

One of the most important descriptions of the city of Vijayanagara in the 15th century comes from **Abdur Razzaq Samarqandi**, a diplomat who came visiting from Heart.

Travellers who visited the subcontinent:

1. **Al-Biruni** from Uzbekistan (11th century),
2. **Ibn Battuta** from Morocco (14th century)
3. **François Bernier** from France (17th century).

Al-Biruni's Kitab-ul-Hind,

- Written in Arabic, it is simple and lucid.
- It is a voluminous text, divided into 80 chapters on subjects such as religion and philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.
- **Al-Biruni** was familiar with translations and adaptations of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit texts into Arabic. However, **he was also critical** about the ways in which these texts were written, and clearly wanted to improve on them.
- In spite of his acceptance of the Brahmanical description of the caste system, Al-Biruni disapproved of the notion of pollution.
- The conception of social pollution, intrinsic to the caste system, was according to him, contrary to the laws of nature.
- Al-Biruni's description of the caste system was deeply influenced by his study of normative Sanskrit texts which laid down the rules governing the system from the point of view of the Brahmanas. However, in real life the system was not quite as rigid
- The categories defined as **antyaaja** (literally, born outside the system) were often expected to provide inexpensive labour to both peasants and zamindars. In other words, while they were often subjected to social oppression, they were included within economic networks.

Ibn Battuta's Rihla

- Ibn Battuta's book of travels, called Rihla, written in Arabic, provides extremely rich and interesting details about the social and cultural life in the subcontinent in the 14th century.
- Travelling overland through Central Asia, Ibn Battuta reached Sind in 1333. He had heard about Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and lured by his reputation as a generous patron of arts and letters, set off for Delhi. The Sultan was impressed by his scholarship, and appointed him the **qazi or judge of Delhi**.
- His account is often compared with that of **Marco Polo, who visited China (and also India)** from his home base in Venice in the late 13th century.
- He talked about coconut and paan (betel leaf).
- Ibn Battuta found cities in the subcontinent full of exciting opportunities for those who had the necessary drive, resources and skills.
- He found Indian agriculture very productive because of the fertility of the soil, which allowed farmers to cultivate two crops a year.
- The efficiency of the postal system allowed merchants to not only send information and remit credit across long distances, but also to dispatch goods required at short notice.
- In India, the postal system was of two kinds:
 - **ULUQ:** It was the horse-post, run by royal horses stationed at a distance of every 4 miles.
 - **DAWA:** It was the foot-post, having 3 stations per mile. It was quicker than the horse-post .

François Bernier

- In virtually every instance Bernier described what he saw in India as a bleak situation in comparison to developments in Europe.
- He came to the Mughal Empire in search of opportunities. He was in India for twelve years, from 1656 to 1668, and was closely associated with the Mughal court, as a physician to **Prince Dara Shukoh**, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan.
- Bernier's **Travels in the Mughal Empire** is marked by detailed observations, critical insights and reflection.
- His representation of India works on the model of **binary opposition**, where India is presented as the inverse of Europe.
- According to him, one of the fundamental differences between Mughal India and Europe was the lack of private property in land in the former
- Bernier confidently asserted: "There is no middle state in India." Only the richest and the poorest.

Merchants often had strong community or kin ties, and were organised into their own **caste-cum-occupational bodies**.

- In western India these groups were called **mahajans**, and their chief, the **sheth**.
- In urban centres such as Ahmedabad the mahajans were collectively represented by the chief of the merchant community who was called the **nagarsheth**.

Women, slave, sati and labourers

Slaves were openly sold in markets, like any other commodity, and were regularly exchanged as gifts. There was **considerable differentiation** among slaves. Some female slaves in the service of the Sultan were experts in music and dance. Female slaves were also employed by the Sultan **to keep a watch** on his nobles.

Slaves were generally used for domestic labour. The price of slaves, particularly female slaves required for domestic labour, was very low, and most families who could afford to do so kept at least one or two of them.

al-Biruni -> Marco Polo -> Ibn Battuta -> Abd al-Razzaq Samarqandi -> Tavernier -> Bernier

BHAKTI SUFI TRADITIONS

The integration of cults

Developments in religious beliefs and practices was due to two processes at work:

1. **Process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas to women and shudras:** This is exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of Puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse, explicitly meant to be accessible to women and Shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning.
2. **The Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices** of these and other social categories. In fact, many beliefs and practices were shaped through a continuous dialogue between what sociologists have described as "great" Sanskritic Puranic traditions and "little" traditions throughout the land.

Example of integration:

- At Puri, the principal deity was identified, by the twelfth century, as Jagannatha. The deity is represented in a very different way. In this instance, **a local deity**, whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal specialists, was recognised as a form of Vishnu. At the same time, Vishnu was visualised in a way that was very different from that in other parts of the country.
- Worship of the goddess, often simply in the form of a stone smeared with ochre, was evidently widespread.

Difference and conflict

Tantric practices were widespread in several parts of the subcontinent – they were **open to women and men**, and practitioners often **ignored differences of caste and class** within the ritual context.

Many of these ideas influenced Shaivism as well as Buddhism, especially in the eastern, northern and southern parts of the subcontinent.

- △ Those who valued the Vedic tradition often condemned practices that went beyond the closely regulated contact with the divine through the performance of sacrifices or precisely chanted mantras. On the other hand those engaged in Tantric practices frequently ignored the authority of the Vedas.
- △ Also, devotees often tended to project their chosen deity, either Vishnu or Shiva, as supreme.
- △ Relations with other traditions, such as Buddhism or Jainism, were also often fraught with tension if not open conflict.

Early traditions of Bhakti

- Poet-saints emerged as leaders around whom there developed a community of devotees.
- These traditions also accommodated and acknowledged women and the “lower castes”, categories considered ineligible for liberation within the orthodox Brahmanical framework
- Traditions of bhakti was remarkably diverse.

Bhakti traditions have been classified into two broad categories:

1. **Saguna (with attributes):** It focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi, all often conceptualised in anthropomorphic forms.
2. **Nirguna (without attributes):** worship of an abstract form of god.

The Alvars and Nayanars of Tamil Nadu

- **Alvars:** those who are immersed in devotion to **V**ishnu
- **Nayanars:** leaders who were devotees of Shiva

Compilations of devotional literature
By the tenth century the compositions of the 12 Alvars were compiled in an anthology known as the *Nalayira Divyaprabandham* (“Four Thousand Sacred Compositions”).
The poems of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar form the *Tevaram*, a collection that was compiled and classified in the tenth century on the basis of the music of the songs.

Devotion:

They led the earliest bhakti movements (c. sixth century), travelling from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods. During their travels they identified certain **shrines as abodes of their chosen deities**. Very often large temples were later built at these sacred places. These developed as centres of pilgrimage.

Reform motive:

These saints initiated a movement of protest **against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas** or at least attempted to reform the system. The bhaktas hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmanas to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered “untouchable”.

Equality with the Vedas:

It is claimed that their compositions were as important as the Vedas. For instance, one of the major anthologies of compositions by the Alvars, **the Nalayira Divyaprabandham**, was frequently described as the **Tamil Veda**.

Women devotees

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

Relations with the state:

- One of the major themes in Tamil bhakti hymns is the **poets' opposition to Buddhism and Jainism**. This is particularly marked in the compositions of the Nayanars. It was due to competition between members of other religious traditions for royal patronage.
- The visions of the Nayanars also inspired artists, sculptors and temple builders under the Cholas. Both Nayanars and Alvars were revered by the **Vellala peasants**.
- These kings also introduced the **singing of Tamil Shaiva hymns in the temples** under royal patronage, taking the initiative to collect and organise them into a text (Tevaram).
- Chola ruler **Parantaka I** had consecrated metal images of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar in a Shiva temple.

Virashaivas

The 12th century movement in Karnataka, led by a **Brahmana named Basavanna** who was initially a Jaina and a minister in the court of a Chalukya king.

His followers were known as **Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva)** or **Lingayats (wearers of the linga)**.

1. They worship Shiva in his manifestation as a linga, and men usually wear a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over the left shoulder.
2. Those who are revered include the **jangama or wandering monks**.
3. Lingayats believe that on death the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world. Therefore, they do not practise funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially bury their dead.
4. The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution" attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.
5. They also questioned the theory of rebirth.
6. The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows.

Vachana Literature: vachanas (literally, sayings) are composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement.

New religious developments

This period also witnessed two major developments. On the one hand, many ideas of the Tamil bhaktas (especially the Vaishnavas) were incorporated within the Sanskrit tradition, culminating in the composition of one of the best-known Puranas, the *Bhagavata Purana*. Second, we find the development of traditions of bhakti in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century.

Religious Ferment in North India

Evidence of anything resembling the compositions of the Alvars and Nayanars have not been found till the 14th century in north India. Reasons:

In north India this was the period when several **Rajput states emerged**. In most of these states Brahmanas occupied positions of importance, performing a range of secular and ritual functions. There seems to have been little or no attempt to challenge their position directly.

New religious leaders

1. Other religious leaders, who did not function within the orthodox Brahmanical framework, were gaining ground. These included the **Naths, Jogis and Siddhas**.
2. They questioned the authority of the Vedas, and expressed themselves in languages spoken by ordinary people.
3. However, in spite of their popularity these religious leaders were not in a position to win the support of the ruling elites.

Coming of the Turks

In **711 AD**, an Arab general named **Muhammad Qasim** conquered Sind, which became part of the Caliph's domain. Later (c. 13th century), the Turks and Afghans established the Delhi Sultanate.

The coming of the Turks undermined the power of many of the Rajput states and the Brahmanas who were associated with these kingdoms.

The coming of the sufis was a significant part of the changes in the realm of culture and religion.

Theoretically, Muslim rulers were to be guided by the ulama, who were expected to ensure that they ruled according to the **shari'a**. It is in this context that the category of the **zimmi, meaning protected** developed for people who followed revealed scriptures, such as the Jews and Christians, and lived under Muslim rulership. They paid a **tax called jizya** and gained the right to be protected by Muslims. In India this status was extended to Hindus as well.

Shari'a

The *shari'a* is the law governing the Muslim community. It is based on the Qur'an and the *hadis*, traditions of the Prophet including a record of his remembered words and deeds.

With the expansion of Islamic rule outside Arabia, in areas where customs and traditions were different, *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy) and *ijma* (consensus of the community) were recognised as two other sources of legislation. Thus, the *shari'a* evolved from the Qur'an, *hadis*, *qiyas* and *ijma*.

The popular practice of Islam

All those who adopted Islam accepted, in principle, the five "pillars" of the faith:

1. that there is one God, Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is his messenger (**shahada**);
2. offering prayers five times a day (**namaz/salat**);
3. giving alms (**zakat**);
4. fasting during the month of Ramzan (**sawm**); and
5. performing the pilgrimage to Mecca (**hajj**).

The Khojahs, a branch of the Ismailis (a Shi'a sect), developed new modes of communication, disseminating ideas derived from the Qur'an through indigenous literary genres. These included the **ginan**.

- GINANS are devotional hymns or poems recited by Shia Ismaili Muslims.
- These were sung in special ragas during daily prayer meetings.
- It was originally an oral rendition mostly by **Pirs**, first among whom to come to South Asia was Pir Satgurnoor in the 12th century.
- Ginans are composed in many languages especially Punjabi, Multani, Sindhi, Kachchi, Hindi and Gujarati. They are based on Verses from the Quran.

Mlechchha: general term for these migrant communities, indicating that they did not observe the norms of caste society and spoke languages that were not derived from Sanskrit.

Sufism

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

Khanqahs

By the 11th century, Sufism evolved into a well-developed movement with a body of literature on Quranic studies and sufi practices. Institutionally, the sufis began to organise communities around the **hospice or khanqah** controlled by a teaching master known as **shaikh, pir** or **murshid**.

He enrolled **disciples (murids)** and appointed a **successor (khalifa)**. He established rules for spiritual conduct and interaction between inmates as well as between laypersons and the master.

The khanqah was the centre of social life.

Silsilas

Sufi silsilas began to crystallise in different parts of the Islamic world around the 12th century.

The word silsila literally means a chain, signifying a continuous link between master and disciple, stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad. It was through this channel that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to devotees.

Special rituals of initiation were developed in which initiates took an oath of allegiance, wore a patched garment, and shaved their hair.

When the shaikh died, his **tomb-shrine (dargah)** became the centre of devotion for his followers. This encouraged the practice of **pilgrimage or ziyarat** to his grave, particularly on his death anniversary or urs (or marriage, signifying the union of his soul with God).

This was because people believed that in death saints were united with God, and were thus closer to Him than when living. People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus evolved the **cult of the shaikh revered as wali**.

Wali (plural auliya) was a sufi who claimed proximity to Allah, acquiring His Grace (barakat) to perform miracles (karamat).

Names of silsilas

Most sufi lineages were named after a founding figure. For example, the Qadiri order was named after Shaikh Abd'ul Qadir Jilani. However, some like the Chishti order, were named after their place of origin, in this case the town of Chisht in central Afghanistan.

Outside the khanqah

- Some mystics initiated movements based on a **radical interpretation** of sufi ideals.
- They scorned the khanqah and took to **mendicancy** and observed **celibacy**.
- They **ignored rituals** and observed **extreme forms of asceticism**.
- They were known by different names – Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc.

- Because of their deliberate defiance of the shari'a they were often referred to as **be-shari'a**, in contrast to the **ba-shari'a** sufis who complied with it.

Chishtis

Of the groups of sufis who migrated to India in the **late 12th century**, the Chishtis were the most influential. This was because they adapted successfully to the local environment and adopted several features of Indian devotional traditions.

A major feature of the Chishti tradition was **austerity**, including maintaining a distance from worldly power.

The Chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind. Rather than accumulate donations, they preferred to use these fully on immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities (such as sama').

Chishti devotionalism: ziyarat and qawwali

Pilgrimage, called ziyarat, to tombs of sufi saints is an occasion for seeking the sufi's spiritual grace (barakat).

The most revered shrine is that of **Khwaja Muinuddin, popularly known as "Gharib Nawaz"** (comforter of the poor).

The earliest textual references to **Khwaja Muinuddin's dargah** date to the 14th century. It was evidently popular because of the austerity and piety of its Shaikh, the greatness of his spiritual successors, and the patronage of royal visitors. Muhammad bin Tughlaq was the first Sultan to visit the shrine, but the earliest construction to house the tomb was funded in the late fifteenth century by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa.

Also part of ziyarat is the use of music and dance including mystical chants performed by specially trained musicians or **qawwals to evoke divine ecstasy**.

The sufis remember God either by reciting the **zitr (the Divine Names)** or evoking His Presence through **sama' or performance of mystical music**.

Sama' was integral to the Chishtis, and exemplified interaction with indigenous devotional traditions and local languages.

Languages and communication

1. In Delhi, those associated with the Chishti silsila conversed in Hindavi, the language of the people.
2. Baba Farid composed verses in the local language, which were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.
3. The **prem-akhyan (love story) Padmavat** composed by **Malik Muhammad Jayasi** revolved around the romance of Padmini and Ratansen, the king of Chittor. It was an example of **long poems or masnavis**.

Bijapur

- In Bijapur (Karnataka), short poems in **Dakhani (a variant of Urdu)** attributed to Chishti sufis who lived in this region during the 17th and 18th centuries were composed.
- These sung by women while performing household chores. Other compositions were in the form of **lurinama or lullabies** and **shadinama or wedding songs**.
- It is likely that the sufis of this region were inspired by the pre-existing **bhakti tradition of the Kannada vachanas of the Lingayats** and the **Marathi abhangs of the sants of Pandharpur**. It is through this medium that Islam gradually gained a place in the villages of the Deccan.

Sufis and the state

1. The sufis accepted **unsolicited** grants and donations from the political elites.
2. The Sultans in turn set up **charitable trusts (auqaf)** as endowments for hospices and granted **tax-free land (inam)**.
3. Kings did not simply need to demonstrate their association with sufis; they also required legitimation from them.
4. Kings often wanted their tombs to be in the vicinity of sufi shrines and hospices. Because, it was believed that the auliya could intercede with God in order to improve the material and spiritual conditions of ordinary human beings.

Sufis and the state

Other sufis such as the Suhrawardi under the Delhi Sultans and the Naqshbandi under the Mughals were also associated with the state. However, the modes of their association were not the same as those of the Chishtis. In some cases, sufis accepted courtly offices.

However, there were **instances of conflict** between the Sultans and the sufis. To assert their authority, both expected that certain rituals be performed such as prostration and kissing of the feet. Occasionally the sufi shaikh was addressed with high-sounding titles. For example, **the disciples of Nizamuddin Auliya addressed him as sultan-ul-mashaikh (literally, Sultan amongst shaikhs)**.

Kabir

Verses ascribed to Kabir have been compiled in three distinct but overlapping traditions:

1. The **Kabir Bijak** is preserved by the **Kabirpanth** (the sect of Kabir) in Varanasi and elsewhere in UP;
2. The **Kabir Granthavali** is associated with the **Dadupanth** in Rajasthan,
3. Many of his compositions are found in the **Adi Granth Sahib**.

All these manuscript compilations were made long after the death of Kabir.

Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects; and some are composed in the special language of nirguna poets, the **sant bhasha**. Others, known as **ulatbansi (upside-down sayings)**, are written in a form in which everyday meanings are inverted. Diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas are expressed in these poems.

Kabir drew on a range of traditions to describe the Ultimate Reality. These include:

- **Islam:** he described the Ultimate Reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir.
- **Vedantic traditions:** terms like alakh (the unseen), nirakar (formless), Brahman, Atman, etc.
- **Yogic traditions:** terms with mystical connotations such as shabda (sound) or shunya (emptiness) were drawn.

Baba Guru Nanak and the Sacred Word

He advocated a form of **nirguna bhakti**.

He firmly repudiated the external practices of the religions.

He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship, austerities and the scriptures of both Hindus and Muslims.

For him, the **Absolute or "rab"** had no gender or form.

He proposed a simple way to connect to the Divine by remembering and repeating the Divine Name, expressing his ideas through **hymns called "shabad" in Punjabi**. Baba Guru Nanak would sing these compositions in various ragas while his attendant **Mardana** played the **rabab**.

Baba Guru Nanak organised his followers into a community. He set up rules for congregational worship (sangat) involving collective recitation.

He appointed one of his disciples, **Angad**, to succeed him as the preceptor (guru), and this practice was followed for nearly 200 years.

The **fifth preceptor, Guru Arjan**, compiled Nanak's hymns along with those of his four successors and other religious poets like Baba Farid, Ravidas (also known as Raidas) and Kabir in the **Adi Granth Sahib**. These hymns, called "**gurbani**", are composed in various languages.

In the late 17th century, the tenth preceptor, **Guru Gobind Singh**, included the compositions of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and this scripture was called the **Guru Granth Sahib**.

Guru Gobind Singh also laid the foundation of the **Khalsa Panth (army of the pure)** and defined its five symbols:

1. uncut hair,
2. a dagger,
3. a pair of shorts,
4. a comb and
5. a steel bangle.

Under him the community got consolidated as a socio-religious and military force.

Mirabai

According to some traditions, her preceptor was Raidas, a leather worker. This would indicate her defiance of the norms of caste society.

Although Mirabai did not attract a sect or group of followers, she has been recognised as a source of inspiration for centuries. Her songs continue to be sung by women and men, especially those who are poor and considered "**low caste**" in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Sources used to construct history of Sufi Tradition:

1. **Treatises or manuals dealing with the sufi thought and practices.**
 - a. Eg. The Kashf-ul-Mahjub of Ali bin Usman Hujwiri.
 - b. It enables historians to see how traditions outside the subcontinent influenced sufi thought in India.
2. **Malfuzat or conversations of sufi saints.**
 - a. Eg. Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad compiled by Amir Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi, is a collection of conversations of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.
 - b. Malfuzats were compiled by different sufi silsilas with the permission of the shaikhs and had didactic purposes.
3. **Maktubat or written collections of letters:**
 - a. It includes letters written by sufi masters to their disciples and associates.
 - b. Eg. Maktubat-I Imam Rabbani of the 17th century Naqshbandi Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.
4. **Tazkiras or biographical accounts of the saints.**
 - a. The 14th century **Siyar-ul-Auliya** of Mir Khwurd Kirmani was the first sufi tazkira written in India. It dealt principally with the Chisti saints.
 - b. The authors of the tazkiras often sought to establish their spiritual genealogies, with many details being implausible.

Shankaradeva

In the late fifteenth century, Shankaradeva emerged as one of the leading proponents of Vaishnavism in Assam. His teachings, often known as the Bhagavati dharma because they were based on the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, focused on absolute surrender to the supreme deity, in this case Vishnu. He emphasised the need for *naam kirtan*, recitation of the names of the lord in *sat sanga* or congregations of pious devotees. He also encouraged the establishment of *satra* or monasteries for the transmission of spiritual knowledge, and *naam ghar* or prayer halls. Many of these institutions and practices continue to flourish in the region. His major compositions include the *Kirtana-ghosha*.

To what extent do you think the architecture of mosques in the subcontinent reflects a combination of universal ideals and local traditions?

The complex blend of a universal faith with local traditions is perhaps best exemplified in the architecture of mosques. Some architectural features of mosques are universal – such as their orientation towards Mecca, evident in the placement of the mihrab (prayer niche) and the minbar (pulpit). However, there are several features that show variations – such as roofs and building materials.

The **Shah Hamadan mosque in Srinagar**, on the banks of the Jhelum, is often regarded as the “jewel in the crown” of all the existing mosques of Kashmir. Built in 1395, it is one of the best examples of Kashmiri wooden architecture. It has a spire and beautifully carved eaves. It is decorated with papier mache.

In Bengal region, mosque have borrowed styles of the indigenous Bengal roof.

Ain-i Akbari

Authored by Akbar’s court historian Abu’l Fazl.

It records the arrangements made by the state to **ensure cultivation**, to enable the **collection of revenue** by the agencies of the state and to **regulate the relationship** between the state and rural magnates, the zamindars.

Its central purpose was to present a vision of Akbar’s empire where **social harmony** was provided by a strong ruling class. Any revolt or assertion of autonomous power against the Mughal state was predestined to fail.

- ♣ Raiyat / muzarian / kisan / asami = peasant
- ♣ Cultivation was based on the **principle of individual ownership**.
- ♣ Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners.

There were two kinds of peasants –

1. **Khud-kashta**: residents of the village in which they held their lands
2. **Pahi-kashta**: non-resident cultivators who belonged to some other village, but cultivated lands elsewhere on a contractual basis. People became pahi-kashta either out of choice – for example, when terms of revenue in a distant village were more favourable – or out of compulsion – for example, forced by economic distress after a famine.

Constant expansion of agriculture was due to:

1. The abundance of land,
2. Available labour
3. The mobility of peasants.

Jins-i kamil

1. It meant perfect crops. The Mughal state encouraged peasants to cultivate such crops as they brought in more revenue. Crops such as **cotton and sugarcane** were jins-i kamil par excellence.
2. During the 17th century several new crops from different parts of the world reached the Indian subcontinent. **Maize** was introduced into India via Africa and Spain and by the 17th century it was being listed as one of the major crops of western India. **Vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes and chillies** were introduced from the New World at this time, as were fruits like the **pineapple** and the **papaya**.

Village Community

Peasants held their lands in individual ownership. At the same time they belonged to a collective village community as far as many aspects of their social existence were concerned.

There were three constituents of this community –

1. the cultivators,
2. the panchayat, and
3. the village headman (**muqaddam or mandal**).

♣ **Majur** = menials or agricultural labourers

♣ **Halalkhoran** = menials (scavengers) in the Muslim communities who were housed outside the boundaries of the village;

♣ **Mallahzadas** = literally, sons of boatmen. In Bihar, they were comparable to slaves.

There was a direct correlation between caste, poverty and social status at the lower strata of society. Such correlations were not so marked at intermediate levels.

Panchayats:

1. The village panchayat was an assembly of elders, usually important people of the village with hereditary rights over their property.
2. In mixed-caste villages, the panchayat was usually a heterogeneous body.
3. The decisions made by these panchayats were binding on the members.
4. The panchayat was headed by a headman known as **muqaddam or mandal**.
 - He was chosen through the consensus of the village elders, and that this choice had to be ratified by the zamindar.
 - Headmen held office as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the village elders, failing which they could be dismissed by them.
 - His chief function was to supervise the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the **accountant or patwari** of the panchayat.
5. The panchayat derived its funds from **contributions made by individuals** to a common financial pool.
6. One important function of the panchayat was to ensure that **caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld**. In eastern India all marriages were held in the presence of the mandal.
7. Panchayats also had the authority to levy fines and inflict more serious forms of punishment like expulsion from the community.

Jati Panchayats:

1. In addition to the village panchayat each caste or jati in the village had its own jati panchayat.
2. These panchayats wielded considerable power in rural society.
3. In Rajasthan jati panchayats arbitrated **civil disputes** between members of different castes.
4. In most cases, except in matters of criminal justice, the state respected the decisions of jati panchayats.

♣ Miras or watan –hereditary land holding

Jajmani system

1. Also called the Yardman system
2. It was an Indian social caste system and its interaction between upper castes and lower castes.
3. It was an **economic system** where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received grain in return.

Amongst the landed gentry, women had the right to inherit property.

Jangli

1. Being jangli did not mean an absence of civilization.
2. It described those whose livelihood came from the gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture.

Pargana was an administrative subdivision of a Mughal province.

Peshkash was a form of tribute collected by the Mughal state.

In the Mughal political ideology, **hunting symbolised the overwhelming concern of the state** to ensure justice to all its subjects, rich and poor. Regular hunting expeditions enabled the emperor to travel across the extensive territories of his empire and personally attend to the grievances of its inhabitants.

Zamindars

They enjoyed certain social and economic privileges by virtue of their superior status in rural society.

They performed certain services (khidmat) for the state.

- They could often **collect revenue** on behalf of the state, a service for which they were compensated financially.
- Control over **military resources** was another source of power.

Most zamindars had **fortresses (qilachas)** as well as an **armed contingent** comprising units of cavalry, artillery and infantry

Milkiyat = meaning the extensive personal property (lands) held by the zamindars. Milkiyat lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars, often with the help of hired or servile labour. The zamindars could sell, bequeath or mortgage these lands at will.

Although zamindars were an exploitative class, their relationship with the peasantry had an element of reciprocity, paternalism and patronage. Evidences:

1. The bhakti saints, who eloquently condemned caste-based and other forms of oppression, did not portray the zamindars and the moneylenders as exploiters or oppressors of the peasantry. Usually it was the revenue official of the state who was the object of their ire.
2. In a large number of agrarian uprisings which erupted in north India in the 17th century, zamindars often received the support of the peasantry in their struggle against the state.

The relatively “lower” castes could enter the rank of zamindars because zamindaris were bought and sold quite briskly in this period.

Land Revenue System under the Mughals:

The office (daftar) of the diwan was responsible for supervising the fiscal system of the empire.

The Mughal state tried to first acquire specific information about the extent of the agricultural lands in the empire and what these lands produced before fixing the burden of taxes on people.

The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages – first, **assessment** and then **actual collection**.

The mansabdari system

The Mughal administrative system had at its apex a military-cum-bureaucratic apparatus (*mansabdari*) which was responsible for looking after the civil and military affairs of the state. Some *mansabdars* were paid in cash (*naqdi*), while the majority of them were paid through assignments of revenue (*jagirs*) in different regions of the empire. They were transferred periodically. See also Chapter 9.

The Emperor Akbar in his profound sagacity classified the lands and fixed a different revenue to be paid by each. *Polaj* is land which is annually cultivated for each crop in succession and is never allowed to lie fallow. *Parauti* is land left out of cultivation for a time that it may recover its strength. *Chachar* is land that has lain fallow for three or four years. *Banjar* is land uncultivated for five years and more. Of the first two kinds of land, there are three classes, good, middling, and bad. They add together the produce of each sort, and the third of this represents the medium produce, one-third part of which is exacted as the Royal dues.

- ♣ The **jama** was the amount assessed, as opposed to **hasil**, the amount collected.
- ♣ **Amil-guzar** was the revenue collector.
- ♣ **Amin** was an official responsible for ensuring that imperial regulations were carried out in the provinces.
- ♣ **Sanad** = imperial order.
- ♣ Revenue was to be paid in either cash or in kind.
- ♣ Both cultivated and cultivable lands were measured in each province.

Tribes:

1. Tribes also had their chieftains. Some were zamindars and maintained armies.
2. In Assam, the Ahom kings had their **paiks**, people who were obliged to render military service in exchange for land. The capture of wild elephants was declared a royal monopoly by the Ahom kings.
3. War was a common occurrence.
4. Sufi saints (pirs) played a major role in the slow acceptance of Islam among agricultural communities emerging in newly colonised places.

The Ain-i Akbari

It was completed in 1598, the 42nd regnal year of the emperor, after having gone through five revisions.

It was part of a larger project of history writing commissioned by Akbar - known as the **Akbar Nama**, which comprised three books. The first two provided a historical narrative. The Ain-i Akbari, the third book, was organised as a compendium of **imperial regulations and a gazetteer** of the empire.

The Ain-i Akbari is made up of **five books (daftars)**, of which the first three books describe the administration.

1. **Manzil-abadi** concerns the imperial household and its maintenance.
2. **Sipah-abadi** covers the military and civil administration and the establishment of servants. It includes notices and short biographical sketches of imperial officials (mansabdars), learned men, poets and artists.
3. **Mulk-abadi** is the one which deals with the fiscal side of the empire and provides rich quantitative information on revenue rates, followed by the "**Account of the Twelve Provinces**". This section has detailed statistical information, which includes the geographic, topographic and economic profile of all subas and their administrative and fiscal divisions (sarkars, parganas and mahals), total measured area, and assessed revenue (jama).

After setting out details at the suba level, the Ain goes on to give a detailed picture of the sarkars below the suba. This it does in the form of tables, which have eight columns giving the following information:

- (1) parganat/mahal;
- (2) qila (forts);
- (3) arazi and zamin-i paimuda (measured area);
- (4) naqdi, revenue assessed in cash;
- (5) suyurghal, grants of revenue in charity;
- (6) zamindars;
- (7) columns 7 and 8 contain details of the castes of these zamindars, and their troops including their horsemen (**sawar**), foot-soldiers (**piyada**) and elephants (**fil**).

The mulk-abadi gives a fascinating, detailed and highly complex **view of agrarian society** in northern India.

4. The fourth and fifth books (daftars) deal with the religious, literary and cultural traditions of the people of India and also contain a collection of Akbar's "auspicious sayings".

Mughal Rulers

The rulers of the Mughal Empire saw themselves as **appointed by Divine Will** to rule over a large and heterogeneous populace.

Mughals referred to themselves as **Timurids**, as descendants of the Turkish ruler Timur on the paternal side. Babur, the first Mughal ruler, was related to Ghengiz Khan from his mother's side.

The Mughals were Chaghtai Turks by origin, tracing descent from the eldest son of Ghengiz Khan.

Language:

1. Mughal court chronicles were written in **Persian**. However, **Turkish** was the mother tongue of the Mughals.
2. Babur wrote poetry and his memoirs in Turkish.
3. Akbar consciously set out to make Persian the leading language of the Mughal court. Persian was elevated to a language of empire, conferring power and prestige on those who had a command of it. It was spoken by the king, the royal household and the elite at court. Further, it became the language of administration at all levels so that accountants, clerks and other functionaries also learnt it.
4. Persian vocabulary and idiom heavily influenced the language of official records in Rajasthani and Marathi and even Tamil.
5. A new language, **Urdu**, sprang from the interaction of Persian with Hindavi.
6. The Mahabharata was translated as the **Razmnama (Book of Wars)**. Ramayana was also translated into Persian.

Manuscripts

1. **All books in Mughal India were manuscripts, that is, they were handwritten.**
2. The centre of manuscript production was the imperial **kitabkhana**.
3. Although kitabkhana can be translated as library, it was a **scriptorium**, that is, a place where the emperor's collection of manuscripts was kept and new manuscripts were produced.

Calligraphy

1. It was practised using different styles.
2. Akbar's favourite was the **nastaliq**. It was a fluid style with long horizontal strokes.
3. It is written using a piece of trimmed reed with a tip of five to 10 mm called **qalam**, dipped in carbon ink (**siyahi**). The nib of the qalam is usually split in the middle to facilitate the absorption of ink.
4. **Muhammad Husayn of Kashmir** (c.1575-1605) was one of the finest calligraphers at Akbar's court. He was honoured with the title "**zarrin qalam**" (**golden pen**) in recognition of the perfectly proportioned curvature of his letters.



Akbarnama and Badshahnama

1. Akbar Nama and Badshah Nama (The Chronicle of a King) are the most well-known illustrated Mughal chronicles
2. Each manuscript contained an average of 150 full- or double-page paintings.
3. A pupil of Abu'l Fazl, **Abdul Hamid Lahori** is known as the author of the Badshah Nama. Emperor Shah Jahan, hearing of his talents, commissioned him to write a history of his reign modelled on the Akbar Nama. The Badshah Nama is this official history in three volumes (daftars) of ten lunar years each.

Lahori wrote the first and second daftars comprising the first two decades of the emperor's rule (1627-47); these volumes were later **revised by Sadullah Khan, Shah Jahan's wazir**.

4. Infirmities of old age prevented Lahori from proceeding with the third decade which was then chronicled by the **historian Waris**.

During the colonial period, British administrators began to study Indian history and to create an archive of knowledge about the subcontinent to help them better understand the people and the cultures of the empire they sought to rule. The **Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded by Sir William Jones in 1784**, undertook the editing, printing and translation of many Indian manuscripts.

In the early 20th century the Akbar Nama was translated into English by **Henry Beveridge**.

Mughal Kingdom

- ♣ Abu'l Fazl placed Mughal kingship as the highest station in the **hierarchy** of objects receiving light emanating from God (**farr-i izadi**).
- ♣ Here he was inspired by a famous Iranian sufi, Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (d. 1191) who first developed this idea.
- ♣ According to this idea, there was a hierarchy in which the Divine Light was transmitted to the king who then became the source of spiritual guidance for his subjects.

Sulh-i kul (absolute peace)

- ♣ Abu'l Fazl describes the ideal of sulh-i kul (absolute peace) as the cornerstone of enlightened rule.
- ♣ In sulh-i kul, **all religions and schools of thought had freedom of expression but on condition that they did not undermine the authority of the state or fight among themselves**.

The ideal of sulh-i kul was implemented through state policies –

1. The nobility under the Mughals was a composite one comprising Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Rajputs, Deccanis – all of whom were given positions and awards purely on the basis of their service and loyalty to the king.
2. Akbar abolished the tax on pilgrimage in 1563 and jizya in 1564 as the two were based on religious discrimination.
3. Instructions were sent to officers of the empire to follow the precept of sulh-i kul in administration.

Just sovereignty as social contract

Abu'l Fazl defined sovereignty as a social contract: the emperor protects the four essences of his subjects, namely,

1. life (jan),
2. property (mal),
3. honour (namus) and
4. faith (din),

In return, he demands obedience and a share of resources.

Only just sovereigns were thought to be able to honour the contract with power and Divine guidance.

Justice

The idea of justice became the highest virtue of Mughal monarchy. One of the favourite symbols used by artists was the **motif of the lion and the lamb (or goat)** peacefully nestling next to each other. This was meant to signify a realm where both the strong and the weak could exist in harmony.

Mughal Court and Etiquettes:

In Mughal courts, status was determined by **spatial proximity to the king**. The place accorded to a courtier by the ruler was a sign of his importance in the eyes of the emperor.

- ♣ **Kornish** was a form of ceremonial salutation in which the courtier placed the **palm of his right hand against his forehead and bent his head**. It suggested that the subject placed his head – the seat of the senses and the mind – into the hand of humility, presenting it to the royal assembly.

The **forms of salutation** to the ruler indicated the person's status in the hierarchy: deeper prostration represented higher status. The highest form of submission was **sijda or complete prostration**. Under Shah Jahan these rituals were replaced with **chahar taslim** and **zaminbos (kissing the ground)**.

- ♣ **Chahar taslim** is a mode of salutation which begins with placing the back of the right hand on the ground, and raising it gently till the person stands erect, when he puts the palm of his hand upon the crown of his head. It is done four (chahar) times.
- ♣ **Taslim** literally means submission.

An ambassador presented to the Mughal emperor was expected to offer an acceptable form of greeting –

- by bowing deeply
- kissing the ground,
- to follow the Persian custom of clasping one's hands in front of the chest.

Thomas Roe, the English envoy of **James I**, simply bowed before Jahangir according to European custom, and further shocked the court by demanding a chair.

- ♣ **Jharoka darshan** was introduced by Akbar with the objective of broadening the acceptance of the imperial authority as part of popular faith.
- ♣ **Khilat** = the robe of honour; a garment once worn by the emperor and imbued with his benediction.
- ♣ **Sarapa** = head to foot; consisted of a tunic, a turban and a sash (**patka**).
- ♣ **Nazr** = small sum of money offered to the emperor
- ♣ **Peshkash** = large amount offered to the emperor

The Mughal kings celebrated three major festivals a year:

1. the **solar and lunar birthdays** of the monarch and
2. **Nauroz**, the Iranian New Year on the vernal equinox.

Mughal Household

1. Polygamy was practised widely in the Indian subcontinent, especially among the ruling groups.
2. In the Mughal household, a distinction was maintained between wives who came from royal families (**begams**), and other wives (**aghas**) who were not of noble birth.
3. The begams, married after receiving huge amounts of cash and valuables as dower (mahr), naturally received a higher status and greater attention from their husbands than did aghas.
4. The **concubines (aghacha or the lesser agha)** occupied the lowest position in the hierarchy of females intimately related to royalty.
5. They all received **monthly allowances** in cash, supplemented with gifts according to their status.
6. The lineage-based family structure was not entirely static. The agha and the aghacha could rise to the position of a begam depending on the husband's will, and provided that he did not already have four wives.
7. Apart from wives, numerous male and female slaves populated the Mughal household.
8. After Nur Jahan, Mughal queens and princesses began to control significant financial resources. **Nur Jahan was the only Mughal Empress to have coinage struck in her name.**

The bazaar of Chandni Chowk, the throbbing centre of Shahjahanabad, was designed by Jahanara.

Humayun Nama

1. Glimpse into the domestic world of the Mughals
2. Written by Gulbadan Begum - daughter of Babur, Humayun's sister and Akbar's aunt.
3. Gulbadan could write fluently in Turkish and Persian.
4. When Akbar commissioned Abu'l Fazl to write a history of his reign, he requested his aunt to record her memoirs of earlier times under Babur and Humayun, for Abu'l Fazl to draw upon
5. Humayu Nama was no eulogy of the Mughal emperors. Rather Gulbadan described in great detail the conflicts and tensions among the princes and kings and the important mediating role elderly women of the family played in resolving some of these conflicts.

Administration

1. Two ruling groups of Indian origin entered the imperial service from 1560 onwards: the **Rajputs** and the **Indian Muslims (Shaikhzadas)**. The first to join was a Rajput chief, Raja Bharmal Kachhwaha of Amber
2. **Iranians** gained high offices under Jahangir, whose politically influential queen, Nur Jahan (d. 1645), was an Iranian.
3. Aurangzeb appointed **Rajputs** to high positions, and under him the **Marathas** accounted for a sizeable number within the body of officers.

All holders of government offices held ranks (mansabs) comprising two numerical designations:

1. **zat** which was an indicator of position in the imperial hierarchy and the salary of the official (mansabdar), and
2. **sawar** which indicated the number of horsemen he was required to maintain in service.

In the 17th century, mansabdars of 1,000 zat or above were ranked as nobles (**umara**, plural of **amir**).

- ♣ Akbar, who designed the mansab system, also established spiritual relationships with a select band of his nobility by treating them as his disciples (murid).

Process of recruitment

1. A person wishing to join the service petitioned through a noble, who presented a **tajwiz** to the emperor.
2. If the applicant was found suitable a **mansab** was granted to him.
3. The **mir bakhshi (paymaster general)** stood in open court on the right of the emperor and presented all candidates for appointment or promotion, while his office prepared orders bearing his seal and signature as well as those of the emperor.

There were two other important ministers at the centre:

1. **Diwan-i ala (finance minister)** and
2. **Sadr-us sudur (minister of grants or madad-i maash, and in charge of appointing local judges or qazis).**

The three ministers occasionally came together as an advisory body, but were independent of each other.

Nobles stationed at the court (**tainat-i rakab**) were a reserve force to be deputed to a province or military campaign.

Information Keeping

The **mir bakhshi** supervised the corps of court writers (**waqia nawis**) who recorded all applications and documents presented to the court, and all imperial orders (farman).

In addition, **agents (wakil)** of nobles and regional rulers recorded the entire proceedings of the court under the heading “News from the Exalted Court” (**Akhbarat-i Darbar-i Mualla**) with the date and time of the court session (pahar).

The akhbarat contained all kinds of information such as attendance at the court, grant of offices and titles, diplomatic missions, presents received, or the enquiries made by the emperor about the health of an officer.

Imperial Post: Round-the-clock relays of foot-runners (**qasid or pathmar**) carried papers rolled up in bamboo containers.

Provincial Administration

The division of functions established at the centre was replicated in the provinces (subas) where the ministers had their corresponding subordinates (diwan, bakhshi and sadr).

The **head** of the provincial administration was the **governor (subadar)** who reported directly to the emperor.

The sarkars, into which each suba was divided, often overlapped with the jurisdiction of **faujdar (commandants)** who were deployed with contingents of heavy cavalry and musketeers in districts.

At the level of the **pargana (sub-district)** local administration was looked after by three semi-hereditary officers:

1. the **qanungo** (keeper of revenue records),
2. the **chaudhuri** (in charge of revenue collection) and
3. the **qazi**.

Persian was made the language of administration throughout, but **local languages** were used for village accounts.

Religion

Akbar moved away from the orthodox Islamic ways of understanding religions towards a self-conceived eclectic form of divine worship focused on light and the sun.

Akbar and Abu'l Fazl created a **philosophy of light** and used it to shape the image of the king and ideology of the state. In this, a divinely inspired individual has supreme sovereignty over his people and complete control over his enemies.

Chronicles and their authors:

Babur's memoirs	By Babur in Turkish; translated into Persian as Babur Nama
Humayun Nama	Gulbadan Begum
Akbar Nama	Abul Fazl
Jahangir Nama	Jahangir
Badshah Nama	Lahori composed the first two daftars; Muhammad Waris completed it.
Alamgir Nama	a history of the first ten years of Aurangzeb's reign compiled by Muhammad Kazim