
UNIT 5 GROWTH OF MUGHAL EMPIRE: 1526-1556

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will tell you about:

- the political situation of India on the eve of Babur's invasion,
- Babur's successful campaigns against the Lodis,
- the conquests and conflicts of the Mughals with the local ruling powers, specially their clashes with the Afghans and the Rajputs,
- the emergence and consolidation of Sher Shah, and
- the circumstances and factors that led to the revival of Mughals in India under Humayun.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The scope of the present Unit confines itself to the process of the establishment of Mughal rule in India under Babur and Humayun. Afghans' bid to challenge and overthrow Mughal authority is also discussed. A brief survey of the Afghan rule has also been attempted. The Unit deals mainly with the territorial expansion under Babur and Humayun. The organisational aspects of the Mughals will be dealt in subsequent Blocks.

5.2 POLITICAL SCENARIO ON THE EVE OF BABUR'S INVASION

The first half of the fifteenth century witnessed political instability with the disintegration of the Tughluq dynasty. Both the Saiyyad (1414-1451) and the Lodi (1451-1526) rulers failed to cope with the disruptive forces (see Unit 2). The nobles resented and rebelled at the earliest opportunity. The political chaos in the North-West provinces had weakened the centre. Now let us examine what was happening in other parts of India.

In Central India there were three kingdoms: Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar. The power of Sultan Mahmud Khalji II of Malwa was, however, on the decline. Gujarat was ruled by Muzaffar Shah II, while Mewar under the leadership of Sisodia ruler Rana Sanga was the most powerful kingdom. Rulers of Malwa were under constant pressure of the Lodis, Mewar and Gujarat. This was because it was not only the most

fertile region and an important source for elephant supply but it also provided an important trade route to Gujarat sea-ports. Hence, it was an important region for the Lodis. Besides, for both Gujarat and Mewar it could serve as a buffer against the Lodis. The Sultan of Malwa was an incompetent ruler, and his prime minister Medini Rai could hardly hold the kingdom intact for long in the wake of internal strifes. Finally, Rana Sanga, succeeded in extending his influence over Malwa and Gujarat. By the close of the 15th century, Rana Sanga's sway over Rajputana became almost complete with the occupation of Ranthambhor and Chanderi. Further south, there were powerful Vijaynagar and Bahmani kingdoms (see Course EHI-03, Block 7). Towards the east, Nusrat Shah ruled Bengal.

Towards the closing years of Ibrahim Lodi's reign, Afghan chieftains Nasir Khan Lohani, Ma'ruf Farmuli, etc. succeeded in carving out separate kingdom of Jaunpur under Sultan Muhammad Shah. Besides these major powers, there were numerous Afghan chieftaincies around Agra — the most powerful ones being those of Hasan Khan in Mewar, Nizam Khan in Bayana, Muhammad Zaitun in Dholpur, Tatar Khan Sarang Khani in Gwalior, Husain Khan Lohani in Rapri. Qutub Khan in Etawa, Alam Khan in Kalpi, and Qasim Sambhali in Sambhal, etc.

While analysing the political set-up on the eve of Babur's invasion it is generally said (Rushbrooke William) that there was confederacy of Rajput principalities which was ready to seize the control of Hindustan. It is held that had Babur not intervened, the Rajputs led by their illustrious leader Rana Sanga would have captured power in northern India. It is argued that the political division of the regional states was religious in nature and that Rajput confederacy under Rana Sanga fired by religious zeal wanted to establish a Hindu Empire. This assumption is based on the famous passage of *Baburnama* where Babur says that Hindustan was governed by 'five Musalman rulers': the Lodis (at the centre), Gujarat, Malwa, Bahmani, and Bengal, and two 'pagans' (Rana Sanga of Mewar and Vijaynagar). Besides, the *fathnama* issued after the battle of Khanwa suggests that Rajput confederacy under Rana was inspired by religious zeal and organised with the intention to overthrow the "Islamic power".

However, such observations have been questioned by historians. Babur has nowhere suggested that these powers were antagonistic against each other on religious grounds. Instead, Babur himself admits that many *rais* and *ranas* were obedient to Islam. Moreover, if we see the composition of the confederacy, there were many Muslim chieftains like Hasan Khan Mewati, Mahmud Khan Lodi, etc. who side with Rana Sanga against Babur. Rather Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi (1560) blames Hasan Khan Mewati for creating the confederacy to overthrow the Mughal power in India. In fact, it was not Rana Sanga, but Sultan Mahmud who proclaimed himself the king of Delhi. Though, the power of Rana was unquestionable, Babur was more anxious of Afghan menace: thus the theory of religious consideration does not seem to hold ground.

5.3 CENTRAL ASIA AND BABUR

We have already discussed political formations in Central Asia and Persia during the 16th century in Unit 1. By the close of the 15th century, the power of the Timurids was on the decline. By this time the Uzbeks succeeded in establishing strong footholds in Transoxiana under Shaibani Khan. Around the same time, the Safavis rose into prominence under Shah Ismail in Iran; while further west the Ottoman Turks dominated the scene. We have already discussed how Shaibani Khan overran almost whole of Transoxiana and Khorasan. However, finally in 1510 Shah Ismail of Iran defeated Shaibani Khan. In a short while (1512) the Ottoman Sultan defeated Shah Ismail, thus leaving the stage again to the Uzbeks to become the master of the whole Transoxiana.

Babur ascended the throne at Farghana (a small principality in Transoxiana) in 1494 at the tender age of twelve. However, it was not a smooth succession for Babur. Both the Mongol Khans as well as the Timurid princes, specially Sultan Ahmad Mirza of Samarqand, an uncle of Babur, had interests in Farghana. Besides, Babur had to face the discontented nobility. Against all odds Babur struggled to strengthen his foothold in Central Asia and did succeed in taking Samarqand twice (1497, 1500). But he could hardly hold that for long. With Shaibani Khan's success over Khorasan (1507) the

Of the four Timurid centres of power finally sealed Babur's fate in Central Asia and he was left with no option but to look towards Kabul where the conditions were most favourable. Its ruler Ulugh Beg Mirza had already died (1501). Babur occupied Kabul in 1504. Yet Babur could not completely leave the dream to rule over Central Asia. With the help of Shah Ismail Safavi, he was able to control over Samarqand (1511) but Shah Ismail's defeat in 1512 and the resurgence of the Uzbeks left Babur with no alternative but to consolidate himself at Kabul.

Thus, it was the Central Asian situation which pressed and convinced (after 1512) Babur to abandon the hopes of creating an Empire in Central Asia and look towards India. The rich resources of India and the meagre income of Afghanistan, as Abul Fazl comments, might have been another attraction for Babur. The unstable political situation after Sikandar Lodi's death convinced him of political discontentment and disorder in the Lodi Empire. Invitations from Rana Sanga and Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Punjab, might have whetted Babur's ambitions. Perhaps Timur's legacy also provided some background for his invasion. (After the siege of Bhira in 1519, Babur asked Ibrahim Lodi to return western Punjab which belonged to his uncle Ulugh Beg Mizra.) Thus, Babur had both reasons and opportunity to look towards India.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Discuss the political condition of India on the eve of Babur's invasion.

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2) "It was Central Asian situation that forced Babur to look towards India".
 Comment.

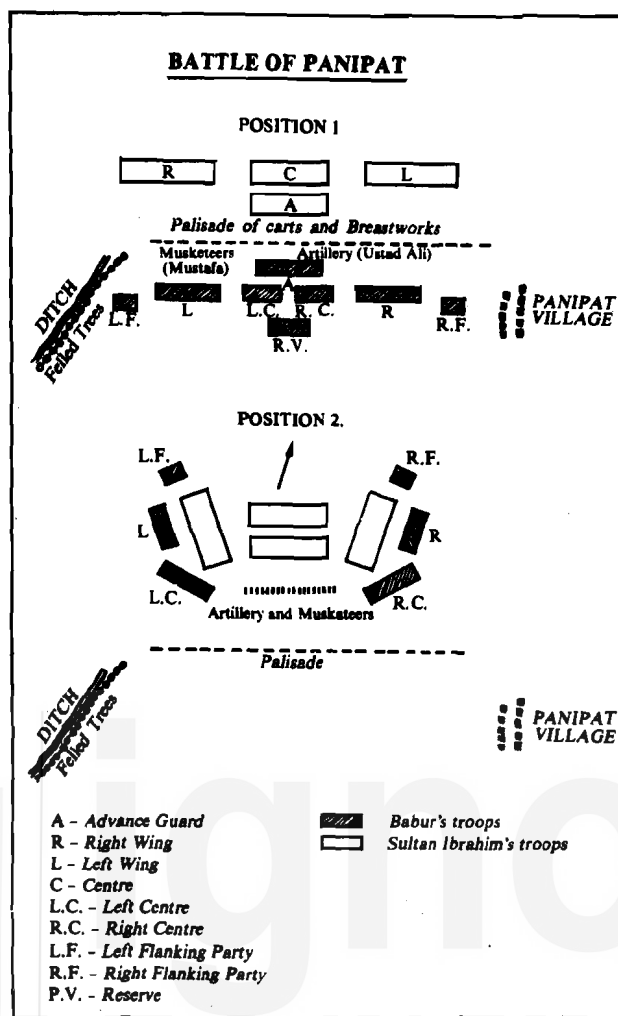
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5.4 FOUNDATION OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA

Much before the final showdown at the battle of Panipat (1526), Babur had invaded India four times. These skirmishes were trials of strength of Mughal arms and Lodi forces.

The first to fall was Bhira (1519-1520), the gateway of Hindustan, followed by Sialkot (1520) and Lahore (1524). Finally, Ibrahim Lodi and Babur's forces met at the historic battlefield of Panipat. The battle lasted for just few hours in favour of Babur. The battle shows Babur's skill in the art of warfare. His soldiers were less in number but the organisation was superior. Ibrahim's forces though many times greater in number (approximately 1,00,000 soldiers and 1000-500 elephants as compared to Babur's 12,000 horseman) faired badly. Babur successfully applied the Rumi (Ottoman) method of warfare (for details see chart given on next page).

As the Afghans advanced to attack the right flank; Babur ordered his reserve forces under Abdul Aziz to move. The Afghans, greater in number, were unable to move forward nor backward. They were attacked from both sides. This created total confusion among the Afghan forces. Babur took full advantage of the situation and his right and left wings soon attacked the Afghan forces from the rear side. This was followed with the opening up of fireshots. This completely paralysed the Afghan army. Afghan casualties reported by Babur were approximately 20,000 including the



Source: Rushbrooke Williams,
An Empire Builder of the 16th Century. pp 130-131.

Rumi device used by Babur at the battle of Panipat.

Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. In the battle it was not Babur's artillery but his 'superb tactics' and the 'mounted archers' played the decisive role, a fact which Babur himself acknowledged.

The battle of Panipat, though, formally established the Mughal rule in India, it was first among the series of battles in the years to come. For example, to secure this triumph, it was equally important to overcome Rana Sanga of Mewar and the chieftains in and around Delhi and Agra. Another important opponent in the eastern India was the Afghans. To add to this, problems were mounting within his own nobility.

5.4.1 Babur and the Rajput Kingdoms

We have already discussed that Rana Sanga of Mewar was a power to reckon with. Babur, in his *Memoirs*, has blamed Rana Sanga for breaking his promise by not siding with him in the battle of Panipat against Ibrahim Lodi. Leaving apart the controversy whether it was Rana or Babur who asked for help, the fact remains that there was some understanding on both sides to join hands against Ibrahim Lodi in which the Rana faltered. Rana expected Babur to return to Kabul and leave him free to establish his hegemony, if not over whole of Hindustan, at least over Rajputana. Babur's decision to stay back must have given a big jolt to Rana's ambitions. Babur was also fully aware of the fact that it would be impossible for him to consolidate his position in India unless he shattered the Rana's power. Rana Sanga this time succeeded in establishing the confederacy against Babur with the help of Afghan nobles. Hasan Khan Mewati not only joined the Rana but also played a crucial role in forming the confederacy. This time (1527) Hasan Khan of Bari and Husain Khan Gurg-andaz joined the Rana. Husain Khan Nuhani occupied Rapri, Rustam Khan prevailed over Koil, while Qutub Khan captured Chandawar. Pressure of eastern Afghans was so much that Sultan Muhammad Duldai had to leave Qannauj and join Babur. To add to this, the defeat of Babur's commander Abdul Aziz and Muhibb Ali at Biana and their praise of the valour of the Rajput army completely demoralised

's army. Ferishta and Badauni (Akbar's contemporary) comment that "the sense of defeatism was so strong that it was proposed by a majority at a council of war that the Padshah should withdraw to Punjab and wait for developments or unseen events". The **Baburnama** does not say anything about such a proposal, but this shows the general feeling of "despair and frustration". However, Babur prevailed over the situation with his fiery speech touching the religious sentiments of his men. Babur fortified his position near Sikri at the village Khanwa. Here also he planned and organised his army on the 'Ottoman' lines. This time he took the support of a tank on his left, front side again was defended by carts but ropes were replaced by iron chains. However, this time he used the strong wooden tripods connected with each other by ropes. They offered not only protection and rest to the guns but also they could move them forward and backward on the wheels. It took around 20-25 days to complete the strategy under Ustad Mustafa and Ustad Ali. In the battle (17th March, 1527) Babur made use of his artillery well. Rana Sanga got severely wounded and was carried to Baswa near Amber. Among his other associates, Mahmud Khan Lodi escaped but Hasan Khan Mewati was killed. The Rajputs suffered a big loss. In fact, there was hardly any contingent whose commander was not killed. Shyamal Das (Vir Vinod) attributes treachery of Silhadi of Raisen as the major factor behind the defeat of Rana. But, in fact, it was irrational for Rana to remain inactive for over three weeks. This provided an opportunity to Babur to strengthen himself and prepare for war. Babur's disciplined army, mobile cavalry and his artillery played most decisive role in the battle.

Though the Mewar Rajputs received a great shock at Khanwa, Medini Rai at Malwa was still a power to reckon with. We have already discussed how in 1520 Rana Sanga bestowed Malwa on Medini Rai, the chief noble of Mahmud II of Malwa. In spite of great valour with which the Rajputs fought at Chanderi (1528), Babur faced little difficulty in overcoming Medini Rai. With his defeat, resistance across Rajputana was completely shattered. But Babur had to tackle the Afghans. Mahmud Khan Lodi who had already escaped towards the east could create problems if left unchecked.

5.4.2 Babur and the Afghan Chieftains

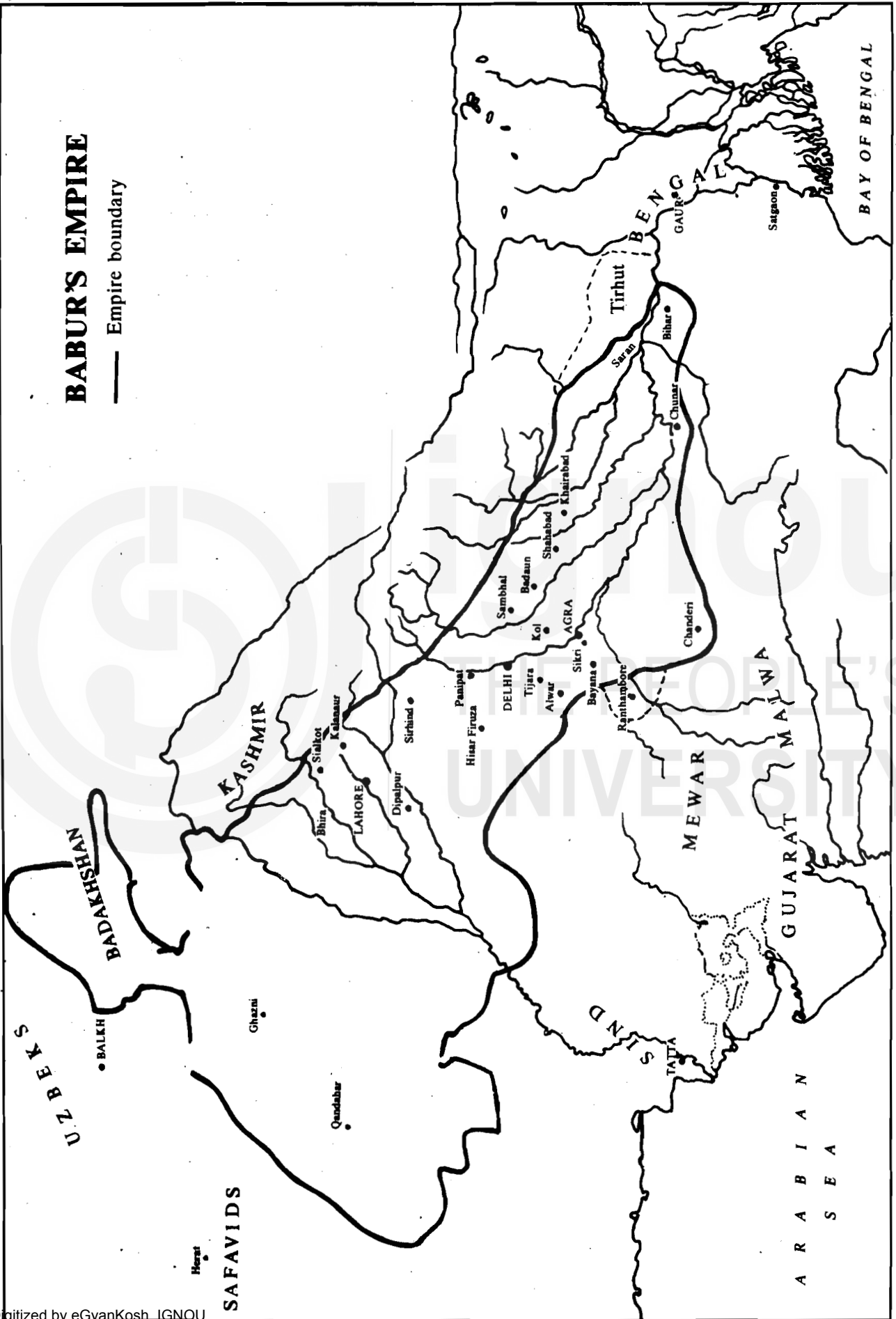
The Afghans had surrendered Delhi, but they were still powerful in the east (Bihar and parts of Jaunpur) where the Nuhani Afghans were dominant led by Sultan Muhammad Nuhani. The Afghans of Chunar, Jaunpur and Awadh were not ready to cooperate with the Nuhanis in a bid to give a united opposition against the Mughals. Instead, they surrendered meekly to Humayun (1527). In the meantime Sultan Muhammad Nuhani died (1528) and left the Nuhanis disjointed as his son Jalal Khan was still a minor. But the vacuum was soon filled by the appearance of Prince Mahmud Lodi, son of Sikandar Lodi and brother of Ibrahim. The Afghans, including the non-Nuhanis, who were a little hesitant earlier to side with the Nuhanis, now readily accepted Mahmud's leadership. Besides, even the Nuhani Afghans like Babban, Bayazid and Fath Khan Sarwani, etc. who felt leaderless with the desertion of Jalal to Bengal, welcomed Mahmud, Nusrat Shah of Bengal also, though apparently advocated friendship with Babur, secretly adopted hostile measures against him. He considered the existence of the Nuhani kingdom in Bihar as buffer between the Mughals and his own possessions in parts of Bihar.

Babur could hardly afford to ignore these developments. He mobilized his forces at Ghagra and inflicted a crushing defeat upon Nusrat Shah's army (1529). Thus ended the Afghan-Nusrat coalition and Nusrat Shah had to surrender large number of Afghan rebels who had taken asylum in his territory. The Afghans were now totally demoralized. Though Babban and Bayazid did attempt to resist at Awadh, but when pressurized (1529) they fled to Mahmud. Thus, within four years Babur succeeded in crushing the hostile powers and now could think of consolidating himself at Delhi. But he could hardly get the opportunity to rule as he died soon after (29 December, 1530).

The establishment of the Mughal Empire under the aegis of Babur was significant. Though the Afghans and Rajputs could not be crushed completely, a task left to his successors, his two major blows at Panipat and Khanwa were certainly decisive and destroyed the balance of power in the region and perhaps was a step towards the establishment of an all-India empire.

BABUR'S EMPIRE

— Empire boundary



Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the significance of the battle of Khanwa.

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2) Write a note on Nusrat-Afghan coalition against Babur.

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5.5 HUMAYUN : 1530-1540

The situation under Humayun was quite different. Like Babur he did not command the respect and esteem of the nobility. Moreover, the Chaghatai nobles were not favourably inclined towards him and the Indian nobles, who had joined Babur's service, deserted the Mughals at Humayun's accession. Muhammad Sultan Mirza, a descendant of Timur; Muhammad Zaman and Mir Muhammad Mahdi Khwaja, brother-in-law of Babur, were considered worthy to aspire to the throne; especially Amir Nizamuddin Ali Khalifa, a grandee of Babur, hatched a conspiracy which failed. To sustain imperial power and hegemony, Humayun had to contend against the Afghans both in the east and the west which was supported by a large social base. But, most dangerous of all, was Humayun's brother Kamran Mirza. The situation was further aggravated by the existence of two centres of power within the empire — Humayun at the centre and Kamran's autonomous control over Afghanistan and Punjab. Humayun decided to deal, at first, with the western Afghans.

5.5.1 Bahadur Shah and Humayun

Humayun's relations with Bahadur Shah represent a curious contrast due to the circumstances. In the beginning (Jan. 1531 to mid 1533), Bahadur Shah assured Humayun of friendship and loyalty. But, at the same time he also attempted to expand his area of influence closer to Mughal frontiers. The first to taste the wrath was Malwa. Bahadur Shah was a little apprehensive of the Mughal designs on Malwa. He feared that if this buffer state between the two was left unoccupied, the Mughals might attempt to conquer it. Besides, all trade routes to Gujarat ports passed through Malwa. It was also very fertile and rich in grain production and Gujarat depended much upon this region for grain supply. After 1530, Bahadur Shah started putting up military pressure on Malwa and finally occupied it in Jan. 1531. Soon after, Bahadur Shah started making alliances with Humayun's adversaries in the east — Sher Shah in Bihar (1531-32) and Nusrat Shah in Bengal (Aug.-Sept. 1532). Nusrat Shah is also reported to have sent an embassy under Khwajasara Malik (Aug.-Sept. 1532) who was well received by Bahadur Shah. Besides, many disgruntled Afghans of the north and the east also joined him in a bid to oust Mughals in order to regain their lost pride. Sultan Alauddin Lodi, son of Bahlul Lodi, and his sons Fath Khan and Tatar Khan, Rai Nar Singh, nephew of Raja Bikramajit of Gwalior (1528) and Alam Khan Lodi of Kalpi (1531), all looked towards Bahadur Shah and extended their help against the Mughals. Even the eastern Afghans, Babban Khan Lodi (Shahu Khail), Malik Roop Chand, Dattu Sarwani and Ma'ru' Farmuli joined hands with Bahadur Shah.

Humayun could ill afford to ignore these developments. Situation could have worsened in case of combined Afghan attack from east and the west. In the meantime, Bahadur Shah's aggressive designs continued unabated. He occupied Bhilsa, Raisen, Ujjain and Gagraon. Thus he could well keep the Mughals away from Gwalior, Kalinjar, Bayana and Agra. While Bahadur Shah was busy in expanding

towards Malwa and Rajputana Humayun was besieging Chunar. These developments forced him to rush back to Agra (1532-33). But Bahadur Shah was keen to avoid any clash with the Mughals and immediately sent an embassy under Khurasan Khan (1533-34). Humayun demanded that he should not give shelter to Mughal rebels especially Muhammad Zaman Mirza. At the same time Humayun agreed not to threaten the Gujarati establishments while Bahadur Shah promised to withdraw from Mandu. Bahadur Shah in the meantime was involved in suppressing the Portuguese menace (Sept.-Dec. 1533) and Humayun was busy in tackling the Afghans in the east.

New developments resulted in the invasion of Gujarat by Humayun in 1535. In Jan. 1534 Bahadur Shah gave shelter to Muhammad Zaman Mirza and also attacked Chittor. Chittor was important for Bahadur Shah for it could provide him a strong base. It could have also facilitated expansion towards Ajmer, Nagor and Ranthambhor. But Humayun at this point made no attempt to stop Bahadur Shah from conquering Chittor. His move from Agra to Kalpi was too slow. Similarly, he took a longer route to reach Chittor. It seems that Humayun was not very keen to stop Bahadur Shah from occupying Chittor. Bahadur Shah was anxious to reach Mandu before Humayun could intercept. But the latter reached there much before. Mandu was the only route to retreat from Chittor to Gujarat and that was already occupied by Humayun. He blocked Bahadur Shah's camp from all directions thus cutting the supplies. Within a month, with no hope left, Gujarati army themselves destroyed their best artillery to stop the Mughals to use it against them. Bahadur Shah fled from Mandu to Champaner, Ahmedabad, Cambay and crossed Kathiawar and reached Diu. Mughals chased him. But, again, they hardly showed any eagerness for either arresting or killing Bahadur Shah. It seems that the real aim of Humayun was just to destroy the power of Gujarat. At Champaner, when Bahadur Shah was recognised by Mughal officers, they did not arrest him. Soon Humayun had to leave Mandu and rush to Agra because his long absence from there had resulted in rebellions in Doab and Agra. Mandu was now left under the charge of Mirza Askari. The handling of local population by the Mughals had caused widespread indignation. People were looted and slaughtered. As a result, as soon as Humayun left Mandu people rejoiced Bahadur Shah's return from Diu. Bahadur Shah took advantage of the opportunity and defeated the Mughals at Ahmedabad. In the meantime, to check the Portuguese advance, Bahadur Shah had to return to Diu. But this time the Portuguese succeeded and Bahadur Shah was treacherously murdered (17 Feb. 1537). This created confusion everywhere. The Afghans, left with no alternative, now turned towards Sher Shah for leadership.

5.5.2 Eastern Afghans and Humayun

The Afghans' defeat at the hands of Humayun (siege of Chunar November, 1531) resulted in the flight of Afghan nobles to Gujarat. This created a political vacuum in the east, providing an opportunity to Sher Khan to consolidate his power.

The period between 1530-35 proved crucial for Sher Shah. To consolidate his position in the east, he had to tackle with Bengal and Afghan nobles who got shelter under the Bengal ruler. On the otherhand, he was hardly in a position to face the Mughals in case of any direct clash. Fortunately circumstances took a favourable turn for Sher Shah. Considering Bahadur Shah of Gujarat a serious threat, Humayun decided to tackle him first. During this period Sher Shah was left free to consolidate himself.

Sher Shah had to face two invasions of Bengal rulers. The first attack took place under Qutub Khan, the *muqti* of Munger in 1532-33 during Sultan Nusrat Shah's reign, and, the second under Ibrahim Khan during Sultan Mahmud Shah's reign (1534). However, Bengal armies were defeated on both the occasions. These successes completely exposed the weakness of the Bengal army. This raised the prestige of Sher Khan. The eastern Afghans who had earlier deserted him now rushed to serve under his banner. Besides, the destruction and death of Bahadur Shah by Humayun left the Afghans with no alternative but to join him against the Mughals.

Now Sher Shah wanted to establish himself as the undisputed Afghan leader. This time (1535) he took the offensive and defeated the Bengal army in the battle of Surajgarh. In a peace settlement after the battle, Sultan Mahmud Shah of Bengal agreed to supply war elephants and financial help to Sher Shah whenever required. This grand success against Bengal, followed by his attacks on the Mughal territories in the east (from Gorakhpur to Banaras), alarmed Humayun. Humayun now deputed

Hindu Beg as governor (**hakim**) of Jaunpur to keep an eye on the developments in the eastern region. But, Sher Shah, acting cautiously on the one hand assured Hindu Beg of his loyalty, while on the other utilized the time for strengthening his army for his next onslaught on Mughals. As soon his preparations were over, he wrote a threatening letter to Hindu Beg. At the same time he launched his second attack on Bengal (1537). Hindu Beg, annoyed with Sher Shah's behaviour, reported his hostile intentions to Humayun. The Afghan nobles suggested Humayun to stop Sher Shah from occupying Bengal, while the Mughal nobles advised him to occupy Chunar first to use it as a base for his operations in the east. The latter option was important for maintaining the line of communications with Agra. But it took too long for Rumi Khan to capture Chunar (6 months). Historians consider it a great 'mistake' that cost Humayun his 'empire'. Though leaving Chunar in the hands of the Afghans could have been unwise, leaving Sher Shah free and unchecked in Bengal was 'equally wrong'. Sher Shah utilized the time and captured Gaur (April, 1538), the capital of Bengal.

At this stage, Humayun asked Sher Shar to transfer Bengal and Rohtasgarh to him, but Sher Shah was not ready to surrender Bengal and the negotiations failed. Now Humayun decided to curb Sher Shah's power but he did not want to involve himself in Bengal politics. Yet, the circumstances were forcing him towards it. Sher Shah shrewdly withdrew from Bengal, and Humayun, with no obvious obstructions, reached Bengal (September, 1538).

He had to stay there for four months until he finally settled the prevailing chaos. In the meantime Sher Shah succeeded in controlling the routes to Agra thus making communication difficult for Humayun, To add to Humayun's worries, Hindal Mirza, who was sent to gather supplies for his army, assumed sovereign power. Humayun hurried back to Chunar and reached Chausa (March 1539). He encamped on the western side of the river Karmnasa. At this stage Humayun was still in control of the situation. On the front side he was guarded by the river, while to his rear was Chunar, which was still in the hands of his men. Sher Shah, too, showed willingness to accept truce. But at this stage Humayun unnecessarily exposed himself to danger by crossing the river. Sher Shah knowing fully well the paucity of Humayun's provisions, equipment and transport wasted no time in exploiting the situation. He, while pretending to fulfil the terms of the truce, attacked the Mughal army. Panic spread in the Mughal camp. Large number of Mughal forces were killed. Humayun and Askari Mirza managed to flee. Humayun reached Agra by way of Kara Manikpur and Kalpi (July 1539). Raja Virbhan, the ruler of Gahora, helped greatly in rescuing them. Kamran Mirza welcomed Humayun on his return to Agra with his army totally destroyed; while Sher Shah, elated by his victory, proclaimed himself an independent king. Under these circumstances, the final clash was inevitable. Humayun was defeated badly in the battle of Qannauj the banks of Ganga (1540). This paved the way for the establishment of the second Afghan empire in India. A number of factors had contributed in Humayun's debacle against Sher Shah. These include:

- i) He faced hostility of his brothers. On many occasions he dealt with them too kindly.
- ii) Sometime he reacted lethargically when the situation demanded swift action. This can be seen well in his Gujarat and Bengal campaigns.
- iii) He was also victim of an 'inexorable fate'. For example Mahmud Shah of Bengal kept him unnecessarily involved in Bengal politics. This provided an opportunity to Sher Shah to gain strength.
- iv) Humayun also lacked financial resources for continuous warfare. This weakness became very much evident when in Bengal he got stranded and lacked money and supplies (1539).
- v) Besides, Sher Shah had the courage, experience and organising abilities; he was also skilled in exploiting political opportunities. Humayun could not match his capabilities.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss in brief Humayun's struggle with Bahadur Shah.

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 2) Discuss the factors responsible for Humayun's debacle against Sher Shah.

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3) Match the following:

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|----------------------------|------|
| i) first battle of Panipat | 1528 |
| ii) battle of Chausa | 1527 |
| iii) battle of Qannauj | 1539 |
| iv) battle of Khanwa | 1526 |
| v) battle of Chanderi | 1540 |

5.5.3 Humayun and His Brothers

Immediately after the death of his father Babur, Humayun divided his empire into four parts giving Mewat to Hindal, Sambhal to Askari and Punjab, Kabul and Qandahar to Kamran. The very division itself was unfavourable to Humayun for he was left with little resources at his disposal. In spite of this kind treatment, his brothers hardly helped him when he needed. His brother Askari Mirza, whom Humayun made governor of Gujarat at the time of Bahadur Shah's attack on Ahmedabad, could not tackle the situation. As a result Humayun had to lose Malwa (1537). Askari Mirza also sided with Kamran and proceeded to Qandahar at the crucial juncture when Humayun needed their help after his defeat at the hands of Sher Shah at Qannauj. However, Hindal Mirza by and large remained loyal to Humayun and even died fighting for him (1551).

The greatest threat to Humayun arose from Kamran Mirza who had assumed almost a semi-independent position in Afghanistan and Punjab. Thus emerged two centres of power — one at Lahore and the other at Agra. This situation prevented the rise of a centralised state and the political instability was evident in the first major crisis which the Mughals faced (1538-1540). Though Kamran Mirza remained loyal to Humayun in early years and once rushed to Delhi at the call of Yadgar Nasir Mirza (governor of Delhi) to tackle Hindal Mirza (June 1539). Here again, instead of marching towards Chausa to help Humayun, both the brothers, Hindal and Kamran, watched the developments from a distance. Had they extended help to Humayun, he could have defeated Sher Shah.

It seems Kamran was more interested in defending his own territory rather than putting up a united front against the Afghans. Even before Humayun's final clash with Sher Shah (1540), Kamran Mirza, instead of sending his whole army, sent only 3000 troops to serve the Emperor at Lahore. After Humayun's defeat at the hands of Sher Shah (1540), Kamran even sent a proposal to Sher Shah, through Qazi Abdullah, to accept Punjab as the frontier between the two, Sher Shah realised that

is no unanimity between the brothers and forced them to accept Indus as the boundary. Kamran felt that he had to lose Punjab due to the incompetency of his brother and became more anxious to save Kabul and Qandahar for himself. The period between 1545-1553 is one during which Humayun was busy in dealing with Kamran Mirza (see *infra*). However, it is difficult to put the entire blame for Humayun's failures on his brothers. But their support would have made things easier for Humayun and the Empire could have been saved.

5.6 ESTABLISHMENT OF SECOND AFGHAN EMPIRE IN INDIA: 1540-1555

After defeating the Mughal Emperor, Sher Shah declared himself as the sovereign ruler and started building the Second Afghan Empire. The fifteen years (1540-1555) of Afghan rule form an interlude in the history of Mughal Empire. This period, nevertheless, was significant for the administrative innovations and reorganisation. The process of consolidation under Sher Shah would be discussed in Blocks 4 and 5. During his short reign (1540-1545), he was busy in fighting for keeping his new Empire intact. Here we will give a very brief account of Sher Shah's conflicts during this period.

The Ghakkars, (inhabitants on the North-West frontier between the Indus and Jhelum rivers) were the first one to come in conflict with him. But Sher Shah got very little success in this venture. The Ghakkars put up a stiff resistance. Khizr Khan, the governor of Bengal, also showed some signs of independence. All this forced him to withdraw from Punjab and marched towards Bengal (1541). There he dismissed Khizr Khan. Malwa was the next target of Sher Shah where Qadir Shah showed disobedience. On this way he occupied Gwalior from Abdul Qasim. Qadir Shah also surrendered and was arrested (1542). To tackle the Rajputs, Sher Shah besieged Raisen in 1543. Raja Puran Mal, ruler of Raisen, though offered submission, Sher Shah attacked him. Puran Mal along with many others died in the battle.

The province of Multan was also conquered in 1543. In spite of the defeat of the Rajputs at Raisen, Maldeo of Marwar was still formidable. He had already extended his dominion towards Sambhar, Nagor, Bikaner, Ajmer and Bednar. Sher Shah marched towards him and in 1544 occupied Ajmer, Pali and Mount Abu. Without any serious resistance, Udai Singh also handed over the keys of Chittor to Sher Shah. Thus, almost the whole of Rajputana fell into his hands. Sher Shah also succeeded in occupying the impregnable fort of Kalinjar, but, while besieging it, Sher Shah was severely wounded on account of explosion and died soon after (22 May 1545). Thus ended the glorious career of Sher Shah.

Sher Shah's son and successor Islam Shah (1545-1553), though kept the legacy of his father intact, failed to consolidate it any further. He was most of the time busy in suppressing the intrigues within his own camp which emerged under the leadership of his brother Adil Shah along with Azam Humayun and Khawwas Khan. Besides, his humiliating treatment towards the Niyazi Afghans specifically and the Afghans in general generated more resentment rather than gaining any support. The ill effects of which had to be borne by his son and successor. One finds that in spite of all efforts of Islam Shah to clear the road for the smooth succession of his son after his death (1553) internal strifes marred the infant Afghan kingdom to the advantage of Humayun. Soon after Islam Shah's death, Mubariz Khan murdered Islam's son Feroz and ascended the throne with the title of Adil Shah. Sedition and rebellions marred the entire country and the Empire broke into 'five' kingdoms (Ahmad Khan Sur in Punjab; Ibrahim Shah in Sambhal and Doab; Adil Shah in Chunar and Bihar; Malwa under Baz Bahadur; and Sikandar Shah controlled Delhi and Agra). This provided an ideal climate for Humayun to strike.

5.7 REVIVAL OF MUGHAL RULE IN INDIA

After Humayun's defeat at Qannauj, when Askari Mirza and Kamran withdrew to the North-West; Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza decided to be with Humayun. The latter now decided to try his luck in Sind. But, here, Hindal Mirza also deserted him and at the invitation of Kamran marched towards Qandahar. The ruler of Sind, Shah Husain Arghun, also succeeded in winning over Yadgar Nasir Mirza by giving his

daughter in marriage. Humayun himself could not succeed in his bid to occupy Sihwan. Frustrated by all these developments, Humayun alone tried his luck in Rajputana. He was invited by Raja Maldeo, the ruler of Marwar (July 1542). But, at this juncture, Sher Shah asked Maldeo to hand over Humayun. The latter fled in fear (August 1542). He was well received by Rana Birsal. With the help of the Rana Humayun tried his luck in Sind once more but failed. Now he marched towards Persia via Ghazni (December 1543) where he was well-received by Shah Tahmasp (1544). The latter promised him in regaining Qandahar, Kabul and Ghazni provided he promised to surrender Qandahar to the Shah. It was agreed upon and Qandahar, then under Askari Mirza, was occupied and handed over to the Shah. But misunderstandings crept up, for the Persians showed no eagerness to help Humayun to occupy Kabul and Ghazni. This compelled Humayun to wrest Qandahar from the Persians (1545). Humayun's success at Qandahar won over many nobles — specially Hindal and Yadgar Nasir Mirza to change sides. These developments totally demoralized Kamran and he fled from Kabul to Ghazna and thence to Sind and thus facilitated Humayun's entry in Kabul (November 1545). From 1545 to 1553, Humayun spent his energies mainly in dealing with his brother Kamran who kept Humayun on his toes. In this conflict Hindal Mirza lost his life on the battlefield (1551). This forced Humayun to have a final showdown. Kamran, tried to get help from Islam Shah but was cold shouldered. While fleeing from place to place, the Ghakkar chieftain Sultan Adam captured Kamran and handed him over to Humayun. Finally, Kamran was blinded and permitted to proceed to Mecca (where he died in 1557).

With the end of Kamran's opposition, Humayun emerged an undisputed master of Kabul. With favourable political climate in India (see *supra*), now Humayun could systematically plan for the re-acquisition of his lost Indian Empire. He started in November 1554 and reached Lahore in Feb. 1555. With little difficulty, the Mughals continued their victorious march and occupied Machhiwara. The final clash took place at Sirhind. Sikandar Shah Sur had to flee towards the Siwalik and the road to Delhi was thus lay clear. Humayun reached Salimgarh in June 1555 and occupied Delhi. However, Humayun could hardly accomplish the task of conquest and consolidation. He died soon after (26 January 1556) leaving behind his minor son Akbar under heavy odds.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Write a short note on Humayun's relations with his brothers.

.....

- 2) Discuss the circumstances which facilitated Humayun to regain his power in India.

.....

5.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have studied the political situation of India on the eve of Babur's invasion. It would not be fair to assume that Indian politics was determined by religious considerations; rather circumstances and personal interests dominated the political scene. But, even after Panipat, Babur's path was not smooth. He had to face the Rajput chieftains and the dispirited Afghans. The alliances that were forged during these conflicts cut across religious considerations. We have seen that the confederacy had in it both the Rajputs and the Afghan nobles. It was Babur's great

ralship that made him victorious against all odds. His son Humayun, who was not as gifted a general as his father, could not stand against the united Afghan opposition and thus failed to keep his father's legacy intact (1540). As a result, he was thrown into wilderness for almost thirteen years. During this period we saw the emergence of a great Afghan — Sher Shah—who, though ruled for just five years, left his permanent marks of excellence in history. He not only provided a strong administrative setup (Blocks 4 and 5), which was followed and further strengthened by Akbar, but also brought almost the whole of north India under one administrative unit. But his successors failed to consolidate further. Their personal intrigues and the prevailing chaos provided an apt opportunity to Humayun to strike. This time Humayun made no mistake. He regained power in 1555. He died soon after leaving the task of consolidation to his son Akbar.

5.9 KEY WORDS

Infra : text to be followed

Muqti : governor; **iqta** holder

Supra : text mentioned earlier

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Discuss briefly the ruling powers in India; their relationship with each other; also mention how their personal interests, court intrigues, etc. weakened their power to the advantage of Babur (see Section 5.2).
- 2) Discuss the Uzbeks and the Persians; their interests particularly in Farghana and Central Asia in general. How Shaibani Khan's defeat provided opportunity to the Uzbeks to strengthen their hold in Central Asia (see Section 5.3).

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Mention how battle of Khanwa proved the turning point and not that of Panipat; the Rajputs' debacle did not make Babur's task easier (see Sub-section 5.4.1).
- 2) After the defeat of the Nuhani Afghans in Bihar, they were given asylum by Nusrat Shah that compelled Babur to tackle him firmly (see Sub-section 5.4.2).

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Apart from briefly giving political details, highlight the point that on many occasions, Humayun reacted too slow to the situation that proved fatal to him (see Sub-section 5.5.2).
- 2) Discuss how Humayun's character, Hindal's attitude and the opportunistic strategies of Sher Shah were responsible for Humayun's failures (see Sub-section 5.5.2).
- 3) i) 1526 ii) 1539 iii) 1540 iv) 1527 v) 1528

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Sub-section 5.5.3.
- 2) Discuss how Humayun could overcome his brother Mirza Kamran in Kabul. In the meantime how circumstances also changed in India. Sher Shah's successors proved incapable in keeping intact Sher Shah's legacy and Humayun took full advantage of the situation (see Section 5.6; 5.7)

UNIT 6 EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION: 1556-1707

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Power Politics and Regency of Bairam Khan : 1556-1560
- 6.3 Territorial Expansion
 - 6.3.1 North and Central India
 - 6.3.2 Western India
 - 6.3.3 Eastern India
 - 6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581
 - 6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West
 - 6.3.6 Deccan and South
- 6.4 Administrative Reorganisation
- 6.5 Territorial Expansion under the Successors of Akbar
- 6.6 Policies Towards Autonomous Chieftains
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit. You would learn about:

- how Bairam Khan's regency came to an end and Akbar took control of the affairs of the state;
- the territorial expansion of Mughal Empire under Akbar and his successors;
- the problems faced by the Mughals in expanding the Empire;
- the formation of provinces under Akbar; and
- the relationship between the Mughals and autonomous chiefs and appreciate how did it help in the expansion and consolidation of the Empire.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Humayun had rescued and restored the Mughal Empire in 1555. But, had it not been for Akbar, the Empire perhaps would not have sustained. It was during his rule that the Mughal Empire became a political fact and an important factor in Indian politics. Akbar's policies were emulated by his successors with few changes or as suited the political atmosphere of their times.

In this Unit we will not go into the details of administrative machinery and the creation of the ruling class. This we will discuss in Block 4. Here we will confine ourselves mainly to the territorial expansion and the problems related to it. In the course of developing a large Empire the Mughal rulers had to deal with some political powers who held sway in various regions. Important of these were the Rajputs and the rulers to the south of the Vindhyas like Bijapur, Golkonda and Ahmadnagar and the Marathas. We will study this aspect in detail in Block 3.

We begin this unit with Akbar's efforts to get rid of his adversaries and to establish himself at the helm of affairs at the Mughal court. Let us take up Bairam Khan's regency.

At Humayun's death, Akbar was only thirteen years old. It was his tutor and Humayun's confidant, Bairam Khan, who served as the regent from 1556-1560. The period of Bairam Khan's regency could be divided into four phases: The first was from the accession of Akbar to before the second battle of Panipat; i.e., January-October 1556. This was a period when the nobles accepted Bairam Khan's leadership to protect their interests. The second phase was marked by the second battle of Panipat and the arrival of the royal ladies (Hamida Banu Begum and Maham Anaga) in India. During this period, Bairam Khan was in absolute control of the state affairs. He attempted to create a personal following. In the third phase, which lasted till mid-1559, Bairam Khan's influence and power declined. The last phase witnessed the attempts of Bairam Khan to regain control. There was also growth of factional strife which ultimately led to the dismissal of Bairam Khan.

Politically, the first phase was insecure. It saw not only Humayun's death but also a challenge to the Empire by the Afghan forces under Hemu. The events especially cast a gloom since Akbar was a minor. The only alternative to save the situation was to appoint a regent. But the fear was that the exercise of *de facto* sovereignty by one of the nobles as regent would disrupt the mutual relations of the nobles and threaten the administration. Despite these fears, Bairam Khan was appointed *wakil*. Surprisingly, there was no opposition to the appointment even by those nobles who could claim *wikalat* either on the basis of long service, blood relationship or past association with Akbar. These included even the most severe critics of Bairam Khan.

While accepting Bairam Khan as the regent, it appears that these nobles wanted to share power and influence with Bairam Khan. Bairam Khan, on the other hand, was determined to exercise power rigidly. On the assumption of the office as *wakil-us Sultanat*, he expected factional conflict and tussle for power. He, therefore, began the process of eliminating all those nobles who would challenge him. He dismissed and imprisoned Shah Abul Ma'ali, his ardent critic. This did not arouse much opposition since Ma'ali was generally unpopular among the nobles.

Subsequently, all such nobles who posed a challenge to Bairam Khan were sent to Kabul. Bairam Khan, however, attempted to win the support of Mun'im Khan, the governor of Kabul and Ali Quli Khan Uzbek, the commander of the Mughal forces in Awadh. Bairam Khan did not trust Mun'im Khan. He wanted to confine him to Kabul and distance him from the court. The opportunity came in May 1556 when Mirza Sulaiman attacked Kabul. Mun'im Khan's contacts were delinked with the court for the next four months and Bairam Khan used this period to strengthen his power at the court.

Tensions were developing in the nobility and it was on the verge of crisis by the second battle of Panipat. The imperial forces led by Tardi Beg failed to defend themselves against the Afghan forces at the battle of Tughlaqabad. At this juncture, trying to assert himself, Bairam Khan, without the sanction of the emperor, ordered the execution of Tardi Beg on charges of treachery. This aroused dissensions in the nobility. But the victory at Panipat revived Bairam Khan's power. He further strengthened his position by distributing titles and *jagirs* in the Doab and granting promotions and rewards to his loyalists. He also gave important positions to his favourites. Pir Muhammad Khan was appointed his personal *wakil*, Khwaja Aminuddin as *bakshi* and Shaikh Gadai as *sadr*.

Bairam Khan was virtually in complete control of the affairs within six months of Tardi Beg's execution. To vest considerable power in himself, he prevented access to the king especially that of his possible rivals. Mun'im Khan and Khwaja Jalaluddin Mahmud were sent away to Kabul and were not allowed to come to the court. The strengthening of Bairam Khan's power and the exercise of *de facto* authority by him was resented by the nobility.

The first evident decline in Bairam Khan's power was when Akbar was married to the daughter of Mirza Abdullah Mughal, a son-in-law of Mun'im Khan despite

Bairam Khan's resistance. Bairam Khan's position was also affected after the arrival of Hamida Banu Begum from Kabul in April 1557. She was accompanied by Maham Anaga who had earlier supported Bairam Khan in the event of Tardi Beg's execution.

Bairam Khan was compelled to compromise on the functioning of the Central government, i.e., he had to share power with leading nobles. Bairam Khan as **wakil** could not place any proposal before the king without the consent of leading nobles. This compromise diminished his power and by 1558 even his personal **wakil**, Pir Muhammad, turned against him.

To regain his power, he attempted a coup in 1559. He replaced Pir Muhammad by Muhammad Khan Sistani as his personal **wakil**. Shaikh Gadai was given additional charge apart from being a **sadr**. Many small ranking officials were also given promotions. But Bairam Khan remained isolated from the large section of the nobility and the king. He aroused their resentment by his authoritarianism.

Scholars like R.P. Tripathi, have accused Bairam Khan of granting favours to the shias to the disadvantage of the sunnis and thus annoying them. But I.A. Khan argues that although Bairam Khan was a shia, there is no historical evidence to prove that he granted favours on religious grounds. In fact, Bairam Khan's favourite Shaikh Gadai, the **sadr** was a Sunni and not a Shia.

Bairam Khan had underestimated the shrewdness of Akbar. He had made no attempt to win the confidence of the king and when the king announced his dismissal in March 1560, all the loyalists of Bairam Khan either supported the king or declared their neutrality.

The study of the period of Bairam Khan's regency indicates that actually the political power was vested in the nobility. The nobles accepted the authority of Bairam Khan in a limited sense. They were not willing to accept his de facto sovereign power.

Bairam Khan tried to curb the nobility but he failed to acquire absolute power. To maintain his position, he had to depend on one or the other section of the nobility. Thus he failed to acquire a stable independent following. In fact, he alienated large sections of the nobility by giving high ranks and promotions to junior officers and creating inefficient **amirs**. At the end of his career, Bairam Khan realised that even his favourites opposed him.

The tussle between Bairam Khan and the nobility was in fact a conflict between the central authority represented by the regent and the nobility. The king during this period was a mere figurehead who often became a tool in the hands of Bairam Khan's opponents. Bairam Khan had tried to weld together the two main groups of the Mughal nobility, i.e., the Chaghatai and Khurasani. But most of the nobles regarded this as an attempt by the regent to curb their power and independence. Even the loyalists of Bairam Khan realised that they could not accept the central authority as represented by Bairam Khan.

Bairam Khan's regency was a period of dilemma for him. While he wanted to curtail the independence of the nobility, he needed their support for his power. This created contradictions in his position throughout this period. It was not possible for him to counterbalance this opposition by introducing a new group. The Afghans could not be recruited because they were the main contenders to the throne. The only alternatives were, therefore, the Rajput chiefs, the **zamindars** or other local chiefs. But, inducting them would have been a long process. Thus, whenever, Bairam Khan tried to recover his position, he was opposed by the court nobility. Consequently, he often found himself isolated and was ultimately overthrown.

Bairam Khan's exit confirmed the struggle between the central authority and the forces against it in the Mughal polity. It resulted in the triumph of the latter. This trend would help to understand the difficulties which Akbar faced with his nobility between 1562-1567 after he assumed complete sovereign powers.

We notice that throughout Bairam Khan's regency, political power rested with the dominant section of the nobility which consisted of the Chaghatais and other groups of Turani origin. Bairam Khan was able to exercise power as the regent as long as

they supported him. The nobles, as mentioned earlier, accepted Bairam Khan in a limited sense and not as a de facto sovereign. They did not oppose him till the Afghans were crushed. But after Hemu's defeat in the second battle of Panipat, they resisted the regent's efforts at centralisation and forced him to accept the authority of the leading nobles.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How did Bairam Khan deal with the initial challenges to his power?

.....

2) Explain the revival of Bairam Khan's power after the second battle of Panipat.

.....

3) Discuss the decline in Bairam Khan's position subsequent to 1557.

.....

6.3 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

After overcoming initial problems and consolidating his hold on the throne, Akbar started a policy of extending Mughal territories. Any policy of expansion meant conflict with various political powers spread in different parts of the country. A few of these political powers were well organised, the Rajputs, though spread throughout the country as autonomous chiefs and kings, had major concentration in Rajputana. The Afghans held political control mainly in Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal. In Deccan and South India, the major states were Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golkonda and other southern kingdoms. In the North-west some tribes held their sway. Kabul and Qandahar, though held by Mughal factions, were opposed to Akbar.

Akbar through a systematic policy started the task of expanding his Empire. It must be noted that the major expansion of Mughal Empire took place during the reign of Akbar. During the reigns of his successors (Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb), very little was added in terms of territory. The main additions in the later period were made during Aurangzeb's reign in South India and North-East (Assam).

6.3.1 North and Central India

The first expedition was sent to capture Gawaliar and Jaunpur in 1559-60. After a brief war, Ram Shah surrendered the Gawaliar fort. Khan Zaman was sent to Jaunpur ruled by Afghans who were defeated easily and it was annexed to the Mughal Empire.

Malwa in central India was ruled by Baz Bahadur. Adham Khan and others led the expedition against Malwa. Baz Bahadur was defeated and fled towards Burhanpur.

Next, Garh Katanga or Gondwana, an independent state in central India ruled by Rani Durgawati, widow of Dalpat Shah, was conquered in 1564. Later, in 1567, Akbar handed over the kingdom to Chandra Shah, the brother of Dalpat Shah.

During this period Akbar had to face a series of revolts in central India. Abdullah Khan Uzbek was the leader of the revolt. He was joined by a number of Uzbeks.

Khan Zaman and Asaf Khan also rebelled. Akbar with the help of Munim Khan succeeded in suppressing them and consolidated his position.

A long conflict with nobility, which had started after the dismissal of Bairam Khan (1560), now came to an end. Akbar through his diplomatic skills, organisational capabilities and the help of some trusted friends tackled this serious crisis.

6.3.2 Western India

Conquest of Rajputana

Akbar realised that to have a stable Empire, he must subjugate the large tracts under Rajput kings in the neighbouring region of Rajputana. A calculated policy was devised not only to conquer these areas but turn their rulers into allies. Here we will not go into the details of Akbar's policy towards the Rajput kings. You would study the details in Unit 11 of Block 3. Akbar with the exception of Chittor's Rana Pratap, managed to secure the allegiance of all the Rajput kingdoms. A large number of them were absorbed in Mughal nobility and helped Akbar in expanding and consolidating the Mughal Empire.



Raja Surjan Hada surrendering the Keys of Ranthambhor fort to Akbar.

Conquest of Gujarat

Having consolidated his position in Central India and Rajputana, Akbar turned towards Gujarat in 1572. After Humayun's withdrawal, Gujarat was no longer a unified kingdom. There were various warring principalities. Gujarat, apart from being a fertile region, had a number of busy ports and thriving commercial centres.

Sultan Muzaffer Shah III was the nominal king claiming overlordship over 7 warring principalities. One of the princes, I'timad Khan, had invited Akbar to come and conquer it. Akbar himself marched to Ahmedabad. The town was captured without any serious resistance. Surat with a strong fortress offered some resistance but was also captured. In a short time most of the principalities of Gujarat were subdued.

Akbar organised Gujarat into a province and placed it under Mirza Aziz Koka and returned to capital. Within six months various rebellious groups came together and revolted against the Mughal rule. The leaders of rebellion were Ikhtiyarul Mulk and Mohammad Husain Mirza. The Mughal governor had to cede a number of territories.



Victory of Surat : Akbar entering the city

On receiving the news of rebellion in Agra, Akbar started for Ahmedabad. This march is considered as one of the most outstanding feats of Akbar. Travelling at a speed of 50 miles a day Akbar along with a small force reached Gujarat within 10 days and suppressed the rebellion.

For almost a decade there was peace in Gujarat. Meanwhile, Muzaffar III escaped from captivity and took refuge in Junagadh. After 1583 he tried to organise a few rebellions.

6.3.3 Eastern India

Ever since the defeat of Humayun at the hands of Sher Shah, Bengal and Bihar were governed by Afghans. In 1564, Sulaiman Karrani the governor of Bihar, brought Bengal also under his rule. Sulaiman realising the growing strength of Akbar had acknowledged the overlordship of the Mughals. He used to send presents to Akbar. After his death in 1572, followed by some infighting, his younger son Daud came to occupy his throne. Daud refused to acknowledge Mughal suzerainty and got engaged in conflict with the Mughal governor of Jaunpur.

In 1574, Akbar along with Mun'im Khan Khan-i Khanan marched towards Bihar. In a short time, Hajipur and Patna were captured and Daud fled towards Garhi. After a brief stay Akbar returned. Mun'im Khan and Raja Todar Mal continued to chase Daud who later submitted to the Mughals. After a short time, he again rebelled and was finally killed by the Mughal forces under Khan-i Jahan and Gaur (Bengal) was taken. This ended the independent rule of Bengal in 1576 which had lasted with few



Akbar's success against Bengal: Daud Shah is taken Prisoner

interruptions, for almost two centuries. Parts of Orissa were still under some Afghan Cheifs. Around 1592, Mansingh brought the whole of Orissa under the Mughal rule.

6.3.4 Rebellions of 1581

According to V.A. Smith, "The year 1581 may be regarded as the most critical time in the reign of Akbar, if his early struggle to consolidate his power be not taken into account."

After the conflict of nobility which had lasted till 1567, now again serious conflicts came to the surface in Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat and in the north-west. At the root was the discomfort of Afghans who were overthrown everywhere by the Mughals. Apart from this, Akbar's policy of strict administration of **jagirs** was also responsible for this. By this new policy the **jagirdars** were asked to submit the accounts of their **jagirs** and a cut was enforced in military expenditure. The governor of Bengal enforced these regulations ruthlessly, giving rise to revolt. Soon the rebellion spread to Bihar. Masum Khan Kabuli, Roshan Beg, Mirza Sharfuddin and Arab Bahadur were the main leaders of rebels. Muzaffer Khan, Rai Purshottam and other imperial officers tried to crush the rebellion but failed. Akbar immediately sent a large force under Raja Todar Mal and Shaikh Farid Bakshi. A little later Aziz Koka and Shahbaz Khan were also sent to help Todar Mal. Meanwhile, the rebels declared Akbar's brother Hakim Mirza, who was in Kabul, as their king. The Mughal forces crushed the rebellion in Bihar, Bengal and adjoining regions. A few rebel leaders escaped and took shelter in the forest region of Bengal. They had lost all following but for a few years they continued to harass Mughal officers with their small bands without much success.

Mirza Hakim, to put greater pressure on Akbar, attacked Lahore. Akbar also marched towards Lahore. Hakim Mirza, after hearing the news of Akbar's march, immediately retreated. Hakim Mirza was expecting a number of Mughal officers to join him but all his calculations failed. Akbar after organising the defence of North West frontier, sent an army to Kabul. Akbar also marched towards it. By the time he reached there Hakim Mirza had left Kabul and Akbar occupied it. Akbar gave the charge of Kabul to his sister Bakhtunnisa Begam and left for Agra (1581). After some time, Mirza Hakim came back and continued to rule in his sister's name. Mirza Hakim died after four years and Raja Man Singh was appointed governor of Kabul.

Gujarat also witnessed some rebellion at around the same time when Bihar, Bengal and North-West regions were in trouble. Here the ex-ruler Muzaffar Shah escaped from captivity and organised a small force. He started attacking the Mughal territories in Gujarat. I'timad Khan was deputed as governor of Gujarat. Nizamuddin Ahmed in the capacity of **bakshi** helped him in his operations against the rebels. In 1584 Muzaffar Shah was defeated at Ahmedabad and Nandod. He escaped towards the Kutch region. Nizamuddin Ahmed followed him there also. In the whole of Kutch region a number of forts were erected and Mughal officers were appointed. Muzaffar kept brewing some trouble in that region till 1591-92 when he was finally captured.

6.3.5 Conquests in the North-West

After the death of Hakim Mirza, Kabul was annexed and given to Raja Man Singh in **jagir**. At around the same time, Akbar decided to settle the various rebellions in the North-West Frontier region and conquer new areas.

Suppression of the Roshanais

The first to attract Akbar's attention was the Roshanai movement. Roshanai was a sect established by a soldier who was called Pir Roshanai in the frontier region. He had a large following. After his death his son Jalala became the head of the sect. The Roshanais rebelled against the Mughals and cut the road between Kabul and Hindustan. Akbar appointed Zain Khan as commander of a strong force to suppress the Roshanais and establish Mughal control in the region. Sayid Khan Gakhar and Raja Birbal were also sent with separate forces to assist Zain Khan. In one of the operations Birbal was killed with most of his forces (around 8 thousand). Subsequently, Zain Khan was also defeated but he could survive to reach Akbar at the fort of Atak. Akbar was greatly shocked by the death of Birbal, one of his most favourite companions. Akbar appointed Raja Todar Mal with strong force to capture the region. Raja Man Singh was also asked to help in the task. The combined efforts of the two yielded success and the Roshanais were defeated.

Conquest of Kashmir: Akbar for a long time had his eyes set on conquering Kashmir. While camping in Atak, he decided to despatch an army for the conquest of Kashmir under Raja Bhagwan Das and Shah Quli Mahram. Yusuf Khan, the king of Kashmir, was defeated and he accepted suzerainty of Mughals. Akbar was not very pleased with the treaty as he wanted to annex Kashmir. Yusuf's son Yaqub along with a few **amirs** also decided to oppose the Mughals and waged war. But some desertions set in the Kashmiri forces. Finally, the Mughals emerged victorious and Kashmir was annexed to the Mughal Empire in 1586.

Conquest of Thatta: Another region in the North-West which was still independent was Thatta in Sindh. Akbar appointed Khan-i-Khanan as governor of Multan and asked him to conquer Sindh and subdue Bilochis in 1590. Thatta was annexed and placed under the governor of Multan as a **sarkar** in that **suba**.

The Mughal forces continued the suppression of Bilochis in the adjoining regions. Finally, by the year 1595, the complete supremacy of Mughals over North-West region was established.

6.3.6 Deccan and South

Akbar had started taking interest in Deccan states of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda after the conquest of Gujarat and Malwa. The earlier contacts were limited to the visits of emissaries or casual contacts. After 1590, Akbar started a planned Deccan policy to bring these states under Mughal control. Around this time, the Deccan states were facing internal strife and regular conflicts.

In 1591, Akbar sent a few missions to the Deccan states asking them to accept Mughal sovereignty. Faizi was sent to Asir and Burhanpur (Khandesh), Khwaja Aminuddin to Ahmednagar, Mir Mohammad Amin Mashadi to Bijapur, and Mirza Ma'sud to Golkonda. By 1593 all the missions returned without any success. It was reported that only I'aja Ali Khan, the ruler of Khandesh, was favourably inclined towards the Mughals. Now Akbar decided to follow a militant policy. Here we will not go into the details of the Deccan policy. We will provide only a brief account of Mughal expansion there. The details would be discussed in Block 3 Unit 9.

The first expedition was despatched to Ahmednagar under the command of Prince Murad and Abdul Rahim Khan Khanan. In 1595, the Mughal forces sieged Ahmednagar. Its ruler Chand Bibi at the head of a large army faced the Mughals. She approached Ibrahim Ali Shah of Bijapur and Qutub Shah of Golkonda for help but with no success. Chand Bibi gave a very serious resistance to the Mughal Army. After heavy losses on both sides, a treaty was formulated. According to this treaty Chand Bibi ceded Berar. After some time Chand Bibi attacked Berar to take it back. This time Nizamshahi, Qutabshahi and Adilshahi troops presented a joint front. The Mughals suffered heavy losses but could manage to hold the field. Meanwhile, serious differences between Murad and Khan Khanan weakened Mughal position. Akbar therefore despatched Abul Fazl to Deccan and recalled Khan Khanan. After Prince Murad's death in 1598, Prince Daniyal and Khan Khanan were sent to Deccan. Akbar, too, joined them. First, Ahmednagar was captured. Meanwhile, Chand Bibi died. Next, Asirgarh and adjoining regions were conquered by the Mughals (A.D. 1600). Adil Shah of Bijapur also expressed allegiance and offered his daughter in marriage to Prince Daniyal. Now Mughal territories in the Deccan included Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Ahmednagar and Berar.

Check Your Progress 2

1) How was Gujarat brought under the Mughal rule?

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2) Which were the main areas affected by the rebellion of 1581.

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6.4 ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANISATION

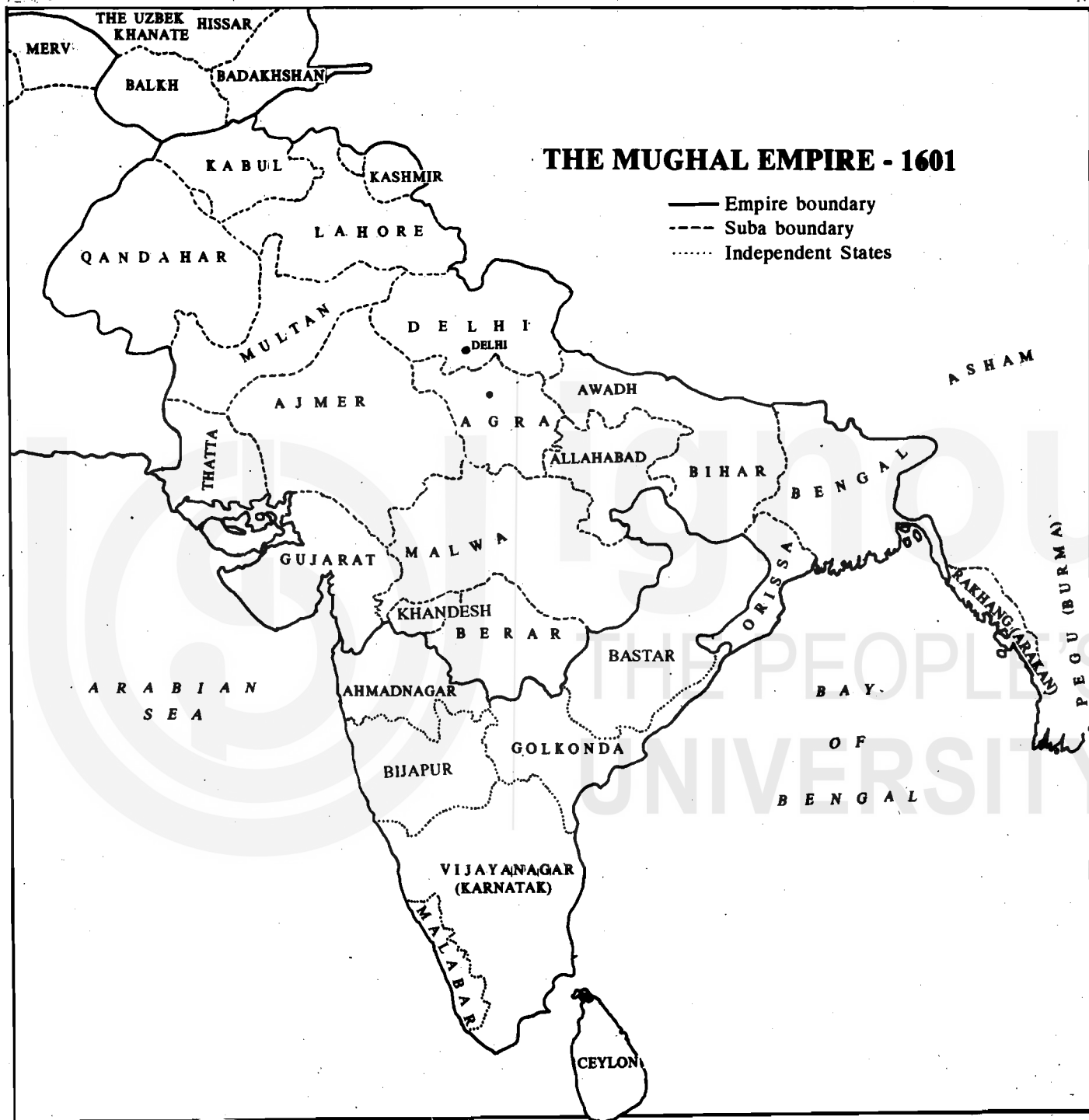
Akbar's policy of conquests and territorial expansion was accompanied by consolidating the new territories into Mughal administrative structure.

Formation of Subas

In 1580, Akbar divided the whole territory under the Mughals into 12 provinces which were called **subas**. These were Allahabad, Agra, Awadh, Ajmer, Admedabad (Gujarat), Bihar, Bengal (including Orissa), Delhi, Kabul, Lahore, Multan and Malwa. After the Deccan conquest, three new **subas** were added making them to 15. These were Berar, Khandesh and Ahmednagar.

These provinces were governed by a definite set of rules and a body of officers. The details of Provincial administration would be discussed in Block 4, Unit 14.

Military Administration : Akbar gave a new shape to the military administration also. He combined the earlier practices and new measures for organising army and tried to evolve a centralised military structure. He gave **mansabs** to both military and civil officers on the basis of their merit or service to the state. **Mansab** literally means an office or rank and **mansabdar** means holder of a rank. Akbar created 66 grades in



his **mansabari** system, i.e., from the command of ten (**dehbashi**) to the commander of Ten Thousand (**dahhazari**).

All **mansabdars** were paid in cash or in the form of a **jagir**. The military administration evolved under Akbar underwent many changes during the rule of his successors. Here we will not go into the details of **mansab** system as these would be discussed separately in Unit 15 of Block 4

6.5 TERRITORIAL EXPANSION UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF AKBAR

The territorial expansion under Akbar gave a definite shape to the Mughal Empire. Very little progress was made during the reigns of his successors, viz., Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. After Aurangzeb we find that the process of disintegration of the Empire began. In this section we will trace the expansion of the Empire during the reigns of Akbar's successors.

During the seventeenth century the main areas of activity were the North-West frontier, South India, North-East and some isolated regions.

In the North-West the Roshanais were decisively curbed by 1625-26. Qandahar became a region of conflict between the Persians and Mughals. After Akbar's death, the Persians tried to capture Qandahar but failed under Shah Abbas I, the Safavi ruler. Following this, Shah Abbas I in 1620 requested Jahangir to hand over Qandahar to him but the latter declined to do so. In 1622, after another attack, Qandahar was captured by the Persians. The struggle to capture Qandahar continued till Aurangzeb's reign but Mughals got little success. The details of these would be discussed in the next Unit (7).

Mewar was the only region in Rajputana which had not come under the Mughals during Akbar's time. Jahangir followed a persistent policy to capture it. After a series of conflicts, Rana Amar Singh finally agreed to accept Mughal suzerainty. All the territories taken from Mewar including the fort of Chittor were returned to Rana Amar Singh and a substantial **jagir** was granted to his son Karan Singh. During the reigns of the successors of Akbar, the Rajputs generally continued to be friendly with the Mughals and held very high **mansabs**.

During the last years of Akbar and early years of Jahangir, Ahmednagar under Malik Ambar started challenging Mughal power. Malik Ambar succeeded in getting support of Bijapur also. A number of expeditions were sent by Jahangir but failed to achieve any success. During Shahjahan's reign, Mughal conflict with the Deccan kingdoms of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda was revived. Ahmednagar was first to be defeated and most parts were integrated into Mughal territory. By 1636, Bijapur and Golkonda were also defeated but these kingdoms were not annexed to the Mughal Empire. After a treaty the defeated rulers were to pay annual tributes and recognise Mughal authority. For almost ten years Shahjahan kept his son Aurangzeb as governor of Deccan. During this period, the Marathas were emerging as a strong political power in the region. During Aurangzeb's reign, the struggle with Deccan states and Marathas became more intensive. In fact, Aurangzeb spent the last twenty years of his life in Deccan fighting against them. By 1687, the Deccani kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda were annexed to the Mughal Empire. The details of the Mughal relations with Deccan states would be discussed in Block 3.

Annexation of Assam : The major success of the Mughals in the north-east was annexation of Assam. In 1661 Mir Jumla, the governor of Bengal invaded the Ahom kingdom. Mir Jumla had 12,000 cavalry, 30000 soldiers and a fleet of boats with guns under his command. The Ahom resistance was very feeble. Mir Jumla succeeded in capturing Kamrup the capital of Ahom kingdom. The king fled from the kingdom. In early 1663, the Swargdeo (heavenly king) surrendered and peace was established. Assam was annexed and Mughal officers were appointed. Mir Jumla died in 1663. Another notable achievement in north-east was capture of Chatgaon in 1664 under Shaista Khan the new governor of Bengal.

The Ahom kingdom could not be directly controlled for long. The Mughal **faujdar**s posted there had to face a number of confrontations. By 1680 Ahoms succeeded in capturing Kamrup and Mughal control ended.

6.6 POLICIES TOWARDS AUTONOMOUS CHIEFTAINS

In his efforts to consolidate the Mughal Empire, Akbar concentrated his attention on chieftains also. Chieftains is a term which is generally used (and has got wide acceptance among historians) for the ruling dynasties spread throughout the country. These rulers enjoyed a different sort of relationship with the Mughals. On the one hand they were free to carry out administration within their territories. On the other hand they held subordinate position vis-a-vis the Mughal Emperor.

Akbar's success lies in the fact that he could enlist the support of this group for the stability of his Empire. The subsequent Mughal Emperors also followed more or less the similar path.

Nature of the Powers of Chieftains

In contemporary accounts these chiefs are referred to by different names such as Rai, Rana, Rawats, Rawals, Raja, Marzban, Kalantaran, etc. Sometimes the term **zamindar** is used to denote both ordinary landholders and autonomous chiefs. But there is a definite difference between the two. The **zamindars** were not independent of the Mughal authority while the chiefs enjoyed comparative autonomy in their territories and had a different relationship with the Mughal Emperors.

The first major study on chieftains was made by Ahsan Raza Khan. He established that they were not confined to peripheral areas of the Empire but were also found in the core regions in the *subas* of Delhi, Agra, Awadh and Allahabad. The largest number of these chieftains were Rajputs but they belonged to all castes including Muslims.

The chieftains were a powerful group possessing large infantry, cavalry and hundreds of miles of land area yielding vast amount of revenue.

Mughal Encounters with Chieftains

After the defeat of the Lodis, the central power in India, Babur had to face joint rebellions of Afghans and chieftains. Humayun also had to face their hostility.

Akbar's initial contacts with the chieftains were through skirmishes and wars. In many cases the chieftains joined hands with Afghan and Mughal rebels. In the process of the conquests and consolidation of Mughal power, Akbar got the support and submission of chieftains. There was no formal declared policy of Akbar towards them. On the basis of references in the contemporary sources, we get an idea about the relations between chiefs and the Mughals. These may be summarised as follows:

- 1) After the conquest of or submission they were generally left free to administer their territories. They also had authority to collect revenue, impose taxes, levies and transit tax etc. In the collection of revenue the chieftains generally followed local practices rather than the Mughal regulations.
- 2) These autonomous chieftains were taken into military service of the Mughals. They were given **jagirs** and **mansabs**. A.R. Khan estimates that around 61 chiefs were given **mansab** during Akbar's reign. The same trend continued during the reigns of successive Mughal Emperors.
- 3) In many cases where chieftains were not directly absorbed as **mansabdars**, they are found helping the Mughal army in their operation against enemy territories or suppression of rebellions. They throughout the Mughal rule helped in conquering extensive areas, at times even against their own clansmen.
- 4) Apart from providing military help, they were given important administrative positions like **subadar** (governors), **diwan**, **bakhshi** etc.
- 5) Often they were assigned their own territories as **jagir** called as **watan jagir** which was hereditary and non transferable.
- 6) An interesting characteristic of their relations was that the Mughal Emperor retained the right to recognise the chieftain as the ruler in case of disputes within the family. At the same time, those who had accepted the Mughal suzerainty were extended military protection.
- 7) The chieftains were supposed to pay a regular tribute to the Mughal Emperor called **peshkash**. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of this **peshkash**. This was at times in cash and at others in diamonds, gold, elephants or other rarities.

Apart from being a source of revenue, the payment of **peshkash** was a symbol of submission to the Mughals.

- 8) A number of matrimonial alliances were also established between Mughal roy family and the chieftains.



A Chieftain presenting tribute to Akbar

Rebellions of Chieftains

We come across numerous instances of rebellions by chieftains. The causes for such rebellions are often stated as non-payment of revenue or tribute. In case of rebellions, the Mughal polity was not to dispossess the chieftains from their territories. Some one from the same family was left in control of the territory. In some instances when a chieftain was dispossessed, it was for a short period often as a reprimand. Later, he or one of his family members was reinstated.

The Mughal policy towards chieftains initiated under Akbar continued during the regins of subsequent Mughal Emperors. The policy of absorbing them into Mughal nobility paid rich dividends to the Empire. The Mughal Emperor succeeded in getting the support of chieftains and their armies for new conquests. As part of Mughal nobility, their help was also available for administring a large Empire. In addition, a friendly relationship with them ensured peace for the Empire.

At the same time, the chieftains also benefited. Now they could retain their territories and administer them as they wished. In addition, they received **jagir** and **mansab**. Often they got territories in **jagir** bigger than their kindgoms. It also provided them security against enemies and rebellions.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) List the **subas** formed in 1580.

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2) List the main achievements in territorial expansion under Aurangzeb.

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3) How the Mughal policy towards chieftains was of mutual benefit?

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we studied that Akbar became Emperor at a very young age. During the first four years Bairam Khan worked as regent for the young Emperor. The nobility was divided into various factions each trying to establish its supremacy. Akbar gradually took control of the situation and created a dedicated group of nobles faithful to him. The Mughal Empire's control was limited to a small territory.

Akbar started a policy of conquests and brought large areas in the east, west, north and south under the Empire, though success in the south was confined to the regions of Deccan only. Along with conquests, the process of consolidation was also initiated. As a result, the conquered territories were placed under a unified administrative system. The consolidated Empire created by Akbar was maintained with a measure of success by his successors for more than hundred years. During the reign of Aurangzeb, new territories in the south (Bijapur, Golkonda, etc.) and in the North-East were added. The notable achievement of the Mughal Emperors was in securing the help of the autonomous chieftains for the expansion and consolidation of the Empire.

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Please read the first phase of Bairam Khan's regency in section 6.2 and write the answer.
- 2) The victory of Mughal forces in the second battle of Panipat strengthened Bairam Khan's position. Read in section 6.2 the second phase of his regency.
- 3) Bairam Khan alienated large sections of nobility after 1557. These nobles joined together and started opposing him. Read section 6.2.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Akbar made several attempts to capture Gujarat and succeeded by 1580 in subjugating her. Read sub-section 6.3.2.
- 2) The areas mainly affected were Eastern provinces and Gujarat. See sub-section 6.3.4.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See section 6.4.
- 2) The main expansion under Aurangzeb was done in the Deccan and Assam.
- 3) The Mughal policy allowed the chieftains to retain and administer their territories. At the same time the Mughal emperors could get their help whenever needed. See details in section 6.6.

UNIT 7 RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL ASIA AND PERSIA

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Global and Regional Perspectives
- 7.3 Relations with the Uzbegs
 - 7.3.1 Babur and Humayun
 - 7.3.2 Akbar
 - 7.3.3 Jahangir
 - 7.3.4 Shahjahan
- 7.4 Relations with Persia
 - 7.4.1 Babur and Humayun
 - 7.4.2 Akbar
 - 7.4.3 Jahangir
 - 7.4.4 Shahjahan
- 7.5 The Deccan States and the Perso-Mughal Dilemma
- 7.6 Aurangzeb and the North-West Frontier
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Key Words
- 7.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with the tripartite relations which developed between the Mughlas, Persians and Uzbegs during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The study of this unit will enable you to understand the:

- geo-political significance of North-Western frontier; the global and regional perspective which shaped and determined tripartite relations;
- main stages in the Mughal-Uzbeg relations; and
- main phases of the Mughal-Safavi relations.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Surrounded by a natural defence from the Himalayan mountains, the Indian ocean, Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal on its three sides, India was vulnerable only from the North-West frontiers. Invaders had come at frequent intervals from lands beyond the Hindukush mountains comprising Persia, Kabul and Transoxiana. Apart from the Greeks, Huns, Turks and other invaders, the Mughals also arrived in India by the same old route. After establishing their power, they were vigilant enough to guard their North-Western frontiers. For expediency, Akbar concentrated on the extension and consolidation of his Empire within India rather than involving himself in ventures beyond the Hindukush or Hormuz. From the very beginning of his reign, therefore, he wanted to retain Kabul and Qandahar under his sway as a bulwark against external invaders. Abul Fazl emphasized the fact that Kabul and Qandahar are the twin gates of India, one leading to Central Asia and the other to Persia. Earlier, Babur, too, had noted this aspect in his **Baburnama**. Later Chroniclers like Sujana Rai Bhandari also expressed such views. While Akbar and his predecessors had a nostalgic love for their homeland, his successors were drawn into the whirlwind of a reckless imperialist ambition and, hence, in many ways the Mughal Empire had to pay the price for adventures in the North-Western campaigns under Shahjahan. The Mughal relations with Persia and Central Asia were determined partly by internal political developments and their own mutual tripartite needs, and global and regional perspective and considerations.

7.2 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In the first decade of the sixteenth century, as the Timurid and the Turkoman states fell apart, two new states came into existence in West Asia and Central Asia (See Unit 1, Block 1). The borders of the two states (the Uzbeks and the Safavis) were contiguous except that the river Amu separated the two. Mutual rivalry and consistent warfare between the two were, therefore, inevitable. This was because their imperialistic adventures could only succeed at the expense of each other's territorial possessions. Although these new states once formed the provinces of a larger Empire and shared many common features, they fell and sprouted into two separate and distinct entities in early sixteenth century. They now differed from each other in their racial, lingual, sectarian, and to a great extent, even in their sociocultural formations and traditions. The upsurge of the Safavi 'warriors of faith' who organised their co-religionists as a political force, established a Persian state as an inadvertent rival to the Empire of the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Largescale migrations (voluntary or forced) resulted in the reshuffling of population — the **sunni** Muslims trickling from Shia Persia of the Safavis to the **sunni** Transoxiana of the Uzbeks and vice versa.

The three states in the region, namely, Central Asia (Transoxiana), Ottoman Turkey and the Mughals, were **sunni** Muslims and as such had no bone of contention to embitter their relations on religious basis. While the Uzbek Empire could, therefore, rely upon its other contemporary counterparts like the Ottomans, the Safavi Empire had no such reliable and permanent allies bound to them by the ties of much trumpeted 'common faith'. Apart from "sectarian differences" (so extensively exploited in the 16th century for political ends) Persia had several other points of discord with the above-mentioned states. Due to geographical proximity, the extension of the Uzbek Empire could be possible only at the expense of Persia which was geopolitically important, commercially prosperous and fertile. As the Ottoman Empire was keen to hold all the maritime trade routes, its interest in the flourishing Hormuz port, Red sea and Indian ocean was sure to bring it into conflict not only with the Persian but also at times with the Portuguese and the Russians. The Portuguese, particularly in the Indian Ocean, were a constant threat to the Ottomans who wanted to eliminate them. The occasional Portuguese-Persian friendship, therefore, was not surprising.

The commercial and strategic significance of Persia, and, its carpet and silk industries and the fertility of its soil always excited the cupidity of its neighbours. Thus, Persia had to face alternately and almost continually the ambitious and expansionist ventures of the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. Since the Czars of Russia had an eye on Transoxiana, they not only instigated the Qazaqs to invade Uzbek Khans but also invoked friendly relations with the Shi'ite Persia. Thus, Persia could get temporary support of the Portuguese, Russians and later on the English. This was because each of them had had their own vested interests and wanted to use Persia only as a counterpoise for their respective rivals.

With India, the Persians had a bone of contention — the territory of Qandahar—which led to a situation ranging from hostility to an occasional armed struggle. In spite of this, the Persians almost always responded to every call of help from the Mughals. For example, Shah Ismail had assisted Babur against the Uzbeks and Tahmasp also ensured the restoration of the lost Empire of Humayun. Shah Abbas maintained friendly relations with Akbar and Jahangir and keenly responded to the calls of help from the Deccan states of Golconda, Bijapur and even pleaded their case with Akbar.

The Uzbeks considered the Mughals as an important balancing power whose slightest tilt towards Persia could disturb the peace and progress in the region. The Ottomans had no animity with the Uzbeks and their common interests had brought them closer particularly over the Persian question. The Mughals, however, were not very favourably inclined towards the Ottomans. Thus, there existed **entente cordiale** between the two blocks of power — a near concord between the Ottomans and the Uzbeks and a conventional understanding between the Mughals and the Persians.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Highlight the significance of Kabul and Qandahar in the context of the North-Western frontier policy of the Mughals.

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2) List the geographical factors which determined the tripartite relationship of India, Persia and Transoxiana.

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3) What was the global situation which influenced the Mughal policy towards Central Asia and Persia?

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7.3 RELATIONS WITH THE UZBEGS

As discussed earlier in Unit 1, Babur was expelled from Central Asia and after much hardship in Kabul, he managed to conquer India in 1526. In the following Sub-sections we will discuss the Mughal relations with the Uzbegs.

7.3.1 Babur and Humayun

With the expulsion of Babur from Central Asia (See Unit 1), the traditional hostility between the Mughals and the Uzbegs was suspended for a while probably due to the fact that there was nothing to quarrel for as in the case of Persians over the issue of Qandahar. As embassy had been sent by Kuchum and other Uzbeg Sultans in 1528 to India to congratulate Babur upon his conquest. Notwithstanding this amicable gesture on the part of the Uzbegs, the Mughals never forgot the loss of their 'ancestral' kindom. Despite a persistent desire of the Mughals to conquer Transoxiana, it was probably apparent to them that the ambition itself was an unimaginative proposition. While the defence of the North-Western frontier had become a constant problem and even the conquest of Qandahar was still a dream, how could they plan to conquer Transoxiana and exercise an effective control over these remote "ancestral lands"? Nevertheless, Babur's exhortations to Humayun to reconquer some parts of Transoxiana and latter's unsuccessful or temporarily successful attempts continued. However, these were without any lasting effects as Mughal territorial possessions in India were yet to be consolidated and extended. In subsequent years, both the Uzbegs and the Mughals were faced with numerous internal problems and could not venture to expand. A new chapter begins in the history of Mughal-Uzbeg relations with the emergene of Abdullah Khan (1560-98) who tried to establish vital contacts with Akbar.

7.3.2 Akbar

The Mughal-Uzbeg relations under Akbar can be discussed in three phases

(1) 1572-1577, (2) 1583-1589 and (3) 1589-1598.

1. First Phase (1572-1577)

It was neither the expectation of some military assistance from Akbar nor a question of exploring the possibility of making an alliance against the Persian Empire which prompted Abdullah to send two embassies in 1572 and 1577. With his designs on territories like Badakhshan and Qandahar, it was only natural that Abdullah should strive to develop friendly relations with Akbar and thereby ward off the danger from this side. These two embassies were thus probing and appeasing missions sent for the following purposes.

- a) To ascertain Akbar's attitude towards Persia and Qandahar;
- b) To find out his general policy in relation to Badakhshan and, if possible,
- c) To mislead Akbar about his own designs on Badakhshan.

The dangers threatening Akbar at his North-Western frontiers e.g., rebellious attitude of Mirza Hakim (ruler of Kabul) and the latter's friendship with Shah Ismail II of Persia, the possibility of triple alliance between Abdullah, Mirza Hakim and Ismail II and Akbar's own inability to become involved in external affairs necessitated a friendly attitude towards Abdullah Khan. Hence, an embassy was sent in 1578 to Akbar. Akbar rejected the proposal for a joint attack on Persia. It seems that the reaction of Abdullah to this letter was not quite favourable since no further embassies were sent to Akbar for about a decade.

From 1577 onwards, a shift is noticeable in the respective positions of Abdullah Khan and Akbar which also brought about a change in their policies towards each other. By 1583, Abdullah had conquered all of Transoxiana, and had also eliminated all his kinsmen. When his father died in 1583, he became the **Khaqan** also and could now compete with his other counterparts in the Muslim world. Abdullah conquered Badakhshan in 1584 and the two Mirzas (Mirza Shah Rukh and Mirza Hakim) had to leave the territory. While Abdullah had improved his position and was now adopting a bolder and demanding attitude towards Akbar, the attitude of Akbar himself had become more conciliatory.

By this time the difficulties of Akbar had increased further. There were troubles in Kashmir and Gujarat, and also tribal commotions in Kabul, Sawad and Bajaur. The frontiers of Akbar had become even more insecure after the death of Mirza Hakim (1585). The Persian Empire had also become weak now under the unsuccessful reign of the incompetent and half-blind ruler Khudabanda from 1577 to 1588 and the Empire had been completely shattered by the invasions of the Ottomans as well as by internal intrigues of the nobles.

2. Second Phase (1583-1589)

After a lapse of several years, Abdullah sent another embassy to Akbar in 1586. Akbar responded by sending Hakim Humeim in 1586 as his envoy. It is difficult to explain why Abdullah chose to send two separate letters simultaneously. Nevertheless, neither of the two letters can be discarded as spurious since Akbar's reply contains answers to the questions raised separately in both the letters. It is clear from the contents of both the written and verbal messages from Abdullah that the purpose of this embassy was not to seek the cooperation of Akbar for an attack on Persia but to prevent him from sending any assistance to the Persian ruler. Abdullah explained that he had discontinued all correspondence with Akbar from 1578-1585 due to the reports that "Akbar had adopted the religion of metapsychosis and the behaviour of Jogis and had deviated from the religion of the Prophet". In his reply sent through Hakim Humeim Akbar called it "fabrications and accusations of certain disaffected persons".

3. Third Phase (1589-1598)

The despatch of Ahmad Ali Ataliq from Abdullah's court marks the beginning of the third phase in the Uzbek-Mughal relations. Through the letter sent with this envoy, Abdullah sought friendship and sent counsel for "exerting ourselves to strengthen the foundation of concord and make this Hindukush the boundary between us". Nevertheless, the formal acceptance of this offer of peace was confirmed by Akbar only in 1596 after the conquest of Qandahar. There were certain plausible reasons for this conciliatory attitude of Abdullah towards Akbar:

- i) Mirza Shah Rukh grandson of the ruler of Badakhshan and sons of Mirza Hakim came to India and Akbar himself remained at Kabul;

- ii) The situation in Persia started showing signs of improvement from 1589 onwards. Shah Abbas concluded a humiliating treaty with the Ottomans so as to be able to deal with the Uzbeks and sent a letter to Akbar seeking his assistance against the Uzbek ruler.
- iii) The strained relations with the Qazaqs had acquired new dimensions as the diplomatic relations of the Qazaqs with Russian Czars which began under the Timurids in the 15th century were very actively pursued between 1550-1599. Notwithstanding twenty-five embassies sent by Uzbek rulers and six return embassies (including Jenkinson's) to Khanates and Qazaqs, the relations were no better than what could be termed a diplomatic-economic offensive. After the conquest of Kazan, Astarakhan and Siberia by Russia, the main intermediary commercial centres and brisk trade between the two states established earlier by Timur had been destroyed. Similarly, the rivalry over the Qazaq region between the Czar and the Khan turned the balance in favour of the Qazaqs whose ruler Tawakkul sent his envoy Muhammad to Russia in 1594, who not only brought troops with fire-arms but also the assurance of full diplomatic protection.
- v) The rebellion of his own son Abdul Momin had further aggravated the problems of Abdullah Khan. In 1592, he sent *nishans* to Din Muhammad (nephew of Abdullah Khan), advising him to give up the idea of conquering Qandahar since an understanding had been reached with Akbar that the Hindukush and Qandahar should form the boundary between the two kingdoms.

In the changed circumstances, Akbar was feeling emboldened and was also aware of the aggressive designs of Abdullah Khan due to which he had personally come to Punjab and was planning to occupy Qandahar as well from 1589 onwards. Akbar entertained designs upon Qandahar and was finally successful in persuading the Mirzas to come to India. After the conquest of Qandahar, Akbar felt the need of reviving his contacts with Abdullah Khan. Since after the occupation of Qandahar, the Mughal forces had engaged themselves in an armed conflict with the Uzbeks over the possessions of Garmsir and Zamindawar, it had become all the more necessary



Badakhshan and Deccani ambassadors presenting tributes to Mughal Emperor Akbar.

to pacify Abdullah Khan. Moreover, in 1594, the Ottoman Sultan Murad III had sent a letter to Abdullah proposing a joint attack on the Persian territory. The fear of the Ottoman-Uzbek friendship might have also alarmed Akbar. No military alliance could take place at this time, as the Uzbek envoy was still on his way to the Ottoman court when Sultan Murad died in 1595.

The fear of the Uzbeks continued, particularly, in view of the fact that Abdullah Khan had opened correspondence with the new Ottoman ruler Mohammad and had even proposed a joint attack of Persia. After the occupation of Qandahar, Akbar realised the urgency of sending an embassy to Abdullah through Khwaja Ashraj Naqshbandi and showed his willingness to accept the Hindukush as the boundary between the two kingdoms. The envoy carrying these messages received audience with Abdullah in September 1597 at Qarshi. For the return embassy, Abdullah sent Mir Quresh with the Mughal envoy, but before they could reach India, the Uzbek ruler died in 1598. The Indian ambassadors returned, though Mir Quresh was not able to accompany them.

7.3.3 Jahangir

Jahangir's relations with Turan were predominantly determined by his relations with Persia. Although his love for Turan is visible in his autobiography, the conquest of Turan was not included in his plans. His relationship with the Uzbeks is best assessed in his own answer to an English traveller Thomas Coryat's request for a letter of recommendation in 1616 that:

There were no great amity betwixt the Tartarian princes and himself and his recommendations would not help the traveller at Samarqand.

In the first decade of his rule, Jahangir maintained no active political relations with the Uzbeks except for attempting to forestall any probable expansionist design on his frontiers. The early indifference of Jahangir towards the Uzbeks was expediently changed as soon as the question of Qandahar was raised by the Shah through his envoy Zainul Beg. In February 1621, Mir Baraka was sent on a "highly confidential mission" to Imam Quli, the Uzbek ruler who in turn sent an embassy to Nur Jahan Begam. Imam Quli's confidential message received by Jahangir with much enthusiasm as it contained criticism of the Persians and sought an alliance with the Mughals against Persians. Jahangir had been invited to join the holy war which was obligatory on Imam Quli not only to avenge the death of his own father but also to clear the road to Mecca which was under Persian control. Although Jahangir had himself ignored friendly overtures of the Ottoman Sultan of Turkey, the news of a possible Uzbek-Ottoman alliance was quite disturbing for him. After the capture of Baghdad in 1624, Sultan Murad had sent a favourable reply to Imam Quli's call for an alliance against Persia and had even exhorted him to take away Iran from the control of the Persians. The Ottoman Sultan had sent a similar letter to Jahangir aiming at a triple alliance against Persia. Although several letters were exchanged during 1625-26, no plans could materialise as Jahangir died in 1627.

7.3.4 Shah Jahan

With the accession of Shah Jahan, the Uzbek-Mughal relations took a new turn. The underlying objective of Shah Jahan's foreign policy was three fold:

- i) The recovery of Qandahar;
- ii) The reconquest of the "ancestral land"; and
- iii) The hegemony over Deccan.

For this purpose, he wanted to ensure friendship of both the contemporary powers of Persia and Transoxiana alternatively when Qandahar and Transoxiana were invaded. Out of sheer diplomacy, Shah Jahan ignored the invasion of Nazr Muhammad on Kabul and sent an embassy to Imam Quli at Bukhara. Through this exchange of embassies, solidarity against Persia was emphasized. Shah Jahan's embassy led by Safdar Khan arrived in April 1633. This visit was followed by another envoy, Mir Husain, in May 1637. Unlike Jahangir, Shah Jahan even wrote a letter to Murad IV in 1636 expressing his desire to reconquer Qandahar and proposing a

tripartite alliance of Mughals, Uzbegs and Ottomans against the Persians. Shah Jahan, however, managed to conquer Qandahar even without the assistance of any of these rulers.

After the capture of Qandahar in 1638, Shah Jahan's sole aim was to conquer his 'ancestral land' of Transoxiana. A large-scale Uzbek invasion of Maruchaq along Persian frontiers provided the much sought after Persian-Mughal entente in April-May 1640. A joint invasion of Balkh was proposed. However, the task was left unfulfilled. The correspondence between the Persians and the Mughals at this juncture shows that the latter succeeded in persuading the Persians to cooperate with them only to a limited extent as the letters from the Persian side smacked of their fear and circumspection. Equally apprehensive were the half-hearted allies — the Uzbegs — as they could sense the expansionist ambitions of Shah Jahan. An opportunity soon appeared in this regard for the Mughals.

The Uzbek Empire was passing through a phase of anarchy. Imam Quli, the popular ruler of the Uzbegs, lost his eyesight and abdicated in favour of his brother Nazr Muhammad in November 1641. The despotism and stubborn autocracy of Nazr Muhammad provoked opposition of the nobility which now started supporting his son Abdul Aziz. In desperation, Nazr Muhammad sought the assistance of Shah Jahan who immediately seized this opportunity to conquer Balkh on the pretext of saving it from the rebels. The Mughal forces successfully entered Balkh in early 1646. Nazr Muhammad was forced to seek shelter in Persia. Therefore, Shah Jahan sent two letters — one to Nazr Muhammad informing him about the conquest of Balkh without any apologies or explanations and another to Shah Abbas II of Persia giving him the news of occupation of Balkh which was a prelude to the conquest of Samarqand and Bukhara by the Mughals. The conquest was justified on grounds of extending necessary protection to the Saiyids of Balkh. It was also conveyed through this letter that Nazr Muhammad should be sent to Mecca and should not be allowed to return to Turan. The Persians themselves hesitated to support the cause of Nazr Muhammad as they were doubtful about his success. In fact, Shah Jahan had despatched three successive envoys to Persia for ensuring Persian neutrality in the Turanian affairs. However, this was not the only factor which determined the Persian attitude towards Nazr Muhammad. They were somewhat reluctant to help him not only because of his sullen temperament but also because of the traditional Uzbek-Persian hostility. The absence of capable leadership in Persia further thwarted such designs. Before the envoys reached Persia Nazr Muhammad had already left for Turan.

The conquest of Balkh and other territories proved easier for Shah Jahan than their occupation. The conquest at the same time was hazardous, too, due to a variety of factors. These included lack of adequate means of communication, severity of climate, staggering cost in men, money and material and the hostility of the local population. The evacuation was also difficult for the Mughals and was equally unpleasant for the Persians. Hence, an agreement had to be reached with Nazr Muhammad in October 1647.

In 1650, Shah Jahan sent an embassy to Abdul Aziz, the Uzbek ruler of Turan. But the political realignments taking place in Turan recently had made the situation difficult for Abdul Aziz. His brother Subhan Quli was being supported by his father-in-law Abul Ghazi — the then ruler of Khwarazm and a satellite of Persia. Shah Jahan often persuaded Abdul Aziz to invade Kabul. Shah Jahan's attempt to form an alliance with the Ottoman rulers Murad III and Muhammad IV had failed. The tenor of the letters sent by the Ottomans to Shah Jahan was distasteful to the latter and not very conducive to mutual understanding. The Mughal occupation of Balkh was also not liked by the Ottomans. Thus, the Mughal-Ottoman relations could not prosper.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What were the salient features of the Mughal-Uzbek relations in the third phase (1589-98)?

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2) What were the objectives of Shah Jahan's policy towards the Uzbegs?

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7.4 RELATIONS WITH PERSIA

After having familiarised you with the Mughal-Uzbek relations, we attempt to tell you about the nature of Mughal relations with Persia.

7.4.1 Babur and Humayun

Babur's relations with Shah Ismail have already been discussed in Unit 1 of Block 1. After the death of Shah Ismail (1524) and the accession of his son Shah Tahmasp (1524-76), Babur set a condolence-cum-congratulatory embassy to the new Shah under Khwajagi Asad who returned with a Persian emissary Sulaiman Aqa.

In the meantime, two Persian embassies under Hasan Chelebi and his younger brother successively reached the Mughal court. Babur also sent a return embassy though the purport of the letters and verbal messages exchanged are nowhere recorded.

After Babur's death (1530), Kamran, Humayun's brother, held his principality of Kabul, Qandahar and the territories extending up to Lahore firmly against the Persians. In 1534-35, the Persian prince Sam Mirza and his ambitious noble Aghziwar Khan were involved in a feud with Kamran and Khwaja Kalan (governor of Qandahar). However, Aghziwar Khan was killed in the encounter and Sam Mirza returned to Herat. This made Shah Tahmasp lead an expedition with a force of seven to eight thousands in 1537 against the Mughals. A contemporary historian blames the governor Khwaja Kalan for inept handling of the situation because it was he who surrendered the fort of Qandahar to the Shah leading to the fall of surrounding territories. When Shah Tahmasp was beset by turmoil in Azerbaijan and the tensions were mounting on his western frontiers Kamran easily reconquered Qandahar in 1537-38.

Humayun did not maintain an active contact with Persia upto 1543. It was only after his expulsion from India in mid 1543 that Humayun wrote a letter to Shah in January 1544. The letters exchanged between Humayun and Tahmasp and his officials are available and throw light on the different phases of Indo-Persian relations. Ahmad Sultan Shamlur, the Persian governor of Siestan, invited the royal fugitive and Humayun took shelter with fifty of his ill-equipped loyalists in Persia. He did so mainly at the advice of Bairam Khan. Tahmasp had himself suffered at the hands of his rebellious brothers. Hence, he appreciated Humayun's difficulties.

Humayun siezed Qandahar from its Persian commander Budagh Khan in September 1545. Although some misunderstanding had temporarily soured the relation between the two potentates leading to speculations that the demand for conversion to **shi'ism** was the cause of rupture, the cordiality was by and large maintained on the two sides. Shah Tahmasp sent a congratulatory embassy under Walad Beg Takkalur in 1546 for Humayun's victory over Kabul. In his letter sent through the returning envoy, Humayun sent invitation to Khwaja Abdus Samad, the famous Persian painter, and certain other talented men to join his service. Humayun recalled his envoy Khwaja Jalaluddin Mahmud (sent in 1548). Another envoy Qazi Shaikh Ali was sent in 1549 to condole the death of Bahram Mirza and to relate the rebellion of Kamran Mirza against Humayun. Shah Tahmasp's envoy Kamaluddin Ulugh Beg brought his message. Humayun was advised to refrain from showing clemency to Kamran and

military assistance, if and when required, was offered. The last recorded embassy from Tahmasp came in early summer of 1553 after which Humayun was once again preoccupied with recovery and consolidation of Indian domains.

7.4.2 Akbar

Humayun's death in 1556 reopened the issue of Qandahar. The seizure of Qandahar by the Shah had strained Persian relations. It was because of this that Tahmasp's embassy in 1562 under Said Beg Saavi to Akbar (to condole Humayun's death and to congratulate him on his accession) remained unanswered. Subsequently, Shah Tahmasp's two letters recommending Sultan Mahmud Bhakkari's candidature for entering the ranks of nobility were also ignored because, as recorded by Abul Fazl, merit and not recommendation determined the state appointments. Silence was maintained even in 1572 when Khudabanda (contender for Persian throne) sent Yar Ali Beg to Akbar with an eye on his support during the imminent war of succession. After the death of Tahmasp (May 1576), Shah Ismail II ascended the throne. He maintained friendly relations with Mirza Hakim. With the accession of Khudabanda in November 1577, Persia was plunged in turmoil. In 1583, Prince Abbas sent Murshid Tabrizi to Akbar to ensure consolidation of his position in his province of Khurasan. Akbar was unhappy with the Persians over the loss of Qandahar. He ignored, says Abul Fazl, "the petition of a rebel son against his father". In 1591, Shah Abbas again sent an embassy under Yadgar Rumlu as he faced a major threat from the Uzbeks. In November 1594, another envoy Ziauddin arrived, nevertheless, the silence suggestive of a cold and stiff relationship continued till March 1594-1595 when the Mughal forces finally entered Qandahar and conquered Zamindawar and Qarmsir.

In 1596, Akbar sent his first embassy to Shah Abbas through Khwaja Ashraf Naqshbandi. In the letter, he justified his conquest of Qandahar in view of the suspected loyalty of the Mirzas towards the Shah and explained away his complete silence owing to his inability to offer timely help to Shah because of the Uzbek embassies. In 1598, Shah Abbas sent an envoy Manuchihr Beg with the returning Indian envoy. Another envoy Mirza Ali Beg informed Akbar about the conquest of all the forts except Qandahar expecting that Akbar would return it. Relying upon his secure frontiers due to the death of Abdullah Khan in 1598, Akbar returned from Punjab to Agra. In 1602, Manuchihr Beg was dismissed by Akbar and Mughal envoy Masum Bhakkari was sent to the Shah. The Shah sent two letters one each to Akbar and Hameeda Banu begam. The last years of Akbar were clouded by Salim's (Jahangir) revolt. The commanders of Farah, Khurasan and Zamindawar seized the opportunity and captured Bust despite stiff resistance from Shah Beg, the Mughal governor of Qandahar. Prince Salim had maintained independent friendly relations with Shah Abbas exchanging gifts and filial pleasantries so long as Akbar was alive. Nevertheless, an organised Persian invasion on Qandahar region in the last days of Akbar's reign (22 October, 1605) followed by the advance of Persian forces in February 1606 for the conquest of Qandahar was the beginning of hostilities between the two rulers. Despite Khusrau's rebellion, the Persian invasion proved to be a fiasco.

7.4.3 Jahangir

The first Persian congratulatory and condulatory mission reached the Mughal court in March 1611. This mission returned in August 1613 accompanied by a Mughal envoy Khan Alam. Shah Abbas despatched several major and minor embassies. A number of 'purchasing missions' were also exchanged and 'toy trade' (of manuscripts, paintings, astrolabes and other such curiosities) continued. Sometime, the Shah took the trouble of supplying certain articles to Jahangir by ordering them from Venice and other parts of Europe. A mission under Sherley brothers arrived in June 1615. Though preceded and followed by a number of other embassies, the only embassy which openly dealt with the reopening of the Qandahar issue was led by Zainul Beg. However, Jahangir's consultations with his counsellors resulted in the rejection of the idea of surrender of Qandahar as it could have been treated as a sure sign of weakness. By winning over the trust of Jahangir and thus taking the small Mughal detachment unawares, Shah Abbas occupied Qandahar on 11 June 1622. Jahangir, in fact, had sensed the intrigues on his western frontiers but failed to save Qandahar

various reasons. The court politics, Jahangir's failing health, rupture of mutual relations of Nurjahan and Khurram, new polarisation of political forces after Ladli Begam's (Nurjahan's daughter from her first husband) marriage with Shahrayar (Jahangir's son) and Khurram's (Shahjahan) rebellion, were several factors which led to the loss of Qandahar.

Shah Abbas tried to assuage Jahangir's anger over the loss of Qandahar by sending two successive embassies. Another embassy arrived under Aqa Muhammad in October 1625. Jahangir's reply to this letter was marked by diplomatic silence over Qandahar affair with an expedient reaffirmation of old friendly ties. It was in October 1626 that four letters including one from Nur Jahan Begum were sent to Persia by Jahangir.

7.4.4 Shah Jahan

With the death of Shah Abbas in January 1629, after four decades of successful rule, Persia was plunged into uncertainties under its new and inexperienced ruler Shah Safi Mirza. Shah Jahan was eager to seize the first opportunity to regain Qandahar and had not only given a warm welcome to the rebel Persian Chief Sher Khan but had also proposed a joint attack on Persia (from India, Turan and Turkey under the Ottomans) in his letter to Murad IV. Shah Safi despatched Muhammad Ali Beg Isfahani in response to Shah Jahan's embassy sent under Mir Barka on 20 October 1629.

Shah Jahan's policy towards North-West frontier was a drain on the Mughal resources. The three abortive campaigns in Qandahar and the expeditions of Balkh and Badakhshan were equally harmful to the exchequer as well as to Mughal prestige. The embargo placed on trade due to hostility with Iran further resulted in losses of various kinds. To facilitate his conquest of Qandahar, Shah Jahan had unsuccessfully tried to lure the Persian governor Ali Mardan through promises of future favours to surrender the town but the offer met with refusal. Nevertheless, the defensive measures being undertaken by Ali Mardan to face the Mughals were misconstrued as his enemies instigated Shah Safi that Ali Mardan was intending to revolt. The Shah's insistence for personal appearance of Ali Mardan in his court and the rejection of all his pleas frightened the latter who chose his life instead of loyalty to the Shah and joined the Mughals.

On 26 February 1638, the Mughal contingent entered Qandahar and Qilij Khan was appointed as its governor. After the capture of Qandahar, Shah Jahan tried to placate Shah Safi and even offered to make an annual payment of a sum equal to the revenues of Qandahar. On another front Shah Safi made peace with the Ottomans in September 1639. Satisfied on this count he started preparations for a war with the Mughals. However, before the campaign could be undertaken, he died in 1642. At the accession of his successor Shah Abbas II — a lad of ten years — Shah Jahan promptly sent a congratulatory embassy as he had his eyes set on Turan. On the other hand, the Persians were keen to recover Qandahar. The recently concluded friendship with the Ottomans and the anarchy prevailing in Qandahar due to Mughal governor's inefficiency had further brightened the prospects for Persian victory. In spite of exhortations from Shah Jahan, the Mughal nobles were reluctant to march towards highlands in winter and the ageing Mughal governor Daulat Khan failed to defend Qandahar. Thus, the Shah easily occupied it in December 1648. In May 1649, Aurangzeb came with the Mughal Wazir Sa'dullah and occupied the places in the vicinity. Shah Wardi the Persian envoy who had come to the Mughal court in July 1649 to offer explanations for the conquest of Qandahar, Zamindawar and other territories, was given audience. But soon two more detachments were sent under Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb to besiege Qandahar. The difficult physical terrain and the disruption in the line of supply made their stay in a hostile region impossible. If Bernier is to be believed, even the Persian soldiers in the Mughal army fought half heartedly against their kinsmen. To add to the trouble, the marauding Uzbeks (despite heavy bribery) continued to invade Ghazni. Dara was not an efficient military leader. The fourth expedition to Qandahar by Shahjahan in 1656 was, therefore, abandoned. A contemporary historian rightly pointed out that the Qandahar campaign resulted in the massacre of thirty to forty thousand people and an expenditure of three krors and five lakhs of rupees.

Apart from Qandahar, the Deccan problem was another point of conflict between the Persians and the Mughals. The Deccan **shia** ruling dynasties (Qutubul Mulk of Golconda and Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar) were driven by the Mughal threat towards the Persians due to their “mutual sectarian affinity”. The diplomatic relations established by Akbar since 1573 with the Deccan states and subsequent conquests laid the basis for the Mughal Deccan relations. Under Jahangir, the Mughal offensive on Ahmadnagar and Bijapur led by Shahi Jahan and Khan Khanan compelled the Deccanis to request for Persian intercession. Envoys from Quli Qutubshah (1590-1611) and Malik Ambar — the ‘commander-in-chief’ of Nizamshah — invoked the sympathy of Shah Abbas who went to the extent of offering a slice of Persia in exchange for the safety of the Deccan states. By 1617, however, the Deccan-Mughal negotiations were completed not so much through the unappreciated intervention of Shah but through the Mughal policy of conciliation and force.

7.5 THE DECCAN STATES AND THE PERSO-MUGHAL DILEMMA

A decade of diplomatic silence in the Mughal-Persian relations was broken when the Deccan problem cropped up. The occupation of Ahmadnagar by the Mughals in 1633 had disheartened Golconda. In 1636, Shah Jahan sent an ultimatum to Qutub Shah and Adil Shah to read **khutba** in the **sunni** fashion and exclude the name of the Shah of Persia. The Golconda ruler succumbed to the pressure. In 1637, Shah Safi appointed Ahmad Beg Qurchi to proceed on a mission to Adil Shah. Apart from the regular exchange of embassies, Qutub Shah used the good offices of his nephew (then attached to the Persian court) and proposed safe flight and asylum in Persia if need arose. When Abdullah Qutub Shah sent Hakimulmulk in 1641 to the ruler of Persia, the Mughal authorities objected and forced a break in the exchange of letters. In 1650, a Persian envoy came on an English ship. Now the Shah, having conquered Qandahar, was in a better bargaining position. The Perso-Deccan contacts also increased due to immigrants from Persia holding high positions at the court. One such Muhammad Said Mir Jumla, a diamond merchant, maintained his connection with his homeland and corresponded, with Shah Abbas II, and such other. Abdullah Qutub became jealous of Mir Jumla who turned to the Mughal court for help and finally entered the Mughal service. Aurangzeb, the then viceroy of Deccan, invaded Golconda in early 1656 due to the detention of Mir Jumla’s son by Qutub Shah. Although the invasion was halted on Shah Jahan’s orders, much havoc had been created in Haidarabad and other parts of Golconda. While the Mughal pressure on Karnataka continued. Aurangzeb’s threatening attitude forced Qutub Shah to seek Persian intercession.

The Persian Shah was already maintaining diplomatic relations with Prince Murad Bakhsh and certain other princes and nobles. The declining health of Shah Jahan and the imminent war of succession encouraged the Shah to send an army to Murad who had declared himself an independent ruler on 20 November 1656 and had sent two missions to Shah Abbas II.

The Shah urged the Bijapur and Golconda rulers to sink their differences and jointly exploit the confusion and anarchy prevailing in the Mughal Empire. But the victory of Aurangzeb nipped these plans in the bud. The Shah now hesitated even to assist Dara.

Aurangzeb’s circumspection and experiences with past never allowed him to plunge into ambitious aggressive designs on his North-Western borders or on Qandahar. Nevertheless, the relations between the Mughals and the Persians continued to remain strained.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Give a short account of Humayun’s relations with Shah Tahmasp.

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2) How far do you agree with the view that Mughal relations with Persia revolved round the issue of Qandahar?

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3) Highlight the main stages in the Mughal-Persian relations during Jahangir's reign.

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7.6 AURANGZEB AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

Aurangzeb's hostility towards Deccani kingdoms was further accentuated due to secret negotiations between his brother and the Shah of Persia. Aurangzeb desired recognition from Shah through Zulfiqar Khan — the Persian governor — who immediately sent an envoy in 1660 presumably with the Shah's approval. The Shah's letter referred to ancient ties of friendship and the assistance rendered by the Shahs of Iran to the Mughals and explanations for the conquest of Qandahar. Although a warm welcome was given to the envoy, the tenor of the reply was displeasing. A return embassy was sent under Tarbiyat Khan — the governor of Multan — with a friendly letter treating the Qandahar affairs as a closed chapter. But the relations between the two rulers deteriorated and the impertinence of the envoy (who declined to accompany the Shah to Mazandaran) provided the Shah the opportunity to challenge the Mughal Emperor for a trial of strength. The letter sent by the Shah contained references to Aurangzeb's fratricide and his ineffective government resulting in disorder. The news of the Shah's intended march reached Aurangzeb before the arrival of Tarbiyat Khan. Preparations started for war and an embargo was placed on all kinds of trade with Persia. The governor of Surat was ordered to stop all ships sailing to Persia. But the news of the death of the Shah in 1666 averted the danger. Tarbiyat Khan, however, lost favour and was declined audience for a year because of listening tamely to the Shah's insulting remarks.

The next Persian ruler, Shah Sulaiman (1666-1694), was rather incompetent and his pious and righteous son and successor Sultan Hussain lacked diplomacy and political acumen. Aurangzeb was aware of the difficulties involved in the Qandahar campaign. He assisted the rebel Persian governor of Herat in 1688. He persuaded Prince Muazzam to go to Qandahar as he himself was preoccupied with problems of Jats, Sikhs, Marathas, and, the rebel son Akbar who had crowned himself in 1681. Although Aurangzeb was keen to secure help from the Shah, the latter desisted from it. The diplomatic relations with Abdul Aziz and his brother Subhan Quli of Turan were strengthened and their sectarian affinity was emphasized. The plans of raid on Bala Murghab in 1685 and the proposed anti-Persian alliance and a joint invasion of Iran were also contemplated. Almost simultaneously the Uzbek ruler Abdul Aziz sought friendship of Shah Abbas II. But the Perso-Uzbek alliance could not materialise as Turan was threatened by Urganj and Khwarazm and torn by internal and external dissensions, devoid of a good leadership. The Safavi Empire was also, during this period, in a state of slow but sure dissolution. It was in no position to extend its support to Deccan Kingdoms. By 1687, Aurangzeb managed to destroy the two remaining Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda and annexed their territories. As no threats existed from Central Asia and Iran, Aurangzeb's position was strengthened.

Thus, Aurangzeb left the Mughal Empire in a 'state of diplomatic isolation' except for an insignificant embassy from Bukhara in 1698. Although Aurangzeb never

dreamt of the recovery of Qandahar, the Mughal-Safavi relations deteriorated gradually and even an embassy from the Ottoman ruler remained unanswered.

Check Your Progress 4

1) What was the policy of Aurangzeb towards Persia?

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7.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have discussed Mughal relations with the ruling powers in Central Asia and Persia. The global situation as well as the geographical factors which shaped Mughal foreign policy have been highlighted. The relations of the various Mughal kings towards the Uzbegs of Central Asia and the Persians have been treated separately. In the ultimate analysis, this unit has tried to bring out the geo-political and commercial significance of the North-West frontier, control over which was the bone of contention between the Mughals, Safavis and Uzbegs.

7.8 KEY WORDS

Khaqan: chief of the Khans.

Metempsychosis: a phenomenon which explains the process of the passing of soul after death into another body

Nishans: an order issued by a Prince

Qazags: a tribe

7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 7.1. Your answer should include the following points: Kabul and Qandahar are referred to as twin gates of India leading to Central Asia and Persia; therefore, Akbar was interested in retaining Kabul and Qandahar as bulwarks against external invasions.
- 2) See Section 7.2. Your answer should include the following points: The borders of Uzbek and Safavi states were contiguous. Persia's commercial prosperity and fertility and the fact that it was geo-politically important brought it into conflict with the Uzbegs. Qandahar was the bone of contention between India and Persia due to geo-political, commercial and other reasons.
- 3) See Section 7.2. Your answer should include the following points: After the break-up of the Timurid and Turkoman states two important states came into existence in Central and West Asia, i.e. the Uzbegs and Safavis. They clashed with each other for gaining political and commercial ascendancy over the region.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-sec 7.3.2. Your answer should include the following points: In the third phase of the Uzbek-Mughal relations, the Uzbek ruler adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Mughal. The Mughals around this time conquered Qandahar and felt the need to oppose the Uzbegs.
- 2) See Sub-sec 7.3.4. Your answer should include the following points: The recovery of Qandahar, the reconquest of ancestral land and hegemony over Deccan, etc.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) See Section 7.4. Your answer should include the following points: After his expulsion from India Humayun took shelter in Persia and Shah Tahmasp had a sympathetic attitude towards him etc. Although control over Qandahar and sectarian differences were a bottleneck in their relationship, by and large they maintained cordial relations.
- 2) See Section 7.4 and Sub-sec.'s 7.4.2 and 7.4.3. Your answer should include the following points: Humayun conquered Qandahar. After Humayun's death Qandahar was lost to the Persians. Akbar regained it. Persian attempt to recover it failed.
- 3) See Sub-sec 7.4.3. Your answer should include the following points: Persian embassies were sent to the Mughal ruler. Qandahar was lost to Persia. Diplomatic silence maintained by Jahangir.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) See Section 7.6. Your answer should include the following points: Aurangzeb received friendly embassies from the Shah and the Qandahar issue was treated as a closed chapter. Later, relations between the two deteriorated. Inconsistency in the relations should be highlighted.



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SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

- 1) Rushbrooke Williams: **An Empire Builder of the 16th Century**
- 2) Mohibbul Hasan: **Babur: Founder of the Mughal Empire in India**
- 3) R.P. Tripathi: **Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire**
- 4) S.K. Banerjee: **Humayun Padshah**
- 5) Beni Prasad: **History of Jahangir**
- 6) B.P. Saksena: **History of Shahjahan of Delhi**
- 7) J.N. Sarkar: **History of Aurangzeb's reign – 4 Vols**
- 8) R.C. Verma: **Foreign Policy of the Mughals**
- 9) A.R. Khan: **Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar**
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