultan’s younger

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brother, Ahmad. Thereupon the Sultan shifted his patronage to the tomb and shrine of a Muslim holy man locally known as Khalifat al Rahman. The Sultan also favoured Baba Kamal Mujarrad, whose tomb faced the sultan’s tomb in Gulbarga. Consequently, Gesudaraz was marginalized.

21.6.3 Social Role of the Sufis

a) Sufis as Disseminators: The Sufis disseminated their teachings to the poor illiterate non-Muslim and Muslim population, like the cotton carders, barbers, smith, potter and so on through a range of literature. This literature comprised of folk songs which contained analogies from everyday life of the people. Written mainly in the seventeenth and eighteenth century by Bijapuri Sufis belonging to the Chishti order, these songs have been preserved in the oral tradition of Dakhan speaking villagers throughout the Deccan plateau and represent the characteristics of folk Islam. These songs were not composed in Persian, but in Dakhan, the local language or the vernacular of medieval Deccan. Through these songs, attempt was to disseminate not the complex mysticism, but simple tenets of Islam and Sufism, devotion to god, Prophet Muhammad, respect for one’s pir or spiritual guide. The songs were particularly aimed at the womenfolk, who would sing these songs while occupied in various household chores.

There were different categories of folk songs related to different types of household work and different aspects of woman’s life. For example, *chakki-nama*, associated with grinding food grains at the grindstone, *charkha nama*, associated with the spinning of thread at the wheel or *charkha*, *lun-nama*, associated with lullaby, *shadi nama* or wedding songs, *suhagan nama* or married woman’s songs and *subaila* or eulogistic songs. (Richard Eaton, 2000, pp.189-202). These songs were meant to appeal to the women and had relevance to their lives, for example marriage, pining for the lover, mother and child relationship and so on. It was expected that while women would perform their household chores, they would sing these songs and practise *zikr* or the Sufi spiritual exercise of concentration and contemplation.

The Sufis who composed these songs were the immediate spiritual descendants of the great mystical Sufis of Bijapur who mostly wrote in Persian and articulated the mystic teachings of their master in a simple manner in these songs. Several themes from the pre-existing folk songs preserved in the oral traditions in Marathi and Kannada were also adapted. The Marathi village songs of this type had also a devotional purpose, focus being the deity of Vithoba in Pandharpur. Therefore, this literature bridged the gap between the mystical aspects of Islam with popular religion.

The trend of *pir* worship and devotionalism at *pir’s* tomb that developed during this period linked the ‘inner circle’ of *pir’s* disciples with the non-elite devotees who visited the shrines and were a part of the ‘outer circle.’ In this connection, the Sufi folk songs that expounded the tenets of Islam, the miraculous power, i.e. *karamat* of the Sufis and their role as the mediator between god and people played a significant role. Due to their popular circulation, different social groups, particularly rural women were drawn to these shrines. In this context women played a significant role in dissemination of the ideas in these songs and literature and subsequently became an important medium of spreading Islam. The women it appears were the most frequent visitors to the shrines or *dargahs* primarily because one of the *barakat* of the saint was associated with fertility. They also participated in various functions and festivals there. The *malfuzat* literatures in the seventeenth century points out that the women entered even the inner circles of Sufi followers and along with the men were instructed in the religious mysticism and exercises to achieve the goal of direct communion with god. Although a large number of women came from non-Muslim background, “they perceived no great theological or social wall existing between Islam and Hinduism. For them the village *dargah* formed only one more facet of an already diffuse and eclectic religious life.” (Richard Eaton, 2000, p.198). Consequently, these women would
convey the teachings to their children. In this way, Sufi ideas through the folk literature and the cult of saints represented in the dargahs entered the household space through the woman, binding the members of the family to the dargah and that particular Sufis silsilah and subsequently Islam. In this manner Islam spread to the non-elite, rural folks.

However, this should not be misunderstood as the attempt on the part of the Sufis to convert people to Islam. Sufis were not Muslim ‘missionaries’ as they made no conscious attempt to gain non-Muslim followers who for the reasons cited above were attracted to their shrines. Most of the devotees who regularly visited the dargahs came from a marginalized social background and gradually came under the influence of Islam. Hence, a following was created focused on the pir, and “the diffusion of the Islamic precepts was a by-product of this effort.” Besides, these Sufis were also trying to create a place for themselves as the mediator between god and people and win over the spiritual allegiance of the people. Therefore, there was never a sudden conversion to Islam at any point of time. The Sufis who entered Deccan in the thirteenth and fourteenth century have been portrayed in the later legends as militant champions of Islam. There is little historical evidence to show this. Those claiming that their ancestors were converted by some Sufi saint or the other are till day undergoing ‘a gradual process of Islamic acculturation’ which is also uneven in terms of food, dress and speech. Besides, such a claim was motivated by their desire to establish a long association with the dargah of the Sufi and their long standing in Islam. Hence, the dargah represented a process of Islamic acculturation, which represented a process of interaction and diffusion of cultural values and traditions between the two societies, resulting in acquisition of new cultural characteristics.

Sufis were not merely pious mystics preaching Islam. They were a heterogeneous group reacting to the social environment they were situated in. Richard Eaton in his study on the Sufis of Bijapur identifies Sufis as a class with their distinct affiliations. (Richard Eaton, 1978, Sufis of Bijapur: 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India. Princeton). As a social class there were four types of Sufis. They were:

1) Reformist Sufis: These Sufis mainly belonging to the Qadri and Shattari orders flourished during the reign of the Adil Shahi sultan, Ibrahim II (1580-1627). Though the Sultan patronized them, but his broad religious outlook was not received favourably by these Sufis. They shunned the use of Dakhni language and were exclusive in their social interaction. This orthodox reaction intensified particularly during the times of Ibrahim’s successors.

The Sufis of the Qadri and Shattari order took upon themselves to reform Islam in Bijapur and influence the sultan. They were city based and had close ties with Arabic traditions. They often collaborated with the ulamas. They developed their khanqahs, had respective murids and received khilafat from some pir. Their hospices were centres of Sufi activities and discourses. Their khanqahs were popular and after death, their tombs became important pilgrimage centres, reflecting popular devotional attitude while in their lifetime they were antagonistic towards it.

2) Literary Sufis: Some Sufis were important writers who wrote numerous mystic and popular literatures. They were mostly Chishtis who lived in isolated place on the Shahpur Hillock outside Bijapur and were not significantly affected by the changing fortunes of the Bijapur court. Their mystical writings gave a respectable status to Dakhani Urdu, which was finally marginalized with the Mughal conquest of Deccan in the seventeenth century. Their role in developing the Sufi folk literature which became an important vehicle of integrating the non-elites, especially the non-Muslims has already been discussed. Their popularity also coincided with the Sufi faith which now heavily centered on the dargahs.
Another kind of Sufis were those who accepted land grants from the state and emerged as the landed elites or inamdars in Bijapur. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Bijapur state was undergoing social and political turmoil. At this juncture, the Sultan’s political strategy was to placate the ulemas and win over the Sufis of non-Chishti origin whose ancestors had a popular social base. Therefore numerous land grants were made to them and the state patronage was extended so that these Sufis could communicate the royal ideology and legitimize it within the larger society. These landed Sufis were called the pirzadas, literally meaning born to a saint. Consequently, certain changes took place within the Sufi institutions. The khanqahs were ignored in favour of dargahs, which now started attracting numerous devotees and their management became a lucrative source of income. Besides, the state patronized those orders that had popular dargahs for it gave them an access to the larger society which they wished to control. Since the continuation of land grants was dependant on the state’s will, therefore the state intervened and controlled the internal affairs of the dargah, especially in appointing, confirming or rejecting a successor. The Sufis now themselves gave less importance to the khanqahs and focused on the dargahs. The ‘cult of personality’ replaced the ‘cult of order’. The concept of pir worship became popular and the intellectual mystical aspect of the Sufi philosophy receded into the background. The leadership of the khanqahs and dargahs was now based on family heredity that capitalized on the personality cult and became prosperous. With these land grants, the declining Adil Shahi state ensured the political loyalty of the Sufis, whereby the ruler expected this class to generate allegiance for the regime, pacify recalcitrant tendencies and legitimize the state policies. Such a strategy became crucial for the stability of the Adil Shahis in the seventeenth century as Bijapur became a disturbed province due to perennial revolts of the local forces against the state. There are cases of well known shaikhs being summoned to the court and made to pray for the well being of the Sultan in the face of Maratha invasions in the Deccan. However, the Sufis protected their landed interests and ignored the popular following. In fact, with the decline of the Adil Shahi state in 1686, the fortunes of these landed Sufis did not suffer. Aurangzeb renewed the inam grants and granted the new ones. In fact, the landed pirzaidas were the first ones to accept the Mughal regime for in the existence of a state they saw their survival and prosperity.

Dervishes: Such conservatism and preference for court patronage over taking care of the religious needs of the devotees produced a reaction from some of the Sufis. These Sufis were known as dervishes and ranged from spiritual heretics to non-conformists. They were hostile to the pirzadas and inamdars as they found them to be too compromising. The dervishes rejected Islamic orthodoxy and its urban materialistic orientation. They adopted spiritual exercises to attain direct experience of god. They withdrew partially or totally from the ‘structural relations’ of the world. In fact stressing on religion’s original purity and simplicity, the Bijapur majzubs resembled the early Sufis in Iraq and Khorasan. The majzubs completely repudiated the contemporary society going back to the original principles of Sufism. The contemporary Sufi literature calls them majzubs. In fact, the polarization between the pirzadas and the dervishes sharpened further with the decline of the Bijapuri state. One of the popular dervishes was a Chishti named Amin al Din Alah whose popularity and influence was feared by the pirzadas, especially of the Qadri silsilah.

21.7 SUMMARY

This Unit is a survey of various social groups that emerged in medieval period in South India. The historical context of social change and consequently changes in the social structure are located in the shifting political boundaries, development of trade
and commerce, expansion of agricultural activities, socio-religious movements based on bhakti and Sufi and finally, the growth of international trade and profits from it. The social groups discussed here are the political elites, landed elites, religious leaders, traders and merchants, artisans and Valangai-Idangai caste. A discussion on these groups has already taken place in the previous Units. Here an outline has been provided in order to understand the factors of social change, social mobility and social transformation.

21.8 EXERCISES

1) Examine the power and position of the landed elites in peninsular India.
2) Discuss different groups of political elites in peninsular India.
3) Analyse the changing social structure of peninsular India in the medieval period.
4) Discuss the different classes of Sufis in the Deccan region during the seventeenth century.
5) What was the socio-political role of the Sufis in the Deccan?
UNIT 22 SOCIO RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

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22.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit various socio-religious movements that were inspired by the idea of bhakti will be discussed. Although bhakti has a general meaning, derived from the root word, bhaj in Sanskrit, implying, ‘partaking (of god), participation, and loving devotion to a personal god’, there are variations in interpreting bhakti that forms the basis of several devotional communities. There will also be a discussion of the historical context in which these movements were situated, the developments within the context and their individual reposes to them. The Unit is divided into four sections:

- Section one is an introduction to the development of religion and ideas of bhakti in South India from fourth to the sixth century;
- Section two focuses on the popular devotional movements from seventh to the eleventh century;
- Section three focuses on the response of the various socio-religious movements to the material context from the eleventh to the fourteenth century; and
- Section four will discuss the changing social base and the community consciousness from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century.

22.1 DEVELOPMENT OF BHAKTI IN SANGAM TEXTS

The religious developments in South India in the medieval period can be traced to the trends in religion from the fourth to the sixth century. The information for this period is obtained from the texts which are largely called the Sangam texts. These texts did not mark out any formal religious community. The descriptions of the sounds of prayers, fragrance of flowers and incense, light of the lamps and a perpetual festive ambience highlighted somewhat unstructured ways of worship. The concept of the sacred was expressed in terms like kataval and ananka, both probably implying the divine form to be worshipped and kantu and potiyil (a pillared hall), probably prototype of a temple implying a sacred space. The term koyil signified the house of a chief...
and not a temple, which was a later development. However, by the end of the fourth century, a systematic development of the divine took place with the association of religion with the tinai tradition in the famous grammatical treatise, the Tolkappiyam. The notion of tinai comprised of five eco-zones, each with a distinct populace, subsistence pattern and a divine form. They were:

1) Mullai, a collective term for the pastoral tracts, inhabited by the maravars (warriors) and the itiayar (pastoralists) was the divine locale for Mayon.

2) Kurinji, a general term for the hilly eco-zone comprising of vetar and kuravar (the hunters) with shifting cultivation as the main occupation. The people here worshipped Murukan as the god.

3) Marutam was the wetland between the river valleys, and a focus of agrarian activities by the ulavar (agriculturists). Ventan was the god of marutam.

4) Neytal implied the area around the sea, populated by paratavars (the fishing community). Varunan was the god of the neytal.

5) Palai representing dry arid zones with the hunting-gathering tribes who worshipped the female divine form, Korravai.

Of all the Sangam deities, Murukan followed by Mayon have maximum textual references. Both Murukan and Mayon were associated with a specific form of worship, veriyatu and kuravai respectively, which were emotionally charged ritual dances involving the participation of all the men and women. Literally meaning the one who symbolizes youth and beauty, Murukan was worshipped in threshing grounds, forests, market places, trees, battle grounds and so on, indicating a strong degree of localization. Compared to Murukan, the divine form of Mayon registered elitist tendencies. By third century, Mayon was associated with northern Krishna Cult/ Vaishnavism, though adapted to the southern milieu. For instance, the texts equated Mayon with Krishna and river Yamuna, one of the important locales of Krishna episodes with Tolunai. Mayon was also the royal symbol of the two ruling lineages in this period, viz., the Pandyas of Madurai in the southern part and Tondaiman of Kanchi on the northern part of the ancient Tamil region. Further, the Sangam texts referred to a sophisticated place of worship of Mayon, which was the temple at Velka in Kanchi.

However, after the fifth century, new religious ideas were expressed in the late Sangam (or post Sangam) texts, viz.; the Cilappadikaram, Kalittokai, Paripatal and Tirumurukarruppatai. These texts depicted the influence of the northern epic (i.e. the Ramayana and the Mahabharata) and the Puranic ideas on the Sangam perception of the divine. The deities localized in the tinai framework were transformed into universal transcendental (i.e. abstract and not localized) godheads due to this influence. Murukan was fused with Skanda, the Aryan god of war. Mal/Mayon was identified with Vishnu. Ventan and Varuna of the marutam and neytal tinai were gradually marginalized and in the subsequent period do not find any mention. Korvarai, the goddess of the palai was important but the process of her absorption in the Shaiva pantheon as Durga, the consort of Shiva already began. The interaction between the Sangam and Puranic elements introduced various themes from the Puranic myths. The various heroic deeds of Skanda now identified with Murukan. He was now described as possessing six faces and six arms in the late Sangam texts.

The Paripatal and the Tirumurukarruppatai articulated for the first time a new devotional milieu. The notion of a personal devotion, i.e. bhakti to the transcendental god appeared in the poems dedicated to Murukan and Mayon in these texts. The characteristics of the bhakti as expressed in these texts were:
1) The devotion to the god was expressed in Tamil, thus providing for the first time an alternative to Sanskrit as the religious language.

2) This idea of devotion was not yet a personalized experience that characterized the later bhakti. The references in the texts were objective and impersonal, as if concerning the second person.

3) The idea of bhakti became the basis for introducing the temple for the first time. The deity was situated in the temple symbolizing the presence of god on this earth amongst the people to remove their sorrows. However, the temple had not emerged as the institution of formal worship. Hence, the ideas about the temple evolved that became central to the various socio-religious movements from seventh century. The temple was now referred to as the koyil.

4) The temple situation also marked out a sacred geography for the first time. This sacred geography comprised of various places of worship of one god, in this case, Mayon and Murukan. This also provided a network for future religious interaction. For instance, the Cilappadikaram and the Paripatal referred to temples of Mayon worship at Vehka (Kanchi), Tirumaliruncholai (near Madurai), Atakamatam (the Golden Hall in the Cera region), Puhar (Manivanann), Turutti (future Sri rangam) and Vengadam (future Tirupati). The Tirumurukarruppatal, on the other hand, presented a sacred geography of the Murukan temples at Parankunram (Madurai), Tiruvavinkukuti (Palani), Tiruverakam (Swamimalai), Palamutircholai (Tiruchchendur), Cenkotu and Erakam. However, a sense of pilgrimage was only in this text in the description of these places by a Murukan devotee, who directed others to go to the god’s shrines and obtain his grace.

Therefore, this new religiosity of the fifth-sixth centuries adapted and integrated the Sanskritic culture to the Tamil one. Although the Sangam texts refer to other religious traditions, viz., Jainism and Buddhism flourishing in the urban centers with the merchants as the main followers, the Puranic-Tamil paradigm provided the basic structural framework for the development of the communities.

22.2 POPULAR DEVOTIONAL MOVEMENTS: THE BHAKTI OF THE NAYANARS AND ALVARS (AD 600-1000)

From the seventh to ninth century, bhakti evolved as a personalized religious attitude that focused on intense devotion to a single god, Shiva or Vishnu. This theistic belief was expressed in the hymns of the early Shaiva and Vaishnava saints, the Nayanars and Alvars respectively. According to respective community tradition, Shaivite Nayanars also known as Samayacharyas are sixty three in number, including a woman saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar and the Vaishnava Alvars are twelve, including a woman saint, Andal. Collectively known as the Tevaram and the Nalayira Divya Prabandham, these hymnal corpuses inspired the philosophy of the Shaiva and Vaishnava religious communities in the medieval period. Several meanings are attributed to the Tevaram. It has been generally accepted that tev is from devagrh, i.e., house of the god and varam is a song addressed to a deity, hence tevaram. It also implies ‘private ritual worship’ and has significance for the hymns, which were associated primarily with the temple worship. (R.Champakalakshmi, 1996, “From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The Bhakti of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars.” In Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar, ed. R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 135-163, p.141). The Nalayira Divya Prabandham literally means ‘a corpus of four thousand hymns’ of the Alvars.

The idea of devotion or bhakti in these hymns was a product of the interaction and systematic synthesis of (a) Tamil religiosity as expressed in the Sangam texts, (b) simple bhakti and its temple environ as articulated in the Paripatal and the
Tirumurukarruppatai (as has been mentioned above) and (c) the pan-Indian Puranic myths and the brahmanical concept of a transcendental absolute. Thus, within the framework of their kind of bhakti, the Nayanars and Alvars reworked these ideas and projected their interpretations of the universal godhead. Although the Nayanars and Alvars were contemporaries, there were differences in the ways in which they conceptualized the sacred. This imparted a distinct identity to both that culminated in distinct religious communities of Shaivism and Vaishnavism by eighth-ninth centuries. Characterized by intense emotional devotion and strong desire of mystical union with the god, the hymns emerged as the first concrete expression of religious sectarianism in Tamil. In both sets of hymnal compositions, the Nayanars and the Alvars condemned each other and attempted to demonstrate through various accounts that their respective gods were superior to the other.

A systematic development of Vaishnava bhakti can be seen delineated in the Prabandhic corpus. Nammalvar, one of the Alvars (seventh century AD) developed the notion of prapatti, which is complete trust and surrender, to be developed in the Srivaisnava theology from twelfth century onwards. Some of the Alvars also used a variety of images from day-to-day life and connected it to the various Vaishnava myths. For instance, Periyalvar (ninth century AD) extensively used the mother and child images connecting it to Yashoda and Krishna. The Nayanars conceptualized Shiva as the warrior god, fighting battles and warding away evils. The local roots of Shiva were highlighted by associating his achievements with specific sites, in this case primarily the Kaveri valley, which was the centre of Chola power. Finally, by the seventh-eighth centuries, in the hymns of Tirujnanacampantar (a Nayanar), the local identity of Shiva merged with the cosmic transcendental one and institutionalized in the temple landscape and idea of a pilgrimage. Simultaneously, the context of Shaivism developed with the inclusion of Murukan as the son and Korravai (Durga) as the consort of Shiva.

22.2.1 Themes of Bhakti in the Nayanar and Alvar Hymns

The hymns elaborated upon certain ideas, which had never evolved earlier. These ideas became the basis for the future religious developments of both the communities. These ideas were:

1) A highly personalized religious attitude that focused on an individual’s relationship with the god.

2) The hymns projected a strong sense of community. It is obvious that the Nayanars and Alvars were addressing primarily a group of devotees and attempting to impress upon them through ideas of devotion.

3) The image of a community was associated with the attitude of the hymnists towards the caste hierarchy. The hymns of these early saints reflected hostility towards the ritual dominance of the Vedic Brahmana, i.e., the Chaturvedins. These Chaturvedins, by virtue of their high status in the caste hierarchy had monopolized the worship. The saints criticized this monopoly and strongly advocated that everybody, irrespective of their caste and economic status should have an equal access to the divine. The non- brahmanical background of the hymnists generated such a dissent against the notion of domination by the Brahmanas. For instance, some Alvars and Nayanars were Vellalas (primarily a peasant caste), low caste minstrels, the chieftains of the tribal clans and so on. However, some of these saints were Brahmanas and their dissent against caste hierarchy reflected the presence of a hierarchy amongst the Brahmanas themselves. The conversion of the local cult centers into Shaiva and Vaishnava faith was accompanied by the assimilation of the cultic priests. Since these priests derived their status from the forms of worship that were considered inferior to the Vedic forms, a low ritual rank was assigned to them within the Brahmana varna. Thus, the Chaturvedins (Vedic Brahmana) and the Smartas and Vadamas (those who
performed Vedic sacrifices) were superior to the Adi Shaivas and the temple priests, the social categories to which the Brahma Alvars and Nayanars belonged.

4) However, it was not a total rejection of the caste system. It is only in the hymns of Tirunavukkarasar, (popularly known as Appar) the Shaiva saint; one can read a direct rejection of caste. (Champakalakshmi, 1993, p.145). Rather an alternative to the caste hierarchy was provided in the concept of a community of bhaktas. In order to be a part of this community of the bhaktas, the most important criteria was devotion to god and caste was secondary. Therefore caste status was never given up. The hymns restated that the devotion to Shiva and Vishnu was much superior to the Vedic recitations and a Chaturvedin was inferior to a low caste devotee of Shiva or Vishnu. Further the Nayanars and Alvars stressed on “communion in the community.” Service to the devotee, whatever his caste status may be, was considered to have more salvific benefits than direct service to god. For instance, the Vaishnava saint Madhurakavi regarded Nammalvar, another Vaishnava saint who was a Vellala by birth as his teacher and lord. In the Tevaram, the notion of the community of bhaktas was expressed in the term, nam (we) for the fellow devotees. The atiyar kuttam (the community of devotees) included not only the Tamil Shaivas, but also the adherents of other Shaiva sects like the Kapalikas and Viratis who were otherwise hated.

5) The notion of pilgrimage further contributed to the sense of belonging to a community. The emergence of the local cult centres in the hymns charted out a sacred geography for the community and marked the beginning of the concept of pilgrimage, where each site was visited and sung into prominence. The hymns of the Nayanars referred to two hundred and seventy four Shaiva sites. All but six are located in the Tamil region. These six are, Sriralam in Andhira, Gokarna in Karnataka and Kedara, Indranila, Gaurikunda and Kailasha in the Himalayas in north India. The Alvars mapped more than ninety odd places, though the traditional Vaishnava holy places are one hundred and eight, which was a later development. In this case, the greater majority are in the Tamil region and the rest are in Kerala, southern Andhra, Karnataka and North India, in places like Mathura, Badrinath, Ayodhya, Naimisharanya, Dwarka and so on. This geography also formed a ‘circulatory region’ of the poet saints, who may not have visited all the sites but were aware of their association with Shiva and Vishnu. This spatial distribution of shrines became the basis for the development of a Tamil regional pilgrimage network and more elaborate South Indian and Pan-Indian sectarian linkages that developed significantly in the Vijayanagar period (that is fourteenth century).

22.2.2 Nature of the Shaiva and Vaishnava Devotionalism

The dissent against caste and a broad based idea of the community that included devotees from diverse background has led many scholars to conclude that the bhakti movement was a radical protest against the conservative social norms. Undoubtedly, the elements of protest were present, but they should not be over-stressed. In order to analyse the nature of Shaiva and Nayanar bhakti, it is important to examine the socio-political context in which the poet-saints were situated and their response to that milieu.

The Historical Context

The religion of the hymnists was influenced by the contemporary socio-political environment. From the sixth century onwards, the expansion and integration of various peasant settlements in the river valleys and the transformation of the tribal population into settled peasant communities provided a base for the emergence of new state systems. The Pallavas of Kanchi in northern Tamil region, with their resource base in the Palar-Cheyyar valley, Pandyas of Madurai in the south with their resource base
in the Vaigai-Tambraparani and Cheras in the southwest emerged as major states. Incidentally, the Nayanars and Alvars were located in these regions. The political processes culminated with the Cholas in the Kaveri valley by the ninth century AD. The royal dynasties made numerous land grants to the Brahmanas called brahmadeyas and sponsored large scale construction of temples. These two institutions were looked upon as having potential for restructuring and integrating the economy and society. Since the Brahmanas possessed knowledge of the agrarian calendar and better irrigation technology, the lands granted to them became a mechanism for the extension of agriculture into unsettled areas and extraction of the surplus from various peasant groups. The temples provided the ritual space for integrating the new social groups, especially the tribes in the caste system. The tribal divinities became a part of the brahmanical pantheon in the temples. Naturally, then the location of the royal centers coincided with the location of the temple and brahmadeya centers. Kanchipuram and Madurai, the capitals of Pallavas and Pandyas respectively were surrounded by prosperous brahmadeyas and had huge temple complexes.

The Response of the Nayanars and Alvars to the Context

1) The popular social base and the royal patronage to the temples were not missed by the Nayanars and Alvars. The sacred geography, which has the various sites of worship in the hymns, corresponded with the political centres. The saints sang about the sacred centres situated in the Tondainadu, the Pallava region, Panyanadu, the Pandya region with the maximum temples situated in the Cholanadu, the Chola region, where the focus was the Kaveri deltaic region. They applied the temple theme in several ways to popularize their religion. The mode of worship described in the hymns was through singing and dancing in praise of the god, represented in the image in the temple and finally seeking union with him. The temple service also became an ideal way of life for a true bhakta. For the Nayanars and Alvars, the institution of temple had a special theological importance. The temple and its deity was the symbol of the immanence (saulabhya) of the transcendent (paratva) god on the earth, not in one place but in several places. The poet-saints with their fellow devotees traveled (in the hymns) from one site to another, singing praises and worshipping the arca (deity) whose local identity fused with the transcendental Shiva or Vishnu. The multiple presence of the god was understood as his lila /maya, i.e. his desire to be close to the devotees. The temple worship further acquired complexities with the adoption of certain features from the royal ritual paraphernalia. The divinity was referred to as the udaiyar and perumal, both the terms symbolizing power and status. (Kesavan Veluthat, 1993. “Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation. The Case of Early Medieval South India.” Social Scientist No. 21, 1-2: 23-33.) The iconographic descriptions of the divine forms in the poems were full of political metaphors of chivalry and power, which highlighted the superiority of one god and subordinated the other. The medium of myths was widely used to highlight the cosmic superiority of the divine. The story of Vishnu and Brahma trying to grasp the beginning and the end of the linga projects the superiority of Shiva over these gods.

According to some scholars, the mode of temple service and the use of these terms point towards the replication of the feudal relationship between god and the devotee which further legitimized the landlord-tenant, king-subject and lord-servant relationships. (For such a view, see, Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.26-27 and M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, ‘Bhakti Movement in South India’, in D.N.Jha, ed., Feudal Social Formation in Early India, New Delhi, 1987, pp.347-375.) But according to R. Champakalakshmi, such a view ignores, ‘the complex processes through which resource mobilization and redistribution were achieved in early medieval Tamilakam, in which the temple enabled royal and chiefly families to establish their political presence and social dominance by intruding into the peasant regions known as the nadus’. (R. Champakalakshmi,1996, p.155.)
Thus, *bhakti* popularized the temple, its religion, its social hierarchy, and its forms of worship. By incorporating the temple theme, the saints expressed the desire for royal patronage. However, it appears that they were not successful as no temples of the Pallava and Pandya period existed in the centers sung by the hymnists with the exception of the Paramesvara Vinnagaram at Kanchi and a couple of Shaiva temples. The prominent temples were a part of the royal institutions with the Brahmanag exercising control over them. Thus, the rhetoric against caste often exaggerated as an outright rejection of it should be seen in connection with exclusive royal patronage to the Brahmanas. *Brahmadeyas* did not figure at all in the hymnal literature. As has been mentioned before, the protest was against the brahmanical exclusivism in the performance of the temple rituals. Nevertheless, some of the hymns inspired the temple iconography of the Pallavas. For instance, the three early Alvars (Poygai, Putam and Pey) inspired the rock-cut temples in the Pallava cities of Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram.

2) Further, the hymnists themselves applied brahmanical motifs to their *bhakti*. For instance, the saints often described themselves as the ‘Kavuniyan’ (a Tamil Brahmana of the Kaundiya gotra) or referred to themselves and their contemporaries as ‘well versed in four Vedas’, as the ‘lord of the Vedas’, ‘is the lord spoken of in the Vedas’, ‘is praised by the Vedas,’ and so on. Although Tamil received importance as a religious language, it was an alternative to the Sanskrit Vedas. The importance of the Vedas was never ignored; rather a Vedic status was attributed to the Tamil hymns, whereby they were looked upon as scriptures, i.e. marai, equal to Vedas. Shiva and Vishnu were supposed to be instrumental in revealing the Vedas to the whole world. Thus, the stress was on the accessibility of Vedas that cut across all caste barriers rather than limiting it to the Brahmanas only. Thus, the *bhakti* movement in early medieval South India representing the temple-based religion of the Agamic-Puranic Hinduism legitimized the social structure based on the brahmanical principles and became the channel for transmission of the royal authority.

3) The expectation and competition for the royal patronage influenced the sectarian criticism against the rival religious communities, Jainism and Buddhism, which were popular in the Tamil region since the early centuries of the Christian era. Jainism enjoyed considerable royal patronage especially under the Pallava ruler, Mahendravarman I, a Jaina himself. Kanchipuram and Madurai were the centres of sectarian rivalry. The *bhakti* hymns referred to the stories of conflict and persecution leading to the conversions of the rulers and consequent change in the patronage towards Shaivism and Vaishnavism. The story of Mahendravarman converting to Shaivism at the behest of Appar and many such narratives reflect tensions over royal patronage, which the heterodox sects enjoyed.

Further tensions arose due to the theological incompatibility between the hymnal and the heterodox religious beliefs, where the former had a materialistic orientation focused on the temple worship and the latter had an austere orientation based on the principles of self-denial. It is also likely that the aversion of the *bhakti* saints was regional as the Jaina and the Buddhist monks had recently arrived from the Kannada and Telugu region to the Tamil country. Hence, it was not social protest but the harsh criticism against Jainism and Buddhism that emphasized upon community solidarity, where both the poet-saints emphasized upon distinct identities.

Therefore, the hymnal tradition for the first time evolved various motifs of the community structure, viz., the philosophy, and notion of a community, sacred geography and pilgrimage that became theologically significant in the later period. The constant attempt to assert a distinct identity vis-à-vis the brahmanical religion and heterodox sects were evident in the protest in the hymnal literature. However, their conformism to the political structure marked the process of ‘reaggregation’ through which the
communities were consolidated in the Chola period. Despite the growth of a community, neither of the religious traditions of the Nayanars and Alvars could evolve a systematic theology and textual tradition – a feature visible from the eleventh century onwards.

Shankaracharya and Advaita Philosophy (AD 788-820)

While the Nayanars and Alvars represented popular devotional movements with a broad socio-cultural base, there was a growth of another religious tradition called the Smartas in the eighth century, under Shankaracharya, the famous advaita philosopher. The Smarta tradition was primarily based upon inquiry and speculation of the philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads and was therefore, highly intellectual with a limited social base confined mostly to the Vedic Brahmanas. However, the ideas of advaita were influential in shaping the ideas of post-eleventh century philosophies of Shaiva Siddhantas and Vaishnava saints like Ramanuja and Madhvacharya. (To be discussed in the next section).

The various biographies of Shankaracharya illustrate that Shankara was a Nambudri Brahmana from Kaladi which is in North Travancore region of Kerela. He lost his father at an early age and became an ascetic or a sanyasin. Shankara travelled all over India, participating and winning in numerous debates on Vedantic philosophy and propagated his ideas. According to the biographies, he reorganized the ascetic order of the sanyasins, perhaps influenced by the Buddhist Sangha or the monastic orders and founded a number of mathas for the study and propagation of his doctrines. Some of the important mathas are located in Sringeri, Dwarka, Badrinatha, Puri and Kanchipuram. However, there is hardly any reference to the monastic orders in the epigraphic records till the fourteenth century, when, “a fresh wave of Sanskritisation took place in South India, including Tamil Nadu, which may well be associated with the expansion of the Vijayanagar authority.” (Champakalakshmi, 1993, p.154) Shankara wrote several works and commentaries on the Vedanta-sutras, Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads, all in Sanskrit. His major contribution was the commentary on Badrayana’s Brahmasutra, which was a significant attempt to systematize the various strands of the Upanishadic thoughts. He acquired numerous disciples who carried on the Smarta tradition. Thus, Shankara’s philosophy that was highly intellectual and religious organization was essentially ascetic. The role he assigned to his disciples brought a class of renouncers into active relationship with the larger society in South India for the first time.

In South India, the term Smarta means not only the worship of the five gods, but also following Shankara’s philosophy of the Vedanta. According to Nilakantha Shastri, the Smarta religion evolved a religious opinion and practice that reconciled the Shaiva and Vaishnava sectarianism as seen in the hymns of the Nayanars and Alvars. The religious practice is based on the principle of Pancayatana puja, i.e. the worship of five shrines, viz., Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti (mother-goddess), Surya and Ganesha. This worship is done at home with the help of symbols representing the deities. (K.A.Nilakantha Sastri, Development of Religion in South India. Madras: Orient Longmans, 1963. p.61). Some believe that Shankara introduced it and some ascribe it to Kumarila, who lived approximately hundred years before Shankara.

Shankara’s philosophy had its roots in Vedanta or Upanishads and represented a brahmanical/Sanskritic alternative to Buddhism. According to him, both Shiva and Vishnu signified the supreme Brahma or the universal soul. He systematically developed the monistic tendency of the Upanishads, emphasizing that the unqualified Brahma is Nirguna Brahma. Brahma is one and eternal beyond the duality of subject and object. Shankara in his Advaitic philosophy of non-dualism explained that god (ishvara), the individual soul (jiva) and the world (jagat) are mere illusions due to the principle of maya. True liberation or moksha can only be attained through jnana, i.e. knowledge. Therefore, Shankara advocated renunciation of worldly life and adoption of ascetic mode of living. He also stated that the devotion to god and the observance
of the varnashramdharma (that is the rules of the caste system) as described in the scriptures were important for acquiring competency for the study of the Vedanta. As has been stated earlier, the philosophy of Shankara’s advaita influenced later Vaishnava and Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy after the eleventh century and emerged as an important theological basis for the respective communities. (Konduri Sarojini Devi (1990), Religion in Vijayanagar Empire. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, pp.58-59).

22.3 CONSOLIDATION OF THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS: AD 1000-1300

From the tenth to the thirteenth century, the religious trends were marked by community construction and consolidation. The expression of community consciousness was evident in two types of interaction: (a) within the community itself where attempts were made to broaden the social base and adopt a universalistic and integrative approach; (b) when the community interacted with other religious traditions.

In the Tamil region, the Nayanars and the Alvars were succeeded by the acharyas, who were theologian philosophers and expanded and consolidated the philosophical base of their individual communities. They collected the hymns of the early saints, created an institutional framework for the bhakti movement and harmonized regional ideas with the Pan-Indian Sanskritic texts such as the Upanishads. Simultaneously, there were socio-religious movements in Karnataka and Andhra region, the basis being an anti-caste ideology. These were the Virashaiva and Aradhya Shaiva movements in Karnataka and Andhra region.

22.3.1 The Historical Background

These socio-religious movements were evolving against the background of different historical processes. With the consolidation of the Cholas in the tenth century, the centre of political activities shifted from Tondaimada (with Kanchipuram as the capital) to Cholanadu with the capital at Tanjavur. The Pandyas continued to rule from Madurai and provided a formidable opposition to the Cholas. Both the Cholas and the Pandyas continued with the Pallava system of utilizing the brahmadeyas, and temples for political integration. Both the brahmadeyas and temples due to their overarching ideological framework of the varna-jati paradigm integrated various sections of the society. (This has already been discussed in the previous Section and in Block 5 Unit 18.) However, it was the temple that emerged as an important institution of integration in three ways:

1) The ritual of gift giving to the deities in the temples created a network of political alliances. The kings gifted to the temples that in turn were recirculated and often sold in the society in the form of ritual goods, for instance the prasadam (food offering), generating economic transactions. The local chiefs also made gifts to the king or donated to the temples in the name of the king and received titles and honours that enabled them to become the members of the royal alliance network. Thus, this ritual of gift giving created loyalties and alliances for political purposes and imparted political stability to the medieval South Indian states. However, one cannot ignore the notion of religious merit, which was an important aspect of ritual gift giving.

2) The temple further provided the ‘ideological apparatus’ for the medieval south Indian states, bringing together the religion of various social groups. Already in the hymns of the Nayanars and Alvars, a context for a dialogue was created between the autochthonous cults and Puranic religion, whereby the former was universalized within the brahmanical structural paradigm of the temple. The political dynasties realized that the bhakti cults of Shaivism and Vaishnavism with their broad-based ideologies would be effective in integrating the society
and consolidate the political network. Hence, the popular socio-religious movements with elements of protest now influenced the political ideology of power and dominance. (R. Chamapakalakshmi, 1996). Consequently, the hymns which were full of poetic descriptions of power and strength of various forms of Shiva and Vishnu became the source of inspiration for the construction of several canonical temples with elaborate iconography. The various cosmic and heroic representations of the Puranic deities in the temple iconography were related to the image of a monarch and his absolute power. The deities acquired royal characteristics. For the first time, political geography coincided with the sacred geography, as the Kaveri region, the core of Cholanadu, experienced hectic temple construction. Shrirangam and Chidambaram developed as major political as well as sacred cult centers, for Vaishnavism and Shaivism respectively.

3) The temples also provided the avenue for the rulers, especially the Cholas to ‘divinise’ themselves. The Cholas constructed images of their rulers and members of the royal family and consecrated them by situating the images in the temples. Apart from this, the construction of monumental temples became a part of the royal project. Several such imperial temples were named after the Chola rulers who sponsored them. The Brhadesvara temple at Tanjore constructed by Rajaraja the Great (AD 985-1014) in AD 1003 illustrates this trend. Symbolizing the new royal power of Rajaraja, the ‘political architecture’ and iconography of the main deity Shiva was identified with the Chola king and was called Rajarajeshvara. (Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.30) Thus, the sacred and the temporal realm were present in the temple. Huge temple complexes with elaborate architecture, a pantheon with multiple divinities represented a continuous process of integration of different sections of the society in a hierarchical manner. At the top of the hierarchy was the royal family, followed by the ritually pure Brahmana priests performing, worship. Below them were the administrative elites, dominant agrarian and mercantile groups involved in temple administration and finally at the bottom were the lower categories of agricultural worker, craftsmen and menials in the temple service. (R. Champakalakshmi, 1995, p.309.)

By the end of the eleventh century, there was a gradual marginalization of the brahmadeyas due to their exhaustion as an institution of integration. Consequently, the temples further emerged as important organizations that had an impact on the religious communities. The Pandya and the Chola records of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries cite several instances of the brahmadeyas being converted into non-brahmana villages or being donated as devadanam to the temples. Either the Brahmanas migrated from the Tamil country to the northern regions or converged increasingly towards the temples, further highlighting the latter’s significance. This coincided with continuing decline of the Chola administration, and the re-emergence of the local chiefs.

Simultaneously, various non-brahmana social groups were becoming prominent. These were the Vellalas, merchants and artisans. There was further expansion of agriculture and agrarian settlements, which highlighted the increasing prominence of the Vellalas as the dominant agricultural community vis-à-vis the lower agricultural groups, leading to tensions within the agrarian community. As powerful non-brahmana landowners, the Vellalas organized and managed the production and water resources. They also partook in the administration of the temples along with the brahmanas.

One of the direct consequences of the agrarian expansion was the acceleration of commercial activities from tenth century onwards that led to the growth of market centers, nagarams and a network between them. Due to commercial activities of overland and inland trade, new trade routes and urban centres came up linking the remote and newly conquered regions with the nuclear areas and the coast. There was a spread of guild activities and trading associations of both the indigenous and foreign merchants. Consequently, there emerged guilds with its diverse groups of
traders, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and itinerant traders. One such prominent trading community in the ninth century was the Nagarattar, whose members applied the chetti suffix. Often the mercantile communities invested in agriculture, gifted to the temples, further strengthening the ties of integration, and inter dependence. One such weaver community, the Kaikkolas had significant links with the temples and became an important social group that the religious traditions attempted to incorporate in order to project a liberal outlook. By ninth century, clusters of brahmadeyas and temples had developed into centers of urban growth, thus connecting villages, urban centers and royal capital, diverse population and religion within the same complex.

Hence, the rising social importance of the various non-brahmana groups led to a movement towards a higher caste status, especially the claims of the artisans to a twice-born caste status with a respectable ritual space in the temples. In this altered social environment, undoubtedly temples forged links amongst chiefs, kings, merchants and the newly emergent groups.

22.3.2 Socio-Religious Movements: The Role of the Acharyas

The popular religion of the Shaivas and Vaishnava community responded to this social change by providing a broad social base with ideological sanction, which would accommodate the diverse ethnic groups, within a single community framework. In the absence of any challenge from the heterodox sects viz., the Jainas and the Buddhists, the religious communities focused on the expansion of their resource base by competing for patronage from the royalty and the local chieftains. The acharyas or the ideologues and theologians organized the ideas of the Nayanars and Alvars. This was done primarily in three ways:

a) The acharyas evolved a textual tradition that comprised of certain kind of texts like the commentaries, the hagiographies and temple texts such as the Agamas. In all these texts, the ideology of the religious communities was articulated. A community tradition evolved in these texts that provided a sense of history and cultural continuity. This continuity reflected an antiquated past, ideas and beliefs, conventions and practices, which gave legitimacy to the community. The commentatorial literature while interpreting and commenting on the pre-existent texts, themselves became the subject of further commentaries and interpretations, thereby adding on to the religious exegesis. Similarly, the hagiographies and the temple texts provided a sense of continuity through the biographical narratives of saints and myths of the various deities and very often provided a link between the normative and the popular tradition. Therefore, these texts themselves became the focus of a collective community consciousness.

b) The acharyas consolidated the community by creating an institutional framework. This comprised of strengthening their base in the temples by gaining access to various privileges, for instance, the right to performing the rituals. Another institutional innovation was the emergence of the mathas, which were probably an influence of the Smarta tradition. (This has been discussed in the previous section).

c) The notion of pilgrimage expressed in various sites in the hymns of the Nayanars and Alvars was elaborated upon by fostering the local, regional and pan-Indian network. In this way, a collective consciousness of the community was highlighted.

22.3.3 Socio-Religious Movements: The New Trends

A) Shaivism:

In this context, Shaivism presented an integrative framework comprising of the Tamil bhakti of the Nayanars, brahmanical forms of worship and autochthonous (local)
cults. Such integration was articulated in the Shaiva Agamas which laid down new forms of worship, in which the emphasis was to incorporate the local cult centres into Shaiva shrines. The sacred geography as demarcated by the Nayanars provided the guide for the identification of these sites, with maximum concentration in the Kaveri region. Consequently, the local priests were initiated into Shaivism giving rise to a new class of temple priests called the Shaiva Brahmans. These Shaiva Brahmans were assigned ritually a lower rank to the Smarta (Vadama) Brahmans hence creating a hierarchy in the Brahmana caste. Thus, the temple emerged as the focus of the entire Shaiva community, where various local sects, converged. The creation of a Shaiva pantheon with Shiva as the father, Durga as the mother and Murugan as the son represented a perfect divine family. This pantheon was popularly known as the Somaskanda image. The folk analogy of the linga worship and its ‘aniconic’ nature brought divergent socio-economic groups into Shaiva worship and broadened the social basis of Shaivism.

Therefore, Shaivism emerged as an effective ideology for the integration of the society and economy. For these reasons Shaivism was adopted as the royal cult, which further enabled the consolidation of the Shaiva community. In addition, the iconographic forms of Shiva as Yogi (popularly called Dakshinamurti), Nataraja, Bhiksatana and Ravanangraha (humbling of Ravana) – all symbolizing the notion of a successful Puranic hero, appealed the Chola ideology for establishing power over the Tamil region. From the middle of the tenth to the twelfth century A.D, Shaivism emerged as a ‘state’ cult under Rajaraja I (A.D 985-1045.), Rajendra I and Kulottunga II (A.D.1133-50.). The large-scale construction of the Shaiva temples, especially in the royal capital of Gangaichondacholapuram and Tanjavur projected the Chola policy of promoting Shaiva bhakti. The collection of the Shaiva hymns and the composition of the hagiographies were a part of the royal project that contributed to the evolution of a Shaiva scripture (marai). Nambi Andar Nambi, the compiler of the Tirumurai (the Shaiva scripture) and Cekkilar, the composer of the Shaiva hagiography, the Periya Puranam, were associated with the court of Rajaraja I and Kulottunga II respectively. In fact, the narratives from the hagiographies inspired some of the iconographic themes in the Chola temples. The royal patronage to the Shaiva temples expanded the liturgy by introducing the hymns of the four Nayanars, viz., Appar, Cuntarar, Campantar and Manikkavaccakar as a part of the ritual singing in the temples. Their deification took place in the temples around the same time that is the tenth century under the royal initiatives mainly of Rajaraja I (985-1014) and Kulottunga II (1133-50).

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Vaishnava tradition had already emerged with a well developed textual, institutional and pilgrimage tradition. This threatened the Shaiva community. The Shaivas also did not miss the crucial emergence of new social non-brahmana groups. The Shaiva canon, Tirumurai, the Shaiva hagiographies, the Tiruttontar Tiruvantati and the Periya Puranam fixed the number of saints to sixty three belonging to a wide social spectrum, from Brahmans to paraiya. However, apart from Appar, Campantar, Cuntarar and Manikkavaccakar, whose devotional works comprised the scripture, the rest are of doubtful historicity. Therefore, the low caste background of the Nayanars was a deliberate projection of a popular social base. Interestingly, the compilers of the canon and composers of the hagiographies Nambi Andar Nambi and Cekkilur belonged to the upper castes- the Brahmanas and the Vellala ruling family respectively. (R. Champakalakhsmi, 1996, pp.135-163). Further, other popular Shaiva traditions were incorporated, representing an integrative paradigm. For instance, the incorporation of Tamil Siddha tradition through the profile of the Siddha saint, Tirumular who emphasized on Shiva and Murukan worship, reflected an attempt in this direction.

Such an incorporative trend accommodated the non-brahmanas, especially the artisan and the weaver groups who had become economically powerful in the twelfth century.
and were demanding greater ritual and administrative participation in the temples. The Shaiva temple rituals and pantheon included a series of popular folk elements, whose non-brahmanical adherents continued with their allegiance to the local deities, despite belonging to the Shaiva community. Thus, Shaivism provided an independent space for the folk cults and their expression. However, the construction of a broad-based community in the twelfth century was a conscious attempt with the help of the royal patronage that reflected the dominant/elite ideological characteristics of the Shaivas. The legend of recovering the Tevaram from the dusty storeroom of the temple in Chidambaram at the royal instance further attests the elitist attitude.

The establishment of Shaiva institutional organization specially the mathas with their non-brahmanical leadership further widened the catchment area of the Shaiva devotees. These leaders known as the Mudalyars Santana mostly belonged to the Vellala lineage of the twelfth-thirteenth century. Further, the instances of the Nayanars establishing the mathas further highlighted their importance. For example, Tirunavukkarasu, a Nayanar himself founded a matha in Tiruppurandurutti in Tanjavur district. The mathas gained control over the temples and its landed property after the twelfth century AD, with the decline of the brahmadesyas. They also invested and participated in the long distance trade, and were mostly located in the trading and weaving centers, where they attracted the royal and mercantile patronage. Thus, they were the custodian of the religious canon, had a large following and emerged as powerful institutional bases for the Shaiva community.

The Shaiva tradition influenced several religious traditions. Virashaivas in Karnataka was one such important tradition. Shaivism also influenced the cult of Murukan, the most venerated god in South India. Projected as the son of Shiva, Murukan on one hand, represented the association of local, regional deities with the brahmanical religion and on the other, it bridged the gap between the tribal and agrarian settlements of the temple and royal court centres.

B) Vaishnavism

i) The Shrivaisnavas:

The heavy royal patronage to Shaivism during the Chola period, from tenth to eleventh century marginalized the development of Vaishnavism. Very often, the Shrivaisnavas became the target of royal persecution. Compared to the Shaiva temples, the construction of the Vaishnava temples was not on such a large scale. None of the Alvars, with the exception of Tirumangai were deified in the Chola temples. Unlike the Shaivas, the Vaishnavas were not a well-developed organized community with a comprehensive textual tradition. Attempts were made in the late ninth and early tenth centuries to evolve a text, the Bhagavata Purana. The text was written in Sanskrit and the Alvar bhakti was the main theme of the text. This ‘Sanskritization of the Krishna tradition’ adopted the popular Puranic style and drew heavily from the local Tamil myths. (R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.140-141). But the text had a heavy Sanskrit base and the ideological basis was primarily the intellectual philosophy of advaita. Therefore, the attempt of Bhagavata Purana to reconcile popular bhakti with brahmanical orthodoxy failed to make an impact on the local population, the Shrivaihsnava philosophical system and the Chola sovereignty.

However, until the middle of the tenth century AD, Vaishnavism along with Shaivism received royal patronage under Parantaka-I (AD 907-955). Vishnu temples like the one at Shrirangam (Tiruchchirapalli district in Tamil Nadu) were elaborated upon. State support was further evident from the presence of the Krishna and Rama temples. Some attempts were consciously made to evolve a structure for the Vaishnava community when a part of the Nalayira Divya Prabandham i.e. the Tiruvaymoli of Nammalvar was collected and put to music in the Ranganathasvami temple at Shrirangam and Uttaramerur during the period of Rajendra I in the eleventh century.
Due to the lack of resources, it was not probably possible to develop the entire corpus of four thousand hymns into a full-fledged institution of ritual singing. Under these circumstances, the conscious choice of the Tiruvaymoli was a deliberate attempt to attract the non-brahmana devotees, especially of the important Vellala caste to which Nammalvar belonged. Hence, a channel for the dissemination of the Vaishnava ideas of bhakti to the people did not develop in the same manner as that of the Shaivas. Probably unlike Shaivism Vaishnavism did not have the integrative capacity that could be the basis of the political ideology and social philosophy of egalitarianism. As a result, the social base of Shrivishnavas could not develop. Poor networks of interaction and a weak institutional structure could not evolve a community. Consequently, the ‘Shrivaishnavas’ remained a scattered lot in South India. Although, the temple inscriptions refer to ‘Shrivaishnavas’, but it was an honorary prefix of the Vaishnava Brahmanas and did not imply a community.

However, by twelfth century, with the decline of the Cholas and the brahmadeyas, rising importance of the temples, and emergence of new social groups, Shrirvishnavism took several significant steps despite its heavy Sanskritic base. Already under Kulottunga I (AD 1070-1118) there was revival of royal patronage in some of the major Vaishnava centres, which started developing a considerable following. The efforts of Shrirvishnava acharyas, Nathamuni and Yamunacharya at creating a strong temple base strengthened the community institutions. Nathamuni introduced the Nalayira Divya Prabandham, i.e. the hymns of the Alvars as a part of the ritual singing in the temples. Yamunacharya’s treatise called Agamapramunyam advocated the Pancharatra Agama in preference to the already existing Vaihiksha Agama for worship in the temples. This was an ideological shift from an exclusive, metaphysical approach as represented in Vaihiksha Agama to a more popular, ritualistic and incorporative approach as represented in Pancharatra Agama and elaborated the forms of worship. The Agamas were manuals that laid down the guidelines for construction of temples, iconography, and details about daily religious observances, magic, medicine and so on. (The Shaiva Agamas will be referred in the next Section).

However, it was under Kulottunga II, i.e. the second quarter of the twelfth century AD that the Vishishtadvaita philosophy of Ramanuja (AD 1100) evolved. It was the first school of thought that challenged Shankara’s monistic (i.e. non-dualism) philosophy of Advaita and the concept of Nirguna Brahma and presented an alternative model for the perception of divinity. According to the Shrirvishnava hagiographies, Ramanuja received his early philosophical training in Kanchipuram from an advaita teacher, Yadava Prakasha. However, he differed from his teacher and developed the philosophy of ‘qualified monism (i.e. Vishishtadvaita). Soon after he split with Yadava Prakasha and met a succession of teachers including Nathamuni and Yamunaharya who held similar theological views like Ramanuja’s. Finally Ramanuja succeeded Yamunacharya as the head of the matha at Ranganathaswami temple at Shrirangam. He travelled to various places not only in South India but also in North India, where in some places, he introduced the Shrirvishnava tradition. He is credited with conversion of the Hoysala ruler of southern Karnataka, Vishnuvardhana from Jaina faith to the Shrirvishnava one. According to the tradition, he established various shrines and centres in southern Karnataka, especially the one at Yadavagiri, also known as Melukote. Ramanuja wrote several treatises and commentaries (bhashya) in Sanskrit and was also called the bhashyakara. The most famous amongst all his works is the Shribhashya which was the first sectarian bhashya and became a model for many others that followed.

Ramanuja’s philosophy was based on the idea that the divine had attributes that were comprehensible to the less intellectual devotees. Therefore, this religious philosophy on the one hand imparted the much-needed theological orientation to the community and on the other hand, it was aimed at bringing the Tamil (local/folk) with Sanskritic,
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where caste was secondary, thereby broadening the base of community. The concept of \textit{Saguna Brahma}, i.e. the perception of divinity in concrete aesthetic terms made the god more accessible.

The Shrivaishnava tradition credits Ramanuja with the introduction of the non-brahmanical classes, especially the Kaikkolas, in the temple services and institutionalizing their presence through numerous duties allotted to them. The inscriptions of the Ranganathasvami temple at Shrirangam and Venkatesvarasvani temple at Tirupati refer several times to the Kaikkolas and their administrative duties. The \textit{Koil Olug}, the chronicle of the temple at Shrirangam also devotes considerable attention to the Kaikkolas and the role of Ramanuja in incorporating them in the temple services. Although epigraphical evidence does not mention Ramanuja’s contribution, the claims made by the powerful Kaikkola weaver community for a higher ritual status was around the same time. The epigraphs point out that the Kaikkolas were a part of the expanding temple rituals and even participated in the gift-giving and administrative functions of the temple. Kaikkola \textit{Mudalis} were important temple officials. Therefore, by the end of the twelfth century, the emergence of Shrivaishnavas as an organized group is evident from their control in the temple organizations.

In the post Ramanuja period, the development and consolidation of the textual tradition contributed significantly towards the evolution of the community identity. First, the philosophy of \textit{ubhaya vedanta} i.e. dual Vedas, introduced for the first time the notion of a scripture in Tamil. The entire corpus of four thousand hymns acquired scriptural importance. Second, with the evolution of the scripture was the tradition of writing commentaries. The \textit{Prabandham} and the works of Ramanuja became the subject of several commentaries. This led to the development of several interpretations, which gradually developed into distinct philosophies themselves. Third, was the hagiographic tradition that delineated a cult of saints projecting a distinction between the \textit{Alvars} and \textit{acharya}, and the hymnal and theological tradition represented by them. The composition of the \textit{Divyasuricharitam} by Garudavahan Pandita is regarded by several scholars as the first hagiography. The hagiographic narratives also emphasized on the itinerary of the saints thus projecting a pilgrimage network.

ii) \textit{Madhvacharya}

An important religious tradition that developed within Vaishnavism was that of Madhvacharya in the thirteenth century. Madhavacharya founded a sect directly based on the \textit{Bhagavat Purana}. He was born at Kalyanapur near Udipi in South Kanara district. Like Ramanuja, his early training was in Shankara’s philosophy of \textit{advaita}. However, he soon developed differences with the \textit{advaitic} philosophy and became a \textit{sanyasi} and was called \textit{Purna Prajna} (fully enlightened). In his writings he referred to himself as Ananda Tirtha. According to the Madhva tradition, he was involved in a debate at Trivandrum with an \textit{acharya} of Sringeri, which led to his persecution. Thereafter, he travelled to various places in north India, facing innumerable difficulties and finally reached the Himalayas and wrote a commentary on the \textit{Vedanta-Sutras}. Subsequently, he returned to Udipi and built a temple of Krishna and spent the rest of his life there preaching. He wrote commentaries on the \textit{Upanishads} and a companion volume to the \textit{Mahabharata}, which is one of the important scriptures of the Madhva community.

Madhva’s religion was complete \textit{bhakti} to Krishna with Radha having no place in it. All other \textit{avatars} (incarnations) of Vishnu are revered, Shiva is worshipped and the five gods of the \textit{Smartas} are recognized. Madhava evolved the philosophy of \textit{Dvaita Vedanta} (dualism) as against Shankara’s \textit{Advaita} (monism) and Ramanuja’s \textit{Vishistadvaita} (qualified monism). According to him five distinctions were eternal. These were the differences between (i) god and individual soul, (ii) god and matter, (iii) individual soul and matter, (iv) one individual soul and other, and finally (v) one material thing and another. World is real and not illusory. There are two kinds of
reality, svatantra or independent reality which is god, and partantra or dependant reality, which are the soul and the world.

C) Virashaivism

The rise of the non-brahmanas also provided an impetus to the Virashaiva movement in Karnataka (also called Lingayats today). They developed a strong anti-caste, anti-brahmanical rhetoric and subsequently emerged as a cohesive community in the Vijayanagar period. Virashaivism, literally meaning heroic Shaivism was based on intense and unconditional devotion to Shiva. This socio-religious movement was influenced by the bhakti of the Tamil Nayanars, who were also regarded as the spiritual guides of the Virashaiva teachers. Virashaivism is also considered to be ‘a reformist schism of the Kalamuka sect in Karnataka.’(Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.159).

The founder of the movement was supposed to be Basava, a minister in the court of the Kalachuri king, Bijjala of Kalyana in north Karnataka in the twelfth century (AD 1160). Bijjala and Basava were said to have had numerous differences. After the ‘crisis of Kalyana’, the Virashaivas faced opposition. Evidence regarding the persecution of the devotees is available in the inscriptions and literature. However, with the establishment of Yadava control in the Deccan, especially in northern Karnataka and the Hoysala regimes in southern Karnataka, Virashaivas received considerable royal patronage. The growth of trade in Karnataka provided the support from the merchants and the artisans communities, especially the Banajigas. This movement was hostile to Jainism and remained so after the twelfth century and was chiefly responsible for the decline of Jainism in Karnataka.

According to the Virshaiva tradition, the community had an ancient origin, when the five ascetics sprang up from the five heads of Shiva and founded the five mathas. They were Kedarnatha in the Himalayas, Srisailam in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh, Balehalli in West Mysore, Ujjaini in Bellary and Benares. According to Nilakantha Sastri,(p. 64) evidences show that these ascetics are contemporaries of Basava in the twelfth century. In every Virashaiva village, there is a monastery affiliated to any one of the five ascetics.

Since they rejected most of the brahmanical practices and institutional organizations like the temples, they created its own priesthood, the jangamas. The jangama was the guru or spiritual guide and commanded veneration in the community. He was identified with Shiva himself. The jangamas were both householders and celibates and were based in the Virashaiva mathas. The celibate jangamas were of two types, the Gurusthalas who initiated the followers and performed domestic rites and the Viraktas who led a life of austerity. Each follower wears a lingam encased in a small container around his neck. It is called the jangama linga or the ishtalinga or the mobile linga. The Virashaivas rejected the worship of fixed large stone lingas (Sthavara linga) in the temples. Temple and temple building was condemned as an activity of the rich. It was a static symbol, as against the body, especially the moving body, wandering from place to place. Hence, it was a denunciation of the stable establishment. The saints came from diverse non-brahmanical background. The Virashaiva saints were considered as Nirguna bhaktas, relating personally to the infinite absolute, who may bear the name of Shiva, but did not have any attributes or mythology.

The scriptures of the Virashaivas comprised of the vachanas, which were exclusively in Kannada. A vachana is a religious lyric in Kannada, literally meaning, ‘saying things said’. (A.K.Ramanujan, (1973). Speaking of Siva. Baltimore: Penguin Books). From the tenth to the twelfth century, there were prolific vachana compositions of the Virashaiva saints like, Dasimayya, Basav, Allama and Mahadeviyakka. None of them were brahmanas. The saints had an antipathy towards the Sanskritic tradition and scriptures. This is reflected in the vachanas of Basava and other Virashaiva
saints. According to A.K. Ramanujan, although the *vachanas* were characterized by spontaneity and rejected the formal stylized brahmanical Sanskritic *Shruti* and *Smriti* literature, but they “did not exclude Sanskrit words or even common Sanskrit quotations; instead the *vachanakars* used Sanskrit with brilliant and complex effects of contrast, setting it off against the native dialectical Kannada.” (A.K. Ramanujan, 1993).

The Virashaivas right from the beginning had a broad social base, where the followers came from different castes and class. Their practices brought them into conflict with other Shiva religious traditions. Their social practice advocated the remarriage of the widows, no restrictions on menstruating women, inter-caste dining, no ritual purification for the family of the deceased and they buried their dead. The community was divided into four categories, viz., Jangamas, Shilavantas, Banajigas and Panchamashalis. Though this division was not based on caste and occupation, it was based on spiritual superiority, whereby a *jangama* was at the top of this hierarchy. Subsequently, the Virashaivas crystallized into an endogamous community with strict boundaries.

Simultaneous with the development of Virashaivism was the growth and expansion of another movement of similar beliefs. This was the Aradhy Shaiva movement in Andhra (Cuddapah and Kurnool district mainly) and Kannada region (Mysore). It was started by Mallikarjuna Pandita Aradhy, who was a contemporary of Basava in the twelfth century. Aradhya is a Sanskrit word meaning adorable. The followers were mostly brahmanas. They wore the sacred thread along with the *linga* around their neck. They adopted the Virashaiva forms of worship but did not interdine with other Lingayats and intermarried with the Smartas.

Therefore, the twelfth century represented a crucial phase in the evolution and construction of the religious communities and their respective consciousness. A stiff competition for acquiring the devotees set in. The theological orientation of the communities was aimed at incorporating the non-brahmanical elements thereby broadening the social base of their respective community organization. The Shaiva and the Vaishnava traditions drew legitimacy from their respective hymnal tradition and projected a broad base. Amidst such an intense religious development, sectarian rivalries became common, especially in the context of competitive control over the patronage of economically and politically diverse powerful social groups. This was further reflected in the subsequent period, with the migration and the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire in the fourteenth century.

### 22.4 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THE CHANGING SOCIAL BASE AND COMMUNITY IDENTITIES AD 1300-1700

The socio-economic and religious processes of the twelfth century continued in the thirteenth century. There was a gradual decline of the Chola power and the emergence of numerous dynasties. The Kakatiyas of Warangal in the interior Telugu country, the Hoysalas of Dvaramudra in the Karnataka region and the Pandyas of Madurai in the Tamil country were the most formidable powers to reckon with. The political situation during this period was characterized by shifting alliances and uncertainties. The fertile river valleys of Kaveri, Pennar, Tamraparani and Krishna-Godavari with numerous agricultural settlements and important trading centres were a source of attraction to the Hoysala and Kakatiya kingdoms as they were located in the rocky areas of low rainfall and therefore possessed a narrow resource base. Subsequently, the Kakatiyas took over the area from Telangana to the rich agricultural land and ports of the Krishna-Godavari delta and the Hoysalas occupied the western coast from the Konkan to Goa and Malabar. The Hoysalas also shifted their capital from Dvaramudra to Kannanur near the Kaveri delta in the Tamil region, where the Pandyas were already making inroads. The tension between the two powers manifested
in their competitive patronage extended to the Vaishnava temple of Ranganathasvami and the Shaiva temple of Jambukeshvaram, situated on either side of the Kaveri at Srirangam.

The invasions of the Delhi Sultanate under Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughluq in the fourteenth century disturbed the political configurations in South India, especially of the Hoysalas, Kakatiyas and Pandyas and culminated in the establishment of the Sultanate at Madurai. By AD 1370, the Vijayanagar Empire with its capital at Hampi in northern Karnataka emerged as a consolidated ruling power. Finally, the defeat of the Madurai Sultan at the hands of Kumara Kampana of Vijayanagar pushed the frontiers to the southernmost point.

The establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire integrated the three cultural zones of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka. Consequently, wetland agricultural settlements and dry upland zones were linked to each other. The fertile Kaveri delta attracted the dominant agricultural community of the Velamas from the arid northern zones of the Deccan plateau. The settlement of the migratory Telugu or the Vadviga groups in the central Deccan and the Tamil wet regions often displaced the older Tamil peasants and landholders, and created a new class of landed magnates. By fifteenth century, agrarian expansion not only took place in the wet areas, but also in the dry zones particularly in the black soil region through artificial irrigation technology. Unsettled wooded areas and hilly tracts situated on the peripheries of agricultural settlements were also the focus of the cultivation. In these areas, the agriculturalists came into conflict with the hunters and pastoralists that often led to the incorporation of the latter into the agricultural community as lower caste groups. These hunting tribes also possessed a martial tradition which became the basis of their recruitment in the Vijayanagar armies. These changes provided the context for the emergence of a warrior peasant class, primarily non-brahamana and Telugu in composition. Some of them were the Reddis, Vellalas, Gavundas, and Manradis. The already existing dominant agricultural community of the Vellalas emerged as big landowners with titles like nadudaiyan or nadaval. These powerful agricultural communities by incorporating and involving various peasant and non-peasant groups in the agricultural activities linked the local village societies to the political authorities.

By fourteenth century political groups, referred to as the nayakas representing the Vijayanagar Empire in various regions of the Peninsula emerged prominently. These nayakas primarily belonged to the Telugu warrior class. They emerged as the major benefactors of the temples and mathas, especially those of the Shrivaishnava community. Over a period, these nayakas became influential in the temple administration and the local assemblies. Subsequently, by seventeenth century, independent nayaka states emerged in Tiruchchirapalli, Madurai and Tanjavur.

Migration also brought into prominence a new class of itinerant merchants and traders, several of whom gradually settled down and emerged as powerful landowners. The inscriptional references to the Kaikkola, Vaniya, Sikku Vaniya Vyapari, Mayilatti, Kamala, and Komatti traders, Pattanulkar (silk weavers) from Saurashtra point to the development of a brisk trade and increased craft production which found a thriving market in the Vijayanagar and post-Vijayanagar kingdoms. The emergent mercantile communities comprising of merchants, artisans and weavers were the followers of different religious traditions - Shaiva, Vaishnava and Islam. However, primarily Vaishnavism was the faith of the migrant merchants and traders. Their lavish sponsorship of Shrivaishnava temples helped to spread Shrivaishnavism. The Venkateshvara temple at Tirupati and the Narayanasvami temple at Melkote emerged as significant institutions due to the patronage of the nayakas and merchants. Thus, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, temple and polity were inextricably linked with each other and emerged as the basis of a new social formation.

Socio Religious Movements
22.4.1 Mechanisms of Integration: Consolidation of Community Consciousness

Amidst such politico-economic and social changes, religion emerged as a major stabilizing influence. Such a scenario provided many opportunities to the religious communities to consolidate their social base. Integration of the diverse social groups, primarily the non-brahmanas, within the larger community framework became a major agenda of the community-building programme. The attempts to reconcile and accommodate the Brahmana and the non-brahmana elements by the acharyas often led to debates and conflicts within the communities. Some of the mechanisms adopted for integrating the different social groups and expanding social base are given below.

1) The religious canvas during this period was not just dominated by the religion of the Vellalas and Brahmanas. Against this backdrop of migration of various social groups and the growing power of the martial communities in both wet and dry areas, the worship of the warrior goddesses became popular. This period registered a dramatic increase in the Amman shrines. Several of these Amman shrines were linked to the brahmanical temples of Shiva and Vishnu, which at a larger level linked the rural societies to the urban settlements. The mechanism through which such integration was affected was primarily the concept of divine marriage that linked the two lineages – brahmanical and non-brahmanical. Thus, both Shiva and Vishnu had numerous consorts during this period. Hence, a large pantheon was created comprising of the local warrior gods, goddesses and the brahmanical divinity of Shiva and Vishnu. This represented a vast cross section of the society that was linked through temple rituals in a hierarchical manner. Further, the non-brahmanical Vellala village priest also participated in the ritual activities of the large temples along with the Brahmana priests. In this way, the brahmanical temples were linked through a priestly network with the village deities. The religious scenario became more complex as some of the migratory groups carried their own gods and goddesses and constructed new temples.

2) In such a situation, the role of the temple assumed importance. As already mentioned the temples were the mechanism for generating agricultural developments. The numerous endowments made by the diverse social groups generated resources that were managed and invested by the temples for tank irrigation. Along with the temples the institution of the mathas assumed further importance in this period. As a powerful institution within the larger structure of the temple, the mathas were either a competitive unit vis-à-vis the temple authorities or participated along with them in various transactions. Very often, they came into conflict with other groups in the temple over the control of resources. The social base of a matha was determined by it being attached to a temple in some form or the other. Some mathas were associated with a single temple and hence were localized and became the controllers of the administration of that temple. During the Vijayanagar period, the matha leaders received heavy patronage.

Both the temples and the mathas provided a space for the convergence of groups within the communities. The religious leaders or the acharyas and the mathadhipatis were the vital link between the local population and the new class of rulers, thereby enabling the establishment of political authority over the newly conquered areas. From the fourteenth century onwards, a large number of non-brahmanas had important administrative roles within the temples and the mathas. They also had access to the performance of some of the rituals. As a centre of community activity and interaction, temples and mathas emerged as important institutions. It is for these reasons that the rayas made heavy endowments to both the institutions. The gifts were made to the deities and the sectarian leaders or the acharyas and the head of the mathas were the instruments through which the gift was made. In return, they were the recipients
of privileges from the ruling class and also gained greater control over temple organization and administration. Thus, these sectarian leaders established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimized themselves as central figures of the community.

In this connection, the relation between the gifts made by the Vijayanagar rulers and chiefs and the sectarian leaders requires a brief discussion. A two-way relationship developed between the sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagar rulers (where both needed each other). Arjun Appadorai points out an ‘asymmetrical’ relationship between the rulers and the sectarian groups. (Arjun Appadorai, Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule, Cambridge, 1981, pp.63-104.) While the rulers conferred honour as well as resources in the form of gifts to the sectarian leaders, the latter only rendered honour and not material resources. Despite such an ‘asymmetrical’ relation, the state preferred to give gift to the temples for two reasons. First, the state was not interested in investing directly in the irrigation activities, for that required additional responsibility of labour and financial management. The sectarian leaders with their social influence could harness the labour potential and control them. Two, gifting to the temple and its functionaries was an act of merit that was inevitably recorded in the inscriptions. However, the underlying motive was to gain access to the temple and be a part of the ritual set-up that included other social groups, over which the rayas and the chiefs wanted to assert their control. Therefore, the temple and the mathas, and their functionaries were instrumental in legitimizing the political authority, which otherwise would have been difficult.

The generation of resources at such a large level created tensions between the various sectarian groups. The control over temple store-houses became one of the major issues of competitive control and contestation. The leaders through the control of the temple base accumulated power and resources. The sectarian leaders imitated the royal paraphernalia and behaved as little kings themselves. Thus, the temple, the king and the religious leader were linked together through the deity as the paradigmatic sovereign.

3) The concept of pilgrimage contributed significantly towards the consolidation of the various communities from fourteenth century onwards. On the one hand, pilgrimage provided an arena for group/community interaction and presented a collective consciousness. On the other hand it provided a single context for the assertion of multiple identities within the overarching community paradigm that is pilgrimage brought together different social groups and sectarian leaders. The sacred geography in the hymns of the Nayanaras and Alvars as discussed in Section two formed the basis on which the pilgrimage complex was elaborated upon during this period. The pilgrimage sites were not only confined to the southern boundaries, but were present in the northern region also, thereby attributing a pan-Indian status to the religious traditions. The notion of pilgrimage was focused on the composite nature of the sacred centres and the network between them. The journey to the sacred shrines within a well-defined area strengthened the spatial identities. This implied not only movement and interaction of the people, but also transmission, exchange and circulation of ideas and beliefs, which influenced and enriched the community ideology. In this context, the pilgrimage sites became the meeting ground for the acharyas, the mathadhipatis, and their respective followers, where the former could symbolically assert their claims as the spiritual mediator between man and god.

Pilgrimages to holy places became common in the Vijayanagar Empire. The rayas themselves and following them the nayakas made frequent pilgrimages to various sacred centres. One copper plate grant mentions a list of holy sites which were both Shaiva and Vaishnava. These sites are, Chidambaram, Shrikakulam, Kalahasti, Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Shrisailam, Harihar, Ahobilam,
A special type of text came into being from fifteenth century onwards in the Shaiva and Vaishnava religious literature with the consolidation of institutional network. These texts were known as the \textit{Sthalapuranas}. The concept of pilgrimage received exclusive treatment in the \textit{Sthalapuranas}. They represented the pilgrimage literature attracting pilgrims by glorifying a particular centre and its temple. Starting from the mythical/legendary origins of a temple, its history, the spiritual leaders associated with that particular centre, these \textit{Sthalapuranas} provided the legendary cum historical account in order to establish the primacy of a \textit{sthala} (centre) in the Vaishnava and Shaiva tradition. In developing or contributing to the community consciousness, these \textit{Puranas} had a more popular role than the religious canonical literature which was intended mainly as the basic text of doctrine, theology, philosophy and ritual. Festivals were incorporated directly into the \textit{Sthalapuranas} for festivals attracted pilgrims, worshippers and patrons to a centre.

The singular treatment of a particular site and a shrine in these texts was with the intention of highlighting the importance of the place. The milieu emerged as a space for the performance of the divine feasts, its flora and fauna being identical with the heavenly abode and its potential of salvation from the sins was parallel to the divine intervention. The shrine then became the centre that initiated and connected the devotee with the other world. In this sense, the concept of pilgrimage they were promoting did not in any way aim to integrate the entire community. It represented the interests of the priestly class and other temple functionaries of that particular place, who wished to attract patronage to the temple.

In general, the \textit{Sthalapuranas} with the \textit{Puranic} and the local legends glorifying the concerned site were meant to attract royal patronage as well as the religious community. The contents of the \textit{Sthalapuranas} reveal a strong tendency of mythicization of the place, deity, rituals and shrine. Though the local legends were presented in their original form, often their mythicization took place whereby creating an element of credibility which appealed to the psyche of the pilgrims. Apart from the epic-\textit{Puranic} framework, the texts also borrowed legends from the Sangam literature, the hymnal corpus, especially regarding the shrine/site, and the biographical accounts of the \textit{Alvars} and the \textit{Nayanars} and \textit{acharyas}. Therefore, they emerged as the representative texts of the sites and the particular temple. With the decline of the Vijayanagar Empire and the emergence of several power groups, the \textit{Sthalapuranas} widened their scope.

4) With the development and consolidation of the temples and \textit{mathas} as important institutions of the various religious communities, the concept of a \textit{guru} became significant. The guru was usually an \textit{acharya} or \textit{muthadhipati} (head of the \textit{matha}). The emergence of these \textit{acharyas} can be seen from the thirteenth century when various political and social changes took place. A \textit{guru} (often \textit{guru} and \textit{acharyas} are used interchangeably) commanded a large group of followers, thereby linking the different groups in the society into the mainstream of the community.

The importance of the \textit{gurus} lay in their role as disseminators of the canon and the \textit{guru-shishya parampara}, i.e. the preceptor-disciple relationship was the transmitter of tradition. The \textit{guru-shishya parampara} not only ensured continuity but also legitimized the validity of the teacher as the preceptor of the tradition which gave him the authority to interpret. The \textit{guru} was indispensable to the devotees as he helped them in attaining salvation. Hence, he was the \textit{upakaraka} and \textit{uddharaka}, i.e. ‘he who gave knowledge and showed the way to salvation and he who took the disciples as it were by hand and led him to salvation.’
The guru initiated the disciple into the community and was instrumental in the dissemination of the theology. The discourses of the acharyas that explained the theological meaning of the texts became a part of the community philosophy. The two roles of the guru, the initiatory and expository, got institutionalized into the hagiographies which narrated several accounts of the intellectual superiority of the guru. Hagiographical texts refer to the acharyas participating in various theological debates and emerging victorious and being rewarded by the rulers. Hence, a guru emerged as the focus for the community.

The powerful sectarian leaders who were usually the gurus were often the intermediaries through whom the warrior class made gifts and in return obtained ‘honours’ and ‘authority’. In return they received privileges from the ruling class and gained greater control over temple organization and administration. Thus, the acharyas and the heads of mathas, as gurus, established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimized themselves as central figures of the community.

22.4.2 Socio-Religious Movements: Developments and Trends

From fourteenth century onwards especially with the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire, a well developed nexus between religion and polity had emerged. The role of the Smarta matha at Shringeri for the establishment of Vijayanagar Empire in Karnataka in the fourteenth century has been discussed by various scholars. Vidyatirtha or Vidyashankara, (fourteenth century) a famous advaita teacher based in the Shringeri matha was held in great reverence by the Sangama rulers of the Vijayanagar Empire. He is supposed to have been the temporal and the spiritual guide of Bukka I. The Inam Office copper plate grant of Harihara II describes Bukka as the worshipper at the lotus feet of Vidyatirtha. This has led some writers to conclude that it was Vidyatirtha who laid the foundation of the Vijayanagar Empire. Vidyaranya the disciple of Vidyatirtha was a powerful advaita of the Shringeri matha and is supposed to have guided Harhara and Bukka in establishing and consolidating the Empire in Karnataka. Although the Smarta tradition was not a part of the socio-cultural movement, it intellectually and theologically influenced the philosophy of some of the socio-religious communities. The case of the Vishishtadvaita and the Dvaita philosophy of Ramunuja and Madhavacharya already discussed in the last Section illustrates this point. The Smarta influence continued in the subsequent period, when the various advaita philosophers and the Smarta mathas were not only important theologically, they were also playing a significant role in Vijayanagar politics. Appaya Dikshitar in the early seventeenth century was an influential Smarta scholar.

A) Shaivism

Tamil Shaivism flourished during this period due to the rising power and influence of the Shaiva mathas and aiturnams. The sectarian leaders attached to these mathas were both Brahmanas and Vellalas who composed hagiographies and theological treatises. In fact, the collective title Tevaram to the Nayanar’s hymns was given probably in the sixteenth century.

Between thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the leaders and teachers of the mathas evolved a new philosophical system of the Tamil Shaivas called the Shaiva Siddhanta. The founder of this movement was one Meyakandadeva who lived in the thirteenth century in the Tamil region, south of Chennai. His work, the Shivajnanabodam contains the principles and ideas of this faith. He emphasized the importance of Shiva and is said to have popularized Shaivism amongst the masses. He had several disciples and followers, some of whom were well known as Shaiva Siddhanta philosophers. The important disciples were, Arulnandi, Marai-jnanasambandar and Umapati Shivam. These three disciples along with Meyakandar constituted the four Santana-acharyas (i.e., teachers in continuous series) of Tamil Shaivism.
The story of the recovery and canonization of the Tevaram was described in fourteenth century by Umapati Shivam in his work, Tirumurulakanta Puranam. This work is important for the Tamil Shaiva identity as the story of recovery narrated here established the authenticity of the Tevaram as the revealed scripture. The recovery story also attested the patronage of the eleventh century Chola ruler at whose behest the Tevaram was recovered from a dusty room in the Shiva temple at Chidambaram by Nampi Antar Nampi who was guided by none other than Shiva and Lord Ganesha themselves.

The Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy is based on the Shaiva Agamas which are twenty eight in number. The Siddhanta philosophy was also influenced by other Shaiva sects like the Pashupatas and Kashmir Shaivas. According to this philosophy, there are three ultimate reals: (a) pashu, i.e. the individual soul; (b) pati, i.e. the lord or Shiva; (c) pacam or pasham, i.e. the bondage of karma. The soul can be liberated by following the fourfold path of devotion, which were, service, worship, spiritual discipline and ultimate knowledge, activated at every stage by god’s grace, arul. The system stresses the importance of bhakti in preference to rituals and ceremonies. As the Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy got consolidated numerous schools of thought emerged.

Another religious tradition developed within Shaivism, which flourished in the fifteenth century. This was Shivadvaita, whose chief exponent was one Shivacharya. He is supposed to have lived in the beginning of the fifteenth century and wrote the Shaivabhashya. According to this school, Brahman was identified with Para Shiva who was superior to the Trimurtis that is, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a monotheistic movement, mystical in nature, developed within Shaivism in the Tamil region. This was known as the Sittars or Siddhas. The term siddha literally means one who has attained perfection as distinct from a bhakta who is attempting to perceive god. According to some scholars the teachings of the Siddhas were influenced by Islam and Christianity. However, this needs to be substantiated. The history of the Siddhas is obscure. Some of the Siddhas had curious names like Ahappey (inner demon), Pambatti (snake charmer) indicating their ambiguous social background. Shivaprakasha was well known Siddha who lived in the seventeenth century. According to the Siddha tradition, he debated with a Christian missionary and wrote Eshumada Nirakaranam, which refuted the Christian ideas. This work is however, no longer extant. (T.V. Mahalingam, (1975), Social and Economic Life in Vijayanagar, Madras, p.195)

B) Virashaivism

During the Vijayanagar period, the Virashaivas shifted from northern Karnataka to central and southern Karnataka, where they eventually based themselves. They received patronage from the Vijayanagar rulers, and Wodeyars of Mysore (eighteenth century), nayakas and merchants. Agrahara villages were granted to the jangamas, who were influential during this period. However, it was in the post-Vijayanagar period that the Virashaivas received heavy patronage and acquired a popular social base. Temples and mathas played a crucial role in expanding and consolidating the Virashaiva tradition and identity. Numerous works, composed during this period were associated with these mathas and temples which had also emerged as the prime instruments of political process.

The Virashaiva identity was articulated in its literature which can be divided into two phases. First phase was from the twelfth and fifteenth century marked by the prolific compositions of the Virashaiva poets. New literary forms were introduced. This period therefore has been also called the age of Virashaivas or Basava Yuga. The second phase was from the fifteenth century onwards, when the Virashaiva literature had three main concerns:
1) The works of the vachanakars were collected and edited. For this exercise, evidences from the Vedas, Agamas and Puranas were provided. Some editors also interpreted the vachanas giving rise to a new form called vachanagamas. Apart from collection, edition and interpretation, hagiographies on the lives of the Virashaiva vachanakars were composed. These texts also focused on stories taken from different Shaiva sources such as Shiva Purana, Tamil Shaivism and so on.

2) Attempts were made to appropriate different Shaiva traditions. Apart from the influence of Basavanna and his followers, the Tamil Shaiva tradition, the Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, Nathpanthis and Aradhyas influenced the community literature and played an important role in constructing the Virashaiva identity. These developments were taking place while the Kapalika and Kalamukha monasteries were getting incorporated into Virashaiva institutions during this period.

3) There were compositions of texts related to theology.

All these three concerns of the literature were reflected in the Shunyasampadane composed in the fifteenth century. This work is a collection of vachanas with a narrative, the real objective is to record the debates and arguments about matters of theory and practice and therefore represented a collective consciousness of the community.

Simultaneous with these attempts at broadening the social base and creating a composite identity for the community, there also seems to be a conscious attempt to broaden the exclusive notion of the sharanas, i.e. the Virashaiva saints. Mechanisms for disseminating the theology for the lay devotees was sought to be done through animate and inanimate intermediaries of the faith. The objective aids to faith evolved by the Virashaivas themselves, guru, lingam, jangama were now gaining importance as aspects of the divine and were in turn related to Basava, Chenna Basava and Allam Prabhu. There were shifts in the perception of saints from being human to having divine origins. This would not only provide respectability and social acceptability but also coherence, dignity and justifiability to the community.

On one hand efforts were made to expand and broaden the community outlook, on the other hand, the exercise of incorporating the very brahmanical literature they had protested against was taking place. For instance, Shripati Pandita’s Shrikara Bhashya (fifteenth century) was based on the Brahma Purana, Nandikeshvara defended the practice of wearing the linga and burial of the dead on the basis of Shruti and Smriti literature in his Lingadharan Chandrika composed in the seventeenth century.

Contradictions could also be seen in the Virashaiva attitude towards impure and polluting occupations. Those who followed these occupations were not denied entry into the Virashaiva fold, but they had to renounce these occupations to ‘be born again’ through devotion to Shiva in order to be a part of the Virashaiva fold. Therefore, the Virashaivas did not challenge the brahmanical standards of occupational purity, though they rejected caste discriminations based on heredity. The hierarchy between the jangamas and the lay person remained.

C) The Madhavas

During the Vijayanagar period the Madhavas consolidated their philosophy and wrote several hagiographies and commentaries and developed their institutions of the matha. They received royal patronage and were influential. Madhva was succeeded by several disciples. The most eminent amongst them was Vyasaraya Tirtha, a contemporary of Krishnadevaraya. According to the Madhva hagiographies, Vyasaraya was a favourite of Krishnadevaraya. The emperor abdicated the throne for a short time in favour of Vyasaraya to avert a serious calamity that was predicted for the empire, should the emperor occupy the throne at a particular hour. Since a calamity
was averted when Vyasaraya occupied the throne, he is said to have been honoured with the title of Karnataka-simhasadhishvara. (T.V. Mahalingam, 1975, p. 201) A large number of villages were also granted to him. This story shows the nexus between religion and political power and the emphasis on royal patronage that would accord an exalted position to the community.

D) Vallabhachcharya (AD 1479-1531)

Vallabhacharya was a Telugu Brahmana and a contemporary of Chaitanya. He was a founder of a system called Shuddhadvaita as against Shankara’s advaita. According to Vallabhacharya Vishnu was the highest god and he was to be worshipped in the form of young Krishna associated with Radha. Further, bhakti was most important and since every soul was a part of the supreme soul, there should be no restriction on the devotees who worship him. The ultimate aim of a Vallabha devotee was to become a gopi (cowherdess associated with Krishna legend) and spend life eternally with Krishna in his heaven, the Vyapi-Vaikuntha which had a heavenly Vrindavana and Yamuna.

According to the Vallabha tradition, Vallabhacharya was invited to participate in a debate at the court of Krishnadevaraya, where he is supposed to have defeated the famous Madhava teacher, Vyasaraya Tirtha and was elected the chief acharya amongst the Vaishnavas. This story was clearly an attempt on the part of the Vallabhas to assert themselves vis-à-vis other Vaishnava communities present during this period.

The followers of the Vallabha tradition were concentrated in the Andhra, Tamil and Maharashtra region and were mostly merchants. The acharyas of this sect called themselves the Maharajas and were Telugu Brahmanas.

E) Shrivaishnavism

By the end of the thirteenth century AD, Shrivaishnavism emerged as an organized religious community. As has been stated earlier, during the Vijayanagar period the Shrivaishnava community drew maximum political support. The Shrivaishnava temples, mathas and the acharyas or the sectarian leaders had a favoured status during this period. It is said that the Vijayanagar ruler, Krishnadevaraya was a Shrivaishnava and since Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati was his tutelary deity, the temple at Tirupati was especially patronized by him. Subsequently, a large number of nayakas also made endowments here as a part of the allegiance to the ruler. Therefore, from sixteenth century onwards, the Venkateshwara temple at Tirupati emerged as one of the prominent Shrivaishnava institutions.

The large scale incorporation of the various non-brahmana groups in the temple and matha administration, a broad based theology and the emphasis on the use of Tamil as the language of devotion are cited as some of the reasons for immense popularity of the faith during this period. The philosophy of abhaya-vedanta i.e. dual Vedas, introduced for the first time the notion of a scripture in Tamil providing sanctity to the vernacular as a scriptural language. A status of the Vedas was accorded to the Nalayira Divya Prabandham. However, the Sanskrit Vedas were not ignored and were incorporated in the scriptural framework. This was a significant development for it broadened the scope of the community ideology and tradition, making it relevant for a larger section of the society. Such popularity drew the attention of the rulers and other political groups towards it as they found Shrivaishnavism effective in developing the link between the polity and society and spread the political network.

However, a closer examination of the community theology and social practice reveals that there were ongoing tensions within the community over caste, language and modes of devotion. The acharyas were conscious of the fact that the Tamil Veda...
was neither a translation nor a parallel rendering of the Vedas and they needed legitimacy from the Vedic tradition to justify the appellation of Dravida Veda. This legitimacy was attempted through constant comparisons between the Sanskrit Vedas and the Prabandham. The low caste authorship of some of the hymns incorporated in the Dravida Veda posed a problem of legitimacy to the subsequent theologians of the community. The question arose as to whether the composition by low caste authors could be accorded the status of a Veda. Several commentaries discussed this issue and asserted that caste was ascrptive and a person had no control over it. What made him great was his devotion to god.

The tensions within the community were further highlighted when the numerous commentaries and theological texts advocated different interpretations on the philosophy and teachings of the Alvars and Ramanuja. The contradictory interpretations created a situation of conflict that led to a split within the community into two sects, the Vatakalai (northern) and Tenkalai (southern). Temples and mathas were also affiliated to a distinct Vatakalai or Tenkalai tradition. Vatakalai means north, i.e. northern part of the Tamil country with Kanchipuram as its religious centre. The Vatakalis are projected as adhering to the Vedic tradition, emphasizing on the sacredness of Sanskrit as the scriptural language. The Tenkalai means south of Tamil country with Shrirangam and Kaveri delta as the religious centre. They are projected as adhering to the Prabandhic tradition and emphasizing on Tamil as the scriptural language.

The basic difference between the Vatakalis and the Tenkalais sects lie in their respective acharyic lineage immediately after Ramanuja. For the Vatakalis, Vedanta Desika (AD1268-1369) was their acharyic head. For the Tenkalais Manavala Mamuni (AD1370-1443) was their acharyic head. The importance of these two acharyic heads for their respective sects lie in the fact that they were in direct line of descent from Ramanuja onwards and hence claimed to be his legitimate successors. Therefore, it followed that, the interpretations of Ramanuja’s teachings by Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamuni were a logical continuation to Ramanuja’s teachings and were valid.

There were theological differences that became the bases of numerous debates between the two sects. They were:

1) The first issue was the nature of god and soul. According to Vatakalis, the soul has to make the effort to attain god’s grace, just as the calf of the monkey clutched the mother with its own efforts i.e. markata-nyaya. According to the Tenkalai philosophy, the soul did not need to make any effort like the kitten who was carried by the cat in its mouth; hence marjala nyaya. These two similes are popular till this day.

2) Second issue was that of bhakti and prapatti (complete surrender to god). To the Vatakalis, bhakti and parapatti were two different goals. Status by birth, knowledge and capability were pre-requisites for bhakti Prapatti and did not require any qualifications and could be attained by any ordinary human being. According to the Tenkalais, since bhakti required individual effort, it was inferior to prapatti, which was effortless and depended on total surrender to god.

3) Third issue was that of the life pattern of prapanna and the notion of kainkarya (or service to the god). According to the Vatakalis, kainkarya was to be performed according to the shastric rules. To obtain forgiveness prapanna (i.e. the devotee) should follow certain prayschitta (atonement) rules. The Tenkalais did not give importance to the shastric injunctions for performing the kainkarya. In fact, prayschitta was not required at all and it was assumed that god would forgive and protect his devotee from all his sins, even those committed after prapatti and kainkarya.
Both the sects agreed on the importance of Shri as Vishnu’s consort who acted as a mediator between the soul and god. According to Vatakalaïs, the status of Shri was equal to that of god. The devotees could rely on her totally, and she would take care of their emancipation. However, according to the Tenkalais, Shri was finite jiva and did not have such powers. She was not equal to god, but was rather subservient to him. Her role as a mediatrix was no doubt important, but she did not have the power to grant liberation.

The ‘schism’ as understood by the historians involved a series of disputes between the Vatakalaïs and Tenkalais over the temple administration. Although direct evidence is not available, it can be inferred from the epigraphical as well as textual sources that tensions between various sects and religious leaders existed. The purpose of these lineages was to assert a sectarian identity for the appropriation of resources in the temples and create spheres of control in them.

Today, the Vatakalaï-Tenkalai notion of Shrivaishnavism has altered the identity pattern of the community. The daily practices of both the sects have too many specific rules. For instance, the external sect marks on the forehead (like the namam) and other rituals of the respective sects reiterate the differences that strengthen the sectarian affiliations for the Srivaishnava devotee.

Apart from the numerous commentaries and hagiographies that provided a collective identity to the community, it was the notion of pilgrimage that emerged as an effective binding factor for the Shrivaishnivas. In a literal sense the history of pilgrimage for Shrivaishnavism commenced around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when in the hagiographies, for the first time, the notion of pilgrimage emerged as a norm enjoining the devotees to physically visit the one hundred and eight shrines in order to attain merit and salvation. The element of obligation implied that pilgrimage was equivalent to and even more efficacious than the exclusive brahmanical rituals and sacrifices. Such a religious ideology emerged as the motivating factor for the evolution of a pilgrimage network, which not only included the shrines of the southern region, but also included the north Indian Vaishnava sites. Linking the regional centres to the various centres of the north imparted a pan-Indian spectrum to the religious geographical space. This legitimized the pilgrimage network, as the northern sites had greater antiquity and longer history because of their early epic, and Puranic (Bhagavata) associations. Such an exercise in constructing a cohesive sacred geography became crucial as it created a religious and social context for bringing together various traditions, different social groups and regions as a Vaishnava divyadesam.

### 22.5 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN NORTH INDIA

The beginning of our period in north India coincides with the emergence of a number of socio-religious movements in north India. Emphasis on bhakti was key to all these movements. It is important to note that the seeds of all the socio-religious movements can be traced from Vaishnava movements of South India. The doyen of bhakti ideology in north India, Kabir, as per the belief, was Ramananda’s disciple, who in turn was the disciple of Ramanuja. Similarly, Chaitanya’s association with Madhava is emphasised. The monotheistic movements in north-India were also influenced by the nath panthi and Sahejia (in Bengal) traditions. The major exponents of the monotheistic movements in north India were Kabir (c. 1440-1518), Dadu, Nanak (1469-1539), Namdev (14th century), Dhanna, Pipa, Raidas. These movements were popular among the common masses as they directly touched upon the sentiments of common people against the socio-economic oppression. Ramananda, the most prominent exponent of Vaishnava bhakti, though derived his ideological framework from South Indian tradition, made Rama and not Vishnu as object of bhakti. This way he was the founder of the Rama cult in north India. However, Kabir emerged
as the most popular and prominent figure among the bhakti saints of north India. All later bhakti saints associate themselves with Kabir and his teachings. The Sikh scripture Adi Granth also contains number of verses by Kabir.

The chief characteristic feature of all these bhakti saints was that they largely belonged to lower castes. Kabir was a weaver, Raidas (Ravidas) was a tanner, Sena was a barber; Namdev was a tailor. They believed in the existence of only ‘one’ god and were called ‘monotheists’. Their god was formless (nirankar), eternal (akal) and ineffable (alakh). They had the nirguna orientation. Their Ram was formless. They emphasised on the recitation of satnam. They all emphasised upon the importance of guru, community singing of devotional songs (kirtan) and keeping the company of saints (satsang). They denounced both Hinduism and Islam equally. They were also critical of the ‘caste’ barriers and caste system as such. They denounced all distinctions based on caste, creed or sex. All superstitions and symbols of orthodoxy were despised with. They rejected the supremacy of the Brahmanical ideas and criticised the Brahmanic dominance. All these movements used the language of the masses which appealed to the commoners. They did not emphasised upon asceticism rather they themselves lived a worldly life. Though they themselves never organised into a formal organisation, their followers organised themselves into sectarian orders (panth) as -- Kabirpanthi (followers of Kabir) Nanak Panthi (followers of Nanak) and Dadu Panthi (followers of Dadu) on narrow sectarian base.

Vaishnava bhakti movement spread towards Bengal, Maharashtra, Kashmir and Gujarat. Jnaneswar (1275-1296) was the pioneer bhakti saints in Maharashtra. The other famous bhakti saints of Maharashtra were Namdev (1270-1350), Eknath (1533-99) and Tukaram (1598-1650). They largely drew their inspiration from Bhagavata Purana. In Bengal Vaishnavite bhakti saints propagated the Krishna bhakti tradition as against the Rama bhakti tradition of Kabir and others. Jaideva (12th century) in his Gita Govind emphasised upon the love of Krishna and Radha. They were also influenced by non-Vaishnava sects like Sahajiya. Their famous exponents were Chandidas (14th century), Vidyapati (14-15 centuries) and Chaitanya (1486-1533). The most popular bhakti saint in Kashmir was a woman, Lal Ded (14th century). In Gujarat bhakti doctrine gained currency under Narsimha Mehta (1414-1481). In Assam Sankardeva (1449-1568) spread the message of bhakti in the Brahmaputra region. It is a matter of debate among historians whether emergence of bhakti was result of Islamic influence, particularly sufi or it had its indigenous origin. As we have seen in previous sections that the idea of bhakti developed in South India much before the advent of Islam in India. But nonetheless it cannot be denied that there existed remarkable similarity between the sufi and bhakti saints and their practices. Kabir is believed to have maintained contacts with Chishti sufi saints.

22.6 SUMMARY

This unit deals with the socio-religious movements based on the ideology of bhakti mainly from the ninth to the seventeenth century. It is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the emergence of bhakti in South India; while part two focusses on the spread of bhakti ideology in north India. In both the Sections various historical processes that influenced the different religious communities and their respective consciousness are studied. The changing socio-political base and the religious developments were mutually interactive, each shaping the other. This can be seen in the textual traditions with different types of texts, some of whom assumed a scriptural status. These texts also reflected the various mechanisms for expanding the social base and hence represented the collective consciousness of a community. Further, changing social base and the rising influence of the sectarian leaders that coincided with the increasing importance of the temples and mathas as institutional organizations
created a network of pilgrimage that further fostered the community consciousness. The growth of these institutions and the religious structures were largely sponsored by the state and different social groups through numerous endowments made during the festivals and other ritual occasions. Therefore, religious developments represented an interaction between different social groups and their respective traditions integrating them within a single community framework.

22.7 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the historical context to the rise of socio-religious movements based on bhakti from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries in peninsular India.

2) Discuss the developments within the various religious communities from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century in peninsular India? How did they respond to the changing context?

3) To what extent were the socio-religious movements a protest against the contemporary social structure?
UNIT 23 THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Structure
23.0 Introduction
23.1 Century of Decline
23.2 Century of Growth and Continuity
23.3 Decline of Cities as Cultural Centres and Large Scale Migration of the City Populace
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23.0 INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth century is marked by the transition from the Mughal state to the establishment of the British colonial state. This process of the disintegration was not limited to India. This period also heralds the weakening of the four prominent Asian empires - the Safavids, the Turkish, the Mughals and the Manchus. While this transition marked the continuation of the old ‘order’, new features also crept in. At political level heydays of the Mughal power started fading away providing space to the emergence of the regional states. While Bengal, Awadh, and Hyderabad attempted to carve out their space ‘within’ the parameters of the ‘Mughal’ state structure, Jats, Afghans, Sikhs and the Marathas formed their principalities with the show of their muscle power. Mughal empire practically shrank to the confines of Delhi and Agra by the mid-eighteenth century. Constant raids and attacks of the Jats, Sikhs and the Marathas created an atmosphere of complete chaos and confusion in the political arena. Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali’s invasions further exposed the weakness of the ‘crumbling’ Mughal State. On a characterization of the eighteenth century, there is a sharp divide among the historians. Some would paint it as ‘the dark century’; while others view it as century of ‘growth and continuity’. (for details on this issue see Block 5, Unit 25 of our Course MHI-05).

In the present Unit our focus will be on the social formations and change in the eighteenth century. We have already discussed in detail the political and economic formations in the eighteenth century in our Courses MHI-04 and MHI-05.

23.1 CENTURY OF DECLINE

The eighteenth century is characterised by some historians as ‘dark age’, century of ‘chaos and confusion’. They strongly believe that the decline of the glory of the Mughal power in the first half of the eighteenth century brought socio-economic and cultural decline in general. While K. M. Ashraf applauds the Turkish and Mughal empires as symbols of ‘unity’ that had succeeded in uniting the whole country under a centralised government, in the eighteenth century all ‘gradually turned into symptoms of social parasitism and decay’.

Irfan Habib calls it a period of ‘reckless rapine, anarchy, and foreign conquest’. Athar Ali argues that, ‘it would be hard to argue that the mutually conflicting small political units into which India was divided in the eighteenth century were individually stronger than the Empire they had supplaned...many of the compromises that the Mughal
satrapies made with the zamindars were signs of weakness, and not of strength... It did not mean that the sum of zamindars based powers that now arose could be stronger than the unified Empire they had supplanted’. Athar Ali also points out the cultural failure of the ruling class in not responding to European science and technology with the exceptions of Haider Ali and Mahadji Sindhia’s efforts to modernise their armies and Tipu Sultan’s limited efforts to develop commerce on those lines.

Irfan Habib sees the conversion of jagirs into hereditary possessions and revenue-farming (ijara) during the eighteenth century as a sign of decline and not of growth and consolidation. He mentions that Khafi Khan (1731) sounds alarm over the sale of ‘tax-farms (ijara) becoming more and more of common practice.’ In 1724 when Nizam-ul-Mulk abolished ijara he saw it as ‘source of the ruin and devastation of the country’. (Habib, 2002) He further argues that increasing tendency to resort to ijara, which became ‘marked’ in the 1730s and ‘all pervasive’ in the second half of the eighteenth century points towards the instability of the taxation system. R. P. Rana (2006) believes that a disturbed peasant economy was at the root of the political crisis of the Mughal empire. This declining trend in the agrarian economy continued uninterrupted in the first half of the eighteenth century. Basing on Taqsim Dahsala documents of pargana Antela Bhabra (1649-1708) and Ponkhar (1730-40) sarkar Alwar, suba Agra he points out that there appears to be a distinct decline in the extent of cultivation by about 25 per cent in the second half of Aurangzeb’s reign and 10 per cent in the first half of the eighteenth century.

As a result of the decline of the Mughal empire long distance trade also declined. Ashin Das Gupta’s study on Surat clearly points out that its decline was the result of the weakness of the Empire and Bombay, with a different hinterland, hardly possessed the potential to compensate for Surat.

Irfan Habib points out that second half of the eighteenth century is marked by extraction of tribute by the British colonial power which drained out India’s resources and put burden on the cultivators and the artisans. As per his estimate between 1780s and 1790s the annual tribute to Britain from India amounted to approximately £4 million or Rs. 4 crores. Cornwallis (1790) himself acknowledged that, ‘the langour’ that the tribute had thrown ‘upon the cultivation and the general commerce of the country’. (Habib, 2002)

23.2 CENTURY OF GROWTH AND CONTINUITY

C. A. Bayly in his Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansions 1770-1870 (Cambridge 1983) challenged the thesis of the decline of the Mughal power at the centre and argued that it did not necessarily lead to the ‘anarchy and chaos’ in the eighteenth century. There appears to be continity in the economic life and the battles of Plassey (1757) or Buxar (1764) do not constitute a break. Largely Mughal institutions continued to survive in the regions with certain modifications.

In 1985 Frank Perlin, focussing his study on Maharashtra region published ‘State Formation Re-Considered’ (Modern Asian Studies), followed by three other works of Muzaffar Alam, Satish Chandra, and Andre Wink (Satish Chandra, ‘The 18th Century in India: Its Economy and the Role of the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans, Calcutta; Andre Wink, Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Saraya). These writings were also a departure from the old view and highlight the continuity aspect. Muzaffar Alam argues that. Both – the Punjab and Awadh – registered unmistakable economic growth in the seventeenth century. In the early eighteenth century in both provinces; politics and administration
appear to have moved along similar lines’. Frank Perlin, however, completely dismisses the Mughals, or Marathas of ‘central significance’ and thus their decline would not bring disaster in the event of their disintegration either. Andre Wink views Marathas as ‘intermediary gentry or zamindari stratum’ and thus the eighteenth century for him was ‘the century of the gentrification of the Muslim Empire’.

Evidences of growth of urban centres and agrarian expansion are very much evident. The textile industry expanded, new trade routes emerged. B. R. Grover’s study shows that there was presence of ‘integrated marketing system’ in the eighteenth century. Revenue farming (ijara) in no way reflected the decline instead it helped in consolidation. Richard Barnett’s study on Awadh clearly points out that the ‘so-called’ anarchy in the kingdom was actually an attempt to hide the ‘resources’ from the colonial power. Steward Gordon has also highlighted that Maratha system was ‘efficient’. Rajasthan equally showed no signs of decline before 1760s. Punjab also recovered by the turn of the eighteenth century. Though Surat declined but Baruch flourished at the same time and emerged to be a major centre of cotton exports. Signs of ‘universal economic decline’ are not visible, rather it benefited in the sense that ‘drain of wealth’ (of revenue) to the centre stopped as a result of decline. Practice of revenue farming only shifted the state power into the hands of the ‘local interests’. There is hardly any evidence that constant conflicts, which marred the century, brought any disruption or destructions to the agriculture. We do not find any significant decline in the revenue figures (jamadami) of the empire either. Rajat Datta’s findings of Bengal show significant increase in the revenue returns in Bengal province during the eighteenth century. Wendel’s Memoir even shows that the Jat territories near Agra and Delhi under Badan Singh yielded the revenue twice the amount that was extracted earlier. Instead the administration of the new riyasats were more effective locally. Scrafton comments, ‘what greater proof need we of the goodness of the government than the immense revenue their country yields, many of the Gentoo provinces yield a revenue in proportion of extent of territory equal to our richest countries in Europe’. Satish Chandra also rejects the view that during the eighteenth century, as a result of constant warfare and disruption, Indian rulers were instrumental in disrupting the long-distance trade. He argues that the impact of their wars and confrontations has generally been exaggerated. He emphasises that no state for long could afford to loose profits in the form of custom dues. This fact is attested to by Orme, ‘some years ago the province of Oude, laying on the north west of Bengal, became quite impoverished by the excess of the customs and the severity of the collections, the trade went round the province, instead going through it. When Munusurally Cawn, the present Vizir of the empire, obtained the Nabobship, he instantly rectified the errors of his predecessor. He lowered the customs exceedingly, and subjected the collection of them to better regulations. This province being the shortest thoroughfare, immediately received its lost trade, and flourished under his administration beyound what it ever was known to do’. Satish Chandra, (2005) argues that, ‘The biggest threat to trade were not the new states but a section of the zamindars who plundered the traders sometimes in conjunction with robbers’. As a result of Jat raids around Delhi-Agra region Wendel remarks that the trade on this route got badly affected. But soon an alternative route from Malwa to Indore and Banaras developed. Similarly, when Sikhs disrupted the regular north-western trade route connecting Central Asia, the trade got diverted towards Rohilkhand and Kashmir to Kashghar. Chandra remarks that Surat did not decline as a result of decline of Delhi, Agra and Gujrat, instead its decline occurred mainly as a result of ‘local difficulties’ (Maratha raids and Dutch blockade) and on account of the ‘downfall of the Safavid empire and the growing crisis in Turkish empire.’ There also existed ‘regional variations’. The riyasats under Awadh and Bengal Nawabs were ‘more stable’, the decline of Surat got counter balanced by the rise of Cochin and Pulicat. Satish Chandra is in agreement with C. A. Bayly and others that ‘the eighteenth century in India was not a period of all-round decline following the collapse of the Mughal empire.’
23.3 DECLINE OF CITIES AS CULTURAL CENTRES AND LARGE SCALE MIGRATION OF THE CITY POPULACE

Muhammad Umar’s study on urban culture in north-India in the eighteenth century shows that the eighteenth century is marked by the decline of ‘urban centres’, particularly the Imperial cities like Delhi, Agra and Lahore. The architecture of newly founded cities was no match to the Mughal imperial cities (Agra, Delhi, Lahore) in scale or grandeur. Though he acknowledges that there arose some new towns as a result of shift in ‘political centres of powers’. The new centres thus emerged were – Murshidabad in Bengal (1704); Faizabad in Awadh (founded by Sa’adat Khan Burhan-ul Mulk (1722-39); Farrukhabad founded in 1723 by Nawab Muhammad Khan Bangash (1713-93); Najibabad by Najib-ud-Daula, the Rohilla chief. Aonla emerged when, around 1730 Ali Muhammad Khan Rohilla made the town his capital. Town populace – merchants and artisans – migrated to provincial capitals in search of markets. Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh (18th century) comments that at Faizabad, ‘as such people here saw wealth, rank and lavish diffusion of money in every street and market, artisans, and scholars flocked there from Deccan, Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, Hyderabad, Shahjahanabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Kabul, Kashmir and Multan’. Har Charan Das referring about Shuja-ud-Daula’s period (1754-75) highlights the presence of Persian, Turani, Chinese and European merchants at Faizabad with their wares. Emphasising upon the importance of Lucknow as an important cultural centre Insha Allah Khan mentions that by the turn of the century Lucknow replaced Shahjahanabad which by then became a ‘ruined city’. ‘Men of eloquence and good manners, who were regarded as the very soul and nourishers of the culture of Shahjahanabad, had come and settled in Lucknow’. (Umar, 2001). Even Mughal princes, like Prince Jahandar Shah, Mirza Jawan Bakht, son of Shah Alam II migrated to Lucknow in 1786. According to Insha Allah Khan the real founders of Muslim culture in Lucknow were immigrants from Delhi. ‘The same people who had contributed much to new inventions in Lucknow, had demonstrated similar skill in Delhi, where they enjoyed the same prosperity, as they were enjoying in Lucknow’. (Umar, 2001). When Farrukhabad was founded in 1723 by Muhammad Khan Bangash (1713-93) he brought in and got settled the skilled artisans and craftsmen from Delhi and other parts of the Mughal empire and encouraged commercial activities in his newly established town. Najib-ud-Daula also invited masons from far off places and they constructed the houses and bazars in his newly founded town – Najibabad. As a result of the chaos the awestricken masses started fleeing particularly from Delhi. Mirza Jan-i Jahan wrote to Sahibzada Ghulam Askari Khan Muhammad that, ‘the people of Delhi are accustomed to run away and make a good escape’. Poets, scholars, handicraftsmen, merchants, soldiers were leaving Delhi in band after band in search of livelihood. The new towns were emerging and the old towns declined.

Umar (2001) argues that, ‘the evidence suggests that the decline of the Imperial cities like Agra and Delhi was not really compensated for by the rise of other towns. The military operations and plundering expeditions of the Abdali Afghans, the Marathas, the Jats, and the Sikhs were not conducive to urban growth; and the emergence of the English East India Company’s power and decline of the Indian ruling houses adversely affected the economic condition of the inhabitants of towns’. The cities that emerged were generally administrative headquarters (Faizabad, Murshidabad, Lucknow) and depended heavily upon the state patronage. ‘Once the patronage was withdrawn and the administrative headquarters shifted, it began to decline. When the administrative headquarters shifted from Faizabad to Lucknow by Asaf-ud-Daula (d.1797) all the merchants, bankers and sarrafs were asked by the Nawab to move to the new capital Lucknow. Thus, all the commercial activities shifted to Lucknow once Faizabad ceased to be the capital. Lucknow acquired the prestige of chief cultural centre. These newly founded cities, which were administrative headquarters, once
shifted, declined. The rise and fall of the towns depended on the support of the founder. By the turn of the century Lucknow faced further set back as a result of English East India Company’s commercial policies, drain of wealth and import of English goods and the impoverishment of the ruling class, who were the main patrons of arts and crafts. Muslim elite specially faced poverty, they were forced to migrate from place to place for their survival depended mostly upon the state patronage. ‘With the decline of the state, their fortunes were eclipsed’. (Umar 2001). Bengal was known for its prosperity and manufactures during the Mughal period. William Bolts, writing in 1772, acknowledges this fact and attributes the decline of the city to British colonial policies, ‘That in former times it was customary for merchants from all the inland parts of Asia, and even Tartary, to resort to Bengal with little else than money or bills to purchase the commodities of those provinces. Thus, by the bad practices of the Company’s agents and gamblers in the interior parts ... all those foreign merchants have been deterred from approaching the Bengal provinces; and things have come to such a pass, that the whole of that advantageous trade is now turned into other channels, and probably lost to those countries forever...’ Murshidabad founded in 1704 faced decline as early as 1784 when William Hodges found the buildings dilapidated. Maratha raids added to the miseries of the life and property of the city dwellers. Twining, writing in 1794 comments that, though the city was (earlier) richer than the metropolis of the British empire, now ‘lowered to a secondary provincial city, deprived of much of its importance and all its splendeur...was even loosing its true name’.

However, Satish Chandra argues that there was no marked decline in the urban population. Hamida Khatoon Naqvi’s study shows that the decline of Lahore, Delhi and Agra soon compensated by the growth of new towns such as Faizabad, Lucknow, Banaras, Patna and Calcutta. Even the so-called decline of Agra, Delhi and Lahore is ‘overestimated’. The new, dispersed ruling elites required the luxury goods produced by cities such as Delhi and Agra. The new elites, continued to live in the cities and towns, and tried to ape, the life-style of the Mughal nobles. According to Satish Chandra, (2005) ‘sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1740 was not as big a setback’. By 1772 Delhi showed remarkable signs of recovery. Shah Nawaz Khan, writing in 1780 remarks, ‘Nadir Shah’s occupation resulted in a setback to the prosperity of Delhi, but in a short while it returned to normal and in fact in everything it is now better and shows progress. A description of its decoration is not possible for the pen: its industries and manufactures are flourishing and music and convivial parties are common feature of the life of the people’. (Satish Chandra, 2005)

Shahr-i-Ashob (ruined cities)

As a result of the decline of the Mughal power and consequent withdrawal of the state-patronage to the literati, there emerged, in the eighteenth century, a distinct genre in literature shahr-i-ashob (ruined cities). There is hardly any poetic work of the eighteenth century that does not contain some reflections and observations on the ruined state of affairs of the city of Delhi. This also reflects the deep attachment and sense of belonging of the people with the city and its culture. The poets no longer enjoyed the patronage of the kings and nobles as a result of Mughal decline. One positive aspect was since they were no more patronised by the ‘nobles’ or ‘kings’ their writings reflect more critical assessment of the contemporary state of affairs. They have more critically examined the malaise and causes of socio-religious degeneration. Their poetry highlights the sorry state of cities, towns and villages of northern India, particularly Delhi. Dil (heart) and dilli (Delhi) formed twin recurring themes and symbols of Urdu poetry (ghazals) composed during this period. Their writings are full of shock, awe, apprehensions and dismay over the ruin of Delhi. The famous Urdu poets of the eighteenth century Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810), Mirza Muhammad Rafi Sauda (1713-1781), Qalander Bakhtish Jurat and Jafar Zatalli they all composed shahr-i-ashob (ruined cities). They have given heartbroken accounts of their sufferings, miseries and dismay in the prevailing distressful conditions, the
overall deterioration in the society, collapse of the social order, hardship faced by the nobility, their destitution. They lamented the authority, supremacy, respect, prosperity and affluence once enjoyed by them under the patronage of kings and nobles. Their depictions of Delhi as a result of the rapid changes reflect the mental trauma faced by the Muslim elite, particularly the literati and men of arts. This pessimism and despair is very much reflected in the writings of the contemporary poets. Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Jahani’s letter to Nawab Faizullah Khan conveys the agony and despair he was passing through, ‘I am tired of the daily recurring troubles of Delhi, since Shahjahanpur is far away from Delhi, I have come here (to Sambhal)’.

Mirza Muhammad Rafi Sauda lamented:

“Oh: Jahanabad how did you deserve this kind of cruelty; perhaps at some time this city was the heart of some lover; that it was ruined in such a way as if it was a false painting.

Mir Taqi Mir mourns:

Now Jahanabad is in ruins otherwise,
there had been a house at every step.

Jafar Zatalli remarks

These are peculiar times where there is no friendship,
and where everyone is afraid of the oppressor.
These are peculiar times where there is no friendship between friends, no love or truth. People have become shameless,
competent and gifted people wander from pillar to post,
only the low caste prosper.

However, Satish Chandra argues that it was the umara and shurma (elites), who provided patronage to the poets, artists and artisans (hunarmandan), faced the brunt. ‘Their eclipse coincided with the rise of the low castes (rascal quam) – the butchers, the vegetable sellers, the weavers – something which could hardly have been possible if the population of the city had declined as drastically as they imply, or had the industries been totally ruined’. Rejecting shahr-i ashob of Sauda, Satish Chandra (2005) argues that ‘poets are not true guides to the state of commerce and manufacture in the cities.’. He believes that it would be misleading to compare the eighteenth century with the 6-10th centuries when town life declined. Thus, according to him to call the process ‘refeudalization’ would be a misnomer.

Though on account of lack of patronage Mughal nobles and men of letters and religious grantees felt dejected, one does not find overall desecration in the field of art and culture. As a result of Aurangzeb’s orthodox attitude and later impoverishment of his successor ‘popular culture’ found ‘patronage’ of the urban elites at the regions. Regional kingdoms became the hub of literary and cultural activities. Lucknow and Hyderabad Nawabs patronised the men of arts and letters. In Bengal Nadia emerged centre of Sanskrit learning and Tanjore of performing arts - dance music and religion. Khyal forms and kathak achieved new heights in the north. In the cities emerged marsia khwani and kothas where city elites used to assemble for poetry, music and dance. Even Indo-Mughal school of painting continued to flourish at regional states of Rajasthan and Hilly regions (Kangra, Basoli style of painting). Hermann Goetz emphasises that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of the ‘highest refinement of Indian culture’. It was the ‘golden age’ of Urdu, Bengali and Marathi literature.

23.4 GROWING POWER OF THE INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

To analyse the issue pertaining to the question of ‘growth’ or ‘stagnation’ in the eighteenth century, C. A. Bayly points out that at first it is important to see, ‘Which
type of landed or commercial interest survived, benefited from, or indeed suffered from the decline of the Mughals'. Bayly highlights that during the eighteenth century there emerged the prominence of the, intermediary classes – the merchants, moneylenders, and revenue farmers (ijaradars; portfolio capitalists). They served as ‘mediators between the state and the agrarian society. There occurred the ‘gentrification’ of the ‘service’ class ‘administrators, warriors and jurists’. Bayly argues that ‘the intermediate classes of society – townsmen, traders, service gentry – who commanded the skills of the market and the pen’ benefited and consolidated during the eighteenth century. It is generally argued that the zamindars rose to prominence at the expense of the state. But for Bayly ‘the disappearance of the Mughal imperial check actually allowed ruling groups to establish a closer hold over the peasantry, artisans and inferior trading groups’. He believes that the process of growth of this class began as early as late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The most powerful zamindaris (Rajputs of Amber, Bhumihars of Banaras, Rohillas of Rohilkhand and Farrukhabad, Bais of Awadh) emerged in the eighteenth century were the ‘beneficiaries of the seventeenth century’. Largely they were the carriers of Mughal legacy and assumed prominence under the Mughals. Even those who rebelled against the Mughals (Jats, Sikhs, Marathas) strengthened their base in the seventeenth century itself. They were in control of the means of production (plough, seed, oxen) as well as the best lands. These privileged classes further consolidated their position in the eighteenth century. Even some were successful in carving out their own kingdoms. They agreed to pay revenue and supply troops in return of absolute freedom. This ‘service gentry’ other than enjoying ‘service grants’ (jagirs, sayurghal, mada-i maash), also possessed ‘primary’ holdings once the Mughal official machinery became defunct and state control over them ‘slackened’. You may recall that under the Mughals all these above mentioned grants were neither hereditary nor permanent. These powerful groups got the opportunity to carve out their own ‘privileged holdings’ where ‘revenue and miscellaneous payments were lighter’ and ‘in turn (they) afforded closer control of agricultural resources, labour and trade’. (Bayly, 1992)

With the decline of the Mughal power at the centre ‘leading families’ of the regions extended their patronage to this ‘service gentry’; while the merchants managed the revenue extraction. The Bhumihars of Bihar and Banaras and the Agarwals and Khattri trading communities of the Gangetic plains maintained close ties with the state. In Rajasthan Poddars and mutasaddis played an important role in the agrarian policies of the state. Even the ‘resources’ of the service gentry were redirected to finance revenue farms (ijaras) or into trade and moneylending. Ruling families also patronised and made grants to religious personnel (Shaikhzadas of Bilgram, Brahmans), etc. This ‘service gentry’ made inroads into the villages and succeeded in converting their service grants into their personal land-holdings. Under the Mughals these grants were transferable and jagirdars held only the right over the share of the revenue and they did not enjoy the ‘proprietary’ right over the land thus assigned. The merchants-cum-moneylenders had close association with the state by directly funding them in the form of loans. At the same time they also maintained their trading network in the towns.

This service gentry and the merchants were closely linked with the ‘great entrepreneurial capitalists’ (revenue farmers, portfolio capitalists). These revenue farmers (ijaradars) operated as states agents and were made responsible for the collection of revenue for the state tried to shirk the risk of revenue collection upon them. They, in turn, relied upon the ‘service gentry’ and the ‘merchants’. Bayly argues that while these revenue farmers hardly survived ‘a generation, the landholdings and family capitals of their inferior coadjutors among gentry and merchant families had a better chance of survival’.
Satish Chandra argues that the big zamindars were the main beneficiaries. In Bengal smaller intermediary zamindars were squeezed by incorporating their ilaquas into the bigger zamindari areas. In Awadh, the setting up of tallugedars at the tappa land had the same effect.' (Satish Chandra, 2005) In Bengal and Maharashtra the number of pahis (non-resident cultivators) and khwud-kashta (self cultivated; resident cultivators) holdings tended to decline. Service grants (jagirs, mokasa) turned hereditary. Mamlatdars (revenue collectors) turned into ijaradars (revenue farmers). There increased the tendency on the part of the ijaradars to grab more and more administrative powers. The grant of ijaradars to outsiders, particularly merchants could have led to greater oppression of the peasantry and sign of a deep crisis. Emergence of the mahajans, sahukars and merchants as ijaradars was a new trend.

But mahajans (money lenders) and sahukars’ (bankers) role in revenue collection largely confined to as guarantors (mal zamin to the ijaradars). Satish Chandra argues that, ‘the acquisition of a zamindari was more often the final ambition of a successful merchant since it implied social prestige. But it could hardly be the objective of a merchant eager for profit, for the return on zamindaris was often extremely low’. In Bengal and Awadh there are references of merchants and bankers turning into ijaradars and occupied zamindaris. But according to Satish Chandra this was happening only with that class which was already associated ‘with agricultural operations either as bankers and mal zamins’. But there are hardly any instances of city merchants turning ijaradars. This process of the feudalization of the merchants community does not, in any real sense, belong to the eighteenth century, (Satish Chandra, 2005) Many old families were ruined but those who were ‘bold, adventurous emerged prominent irrespective of their status - Marathas (Shivaji) and Sindhis were Kunbis, while Holkars belonged to the caste of goat-herders (Satish Chandra, 2005).

This openness of the Maratha society is fully noted by Mir Ibrahim Khan, ‘Most of the men in the Maratha armies are not endowed with the excellence of noble and illustrious birth, and husbandsmen, carpenters and shopkeepers abound among their soldiers’. (Satish Chandra, 2005)

There was scope of khwudkashta occupying the muqaddami rights (official position) and ‘petty gentry’ deshmukh, deshpande, patil rising in social scale by adding to their jamait (military following). However, in Rajasthan the stratification was more marked on caste lines Rajputs were the zamindars while Jats and Meenas were the owner-cultivators. However, Meenas, ‘unable to defend their position by arms, lost their right to ownership of land, and also sank in the social order. (Satish Chandra, 2005)

The eighteenth century successor states needed ‘legitimacy’ for which they liberally gave patronage to the ‘religious classes’. At the same time, to ensure revenue returns special favours were granted to the merchant class. Bayly points out that certain changes did occur in their position after 1760 as a result of unstable political condition coupled with series of famines. Nonetheless, it did not altered their position sharply. Rajat Datta’s findings for Bengal and Dilbagh Singh’s study on eastern Rajasthan clearly show that the hold of merchants and financiers continued, rather it got strengthened further. However, with gradual tightening-up of the British hold after 1780 it did bring certain changes in the power and position of these intermediary groups. British compromised with the Bhumiars, Bais, (Brahman landed classes of Awadh, Bihar and Banaras) and utilised their base for recruits in the army. We do find that merchant families involved themselves in cash-crop trade and continued to ‘finance colonial armies and revenue settlements’. (Bayly, 1992 ) But ‘service gentry’ got disrupted. They were sacked out from the administrative positions. ‘But, in general local judges, office superintendents, and babus of the early Victorian era were drawn from the later seventeenth century onwards’. Muzaffar Alam’s study highlights that as early as early eighteenth century state started discriminating against the non-
Muslim service gentry (Khattris and Kayasthas) as *waqai-nigar* and *waqai-navis* (news writers).

### 23.5 CASTE, CLASS AND COMMUNITY

C. A. Bayly finds that generally caste and class are ‘exclusive’ categories. However, ‘in India class formation was inextricably linked with caste and community formation’. Even people of status identified themselves with caste and class ties. He elaborates that, ‘the consolidation of Bhumihar ‘gentry’ tended to benefit Bhumihar tenants, ploughman, and dependents in particular’. Similarly, Muslim ‘gentry’ identified themselves as ‘carriers of Islamic community’. The positive aspect of this trend was, it ‘could provide communities defence in shifting political circumstance’. This process is referred to by Bayly as ‘cultural fragmentation’. In his view, ‘the gulf between the non-Muslim mercantile communities of the Punjab and the old Mughal elite widened’. Rohillas and Banaras Raj tried to assert their ‘Hindu or Muslim identities’.

In the context of the Indian Business Community David Rudner’s Study shows that the ‘caste’ was the vital organising force. But Bayly (1992) argues that cross-caste mercantile organisations played an important role. He believes that the role of caste in social life is actually exaggerated. He argues that there existed ‘many subtle forms of inter-relationship across the boundaries of caste’. Mercantile elites of the eighteenth century not only hailed from traditional mercantile castes (Agarwals, Oswals) but Khattris (merchant-cum-administrators) and Brahmans were equal partners in the trade. Even among the Marwari merchants regional (belonging to Marwar region) and sect (Vaishnavite, Jains) identities were more marked than their caste affiliations. Thus, ‘while caste was one form of social identity which shaped their outlook and social lives, its projection into the sphere of economic organization seems, indeed, at many points to reflect an underlying rationality rather than the perpetuation of the traditional’. (Bayly 1992)

The seventeenth century *karkhanas* which were largely controlled by the state and the Mughal nobles, now during the eighteenth century were run by big merchants and revenue farmers. At Banaras under the protection of merchants and notables were organised skilled Gujarati artisans who fled to the territory from Ahmedabad and Surat as a result of political flux. Merchants employed them as artisans or labours, as their ‘personal dependants’. In the Rohilla territory as well artisans also served under Rohilla ‘military elite’ and ‘financiers’. Big merchants and revenue farmers maintained artisanal workshops (*karkhanas*) which were earlier run and maintained by the Mughal nobles.

During the eighteenth century various social groups and communities were trying to redefine themselves in the changing circumstances. The declining influence of the Mughal ruling groups is evident in the prominence of other groups. In Banaras, Bhumihar’s dominance over the Ramlila festivals depict the same trend. Similarly, the association of kings, Brahmans and ascetics with the Gosains suggests the emergence of the Gosains as powerful group.

Bayly argues that during the eighteenth century *qasbahs* (small-towns) emerged as ‘bearers of Muslim tradition’ as centres of ‘Mughali culture’. The petty landlords and *ulama* emerged as spokespersons of *qasbah* society. During this period began the ‘decline of social communication and shared interest between the Brahmin-mercantile elites of the great towns and the Muslim *qasbahs*, and in turn – and very unevenly between the Muslim literati and gentry of the *qasbahs* and their Hindu peasancies.
23.6 SUMMARY

After Aurangzeb’s death in 1707 the glory of the Mughal grandeur and power started declining. The century is full of happenings at a fast pace. It faced two major Afghan attacks of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. But British success at Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) shifted the balance in favour of the British colonial power. Historians are sharply divided on the nature of socio-economic developments during the eighteenth century. One group of historians view it as a century of chaos and decline; while others argue that it was the century of continuity and growth.

23.7 EXERCISES

1) Critically examine the nature of the eighteenth century society.
2) The ‘eighteenth century was a century of chaos and decline.’ Comment.
3) Do you agree with a view that the eighteenth century was a century a growth and prosperity?
SUGGESTED READINGS


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