



drishti

Distance Learning Programme (DLP)

MEDIEVAL INDIA

(UPSC PRELIMS)



drishti

MEDIEVAL INDIA

641, First Floor, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi-110009

Contact No.: 011-47532596, 8448485520

Web : www.drishtias.com

E-mail : dlpsupport@groupdrishti.in

For DLP, Current Affairs Magazine & Test Series related regular updates, follow us on

 www.facebook.com/drishtithevisionfoundation

 www.twitter.com/drishtias

CONTENTS

1. Early Medieval Empires	1-11
2. Age of Conflict (1000-1200 CE)	12-20
3. Delhi Sultanate-I	21-28
4. Delhi Sultanate-II	29-52
5. Mughal Empire-I	53-61
6. Rise of Afghans – The Surs	62-68
7. Mughal Empire-II	69-79
8. Mughal Empire-III and the Rise of Marathas	80-87
9. Administration under the Mughals	88-100
10. Vijayanagar and Bahmani Kingdoms	101-112
Previous Years' UPSC Questions (Solved)	113-119

6

CHAPTER

RISE OF AFGHANS – THE SURS

Afghan Theory of Kingship

The Afghan theory of kingship differed from that of the Turks. The Turkish theory of kingship was similar to the theory of Christian and Hindu monarchs. The Turkish Sultans, right from Sultan Illtutmish to Sayyid rulers, believed in absolute monarchy and some of them claimed even divinity.

They claimed that the Sultan was superior to all in the state and all his nobles, governors, supporters, etc. were his subordinates. Therefore, none could claim equality with the Sultan and no one had the right to share in the administration of the state but with the consent or orders of the Sultan.

The Afghans, on the contrary, regarded the Sultan as one among themselves or only first among equals. They did not believe in the divinity of the Sultan and therefore, claimed power and respect in matters of the state. The Afghan theory of kingship, thus, believed in the equality of nobles with the Sultan and thus, more or less, supported an oligarchy.

The primary features of this theory were rested upon democratic means of electing head – Sultan. Theory of succession was not there and the Sultan was elected by the nobility. Every Afghan noble claimed to be the commander of his forces and did not accept his forces as a part of the army of the Sultan. Nobles kept their own army and enjoy jagirs and privileges in equality with the Sultan. In fact, Sultan was dependent on nobles for men and resources.

Sher Shah Suri

Early Life and Rise to Power

Farid, who later came to be called Sher Khan and subsequently Sher Shah, was the son of a Jagirdar under the kingdom of Jaunpur. His father Hasan Khan Sur held the jagir of Sasaram in Bihar during the rule of Lodis. Sher Shah helped his father in the administration of his jagir. Later he developed differences with his father and left him. He served under Afghan nobles.

After the death of his father in 1524 he was given his father's jagir by Ibrahim Lodi. He had to enter into conflict with his family to take possession of the jagir. He very effectively managed the jagir of his father. He also acquired great military and administrative skills. His capabilities made him the leader of Afghans.

He emerged as the most powerful military commander in the eastern provinces. Sher Shah continued consolidating his position in Bihar. He had to enter into a number of conflicts with prominent Afghan nobles in Bihar and ruler of Bengal.

Sher Shah wished to establish himself as the undisputed Afghan leader. He invaded the Bengal and defeated Mahmud Shah, the independent ruler of Bengal in the battle of Surajgarh. From Bengal, he extracted huge wealth which helped him to raise a bigger army. He finally succeeded in establishing himself as the most powerful Afghan chief in Eastern India.



Conflict with Humayun

Humayun was quite suspicious of Sher Shah's ambitions, but underestimated his extent and capability. He asked his governor of Jaunpur, Hindu Beg to check the movements of Sher Shah. In the meantime Sher Shah captured Gaur (1538) the capital of Bengal.

While Humayun was moving towards Bengal Sher Shah took a strategic move and control the route of Agra making communication difficult for Humayun. On the other hand, Hindal Mirza, brother of Humayun, who was supposed to provide supplies for his army, declared his independence.

Now, Humayun decided to return to Chunar. When he reached Chausa (1539), he encamped on the western side of the river Karmnasha. Sher Shah attacked Humayun at the bank of the river and defeated him. Sher Shah declared himself as an independent king. Humayun could escape, but most of his army was destroyed.

With difficulty he could reach Agra. His brother Kamran moved out of Agra towards Lahore leaving Humayun with small force. Sher Shah now moved towards Agra. Humayun also came forward with his army and the armies of the two clashed at Kannauj. Humayun was defeated badly in the battle of Kannauj (1540).

The Extent of Empire

He defeated and conquered Malwa in 1542 which was followed by Chanderi. In Rajasthan he led campaigns against Marwar, Ranthambhore, Nagor, Ajmer, Merta Jodhpur and Bikaner. He defeated rebellious Afghans in Bengal.

By 1545 he had established himself as the supreme ruler from Sindh and Punjab to whole of Rajputana in the west and Bengal in the east. Then he turned towards Bundelkhand. Here while besieging the fort of Kalinjar he died in 1545 in an accidental blast of gunpowder.

Administration of Sher Shah Suri

As we know with the replacement of Lodi's the first Afghan rule ended in 1526. After a gap of 14 years, it was established again by Sher Shah Suri in 1540. Thus, it is also called in history as the second Afghan empire.

Sher Shah Suri, also known as Sher Khan or the Lion King, was one of the greatest administrators of medieval Indian history. Sher Shah Suri's administration was based on old institutions, but with a new spirit and this task attained too much success that he almost transformed the medieval Indian administration and made it serve the interest of the people.

Central Administration

Like all rulers of the Sultanate of Delhi, Sher Shah was a despot and was at the top of the central administration. But unlike his predecessors, he was a benevolent despot, exercising power for the benefit of the people. Still, all the strings of policy and civil and military powers were concentrated in his hands. His ministers were in charge of the daily routine work of administration. Sher Shah four ministers after the model of the Sultanate period. They were:

- Diwan-i-Wazarat
- Diwan-i-Ariz
- Diwan-i-Risalat
- Diwan-i-Insha

- Besides them there were several minor officers, two of whom (the Chief Qazi and the head of news department) enjoyed fairly high rank.
- The head of the Diwan-i-Wazarat was called the Wazir. He was the Minister of Revenue and Finance Administration and was, therefore, in charge of the income and expenditure of the empire. Besides, he exercised a general supervisory authority over other ministers.
- The Diwan-i-Ariz was under the Ariz-i-Mamalik who was the army minister. He was not the commander-in-chief of the army, but was in charge of its recruitment, organization and discipline. He had to make arrangements for payment of salaries of the troops and officers and to look after the disposition of the army on the field of battle.
- The third ministry was the Diwan-i-Risalat or Diwan-i-Muhtasib. The minister in charge of this department may be called foreign minister. His duty was to be in close touch with ambassadors and envoys sent to and received from foreign states. He must also have been in charge of diplomatic correspondence, and sometimes the charity and endowment department too, was placed under him.
- The fourth ministry was known as Diwan-i-Insha. The minister in charge of this department had to draft royal proclamations and dispatches. His duty was also to communicate with governors and other local executive officers. Government records, too, were in his charge.
- The other departments which were sometimes reckoned as ministers were Diwan-i-Qaza and Diwan-i-Barid. The chief Qazi was the head of the first. He had to supervise the administration of justice besides deciding cases, whether in the first instance, or appeals from the courts of provincial qazis. The Barid-i-Mamalik was the head of the Intelligence department, and it was his duty to report every important incident to the king.

Administrative Divisions

Sarkar

The provinces were divided in Sarkars or districts. Each Sarkar had two important officers – Chief Shiqdar and Chief Munsif, also called Shiqdar – I – Shiqdaran and Shiqdar-i-Munsif respectively. The former was the head of Sarkar. He had a small contingent under his control in order to maintain law and Order. He was also to supervise the work of the Shiqdar of parganas in his district. The chief Munsif was in charge of revenue collection and civil justice. He was primarily a judge. He also supervised the work of the munsif of the parganas.

Parganas

Each Sarkar comprised of a number of parganas. Each Pargana had a Shiqdar, a Munsif (Amin), a treasurer and two clerks-one to maintain records in Hindi and the other in Persian. The Shiqdar maintained some soldiers who were employed to maintain peace. The Munsif supervised the land revenue administration and collection of government dues. He also tried civil and revenue cases and enjoyed the same status as the Shiqdar.

The Treasurer was the next important officer. All collections were deposited with him and he maintained an account of the income and expenditure of the Pargana. The two clerks were called Karkuns. Persian was the language of the court therefore one clerk maintained all records in Persian while the majority of the people had no knowledge of Persian therefore the other clerk maintained duplicate records in Hindi.



A special feature of the administration of Sarkars and Parganas was that Sher Shah introduced a dyarchy system of government as a preventive against rebellions. Rebellions generally occurred because control over local army and finance were vested in the same person therefore Sher Shah appointed two persons of equal Ranks-one in charge of military functions and the other finance. Both of them acted as a check on the other.

Village

A village was the lowest unit of administration. Sher Shah initiated the policy of making the people of the locality responsible for maintaining peace and security within their respective area. He accepted the time honoured custom of recognizing the autonomy of the villages which were governed by their own Panchayats.

The panchayats were in charge of maintaining law and order. He gave legal recognition to the panchayats. Each Panchayat was composed of the elders of the village who looked after the interest of the people and administered justice. He maintained touch with the villages through the village officials, namely Patwari and Chowkidar.

Reforms of Sher Shah

Land Revenue System

- The most striking contribution of Sher Shah was his revenue reforms. His land revenue reforms were based on wise and humane principles and have unique importance in the administrative history of India. The experience gained by him in his youth as the manager of his father's jagir had given him first-hand knowledge of the land revenue problems and the secrets of prosperity and stability of the state. His land revenue reforms had three objectives:
 - To increase agricultural production
 - To increase the revenue of the state
 - To improve the conditions of the cultivators.
- The cultivable land was measured according to uniform system. All cultivable land was divided into three classes – good, middle and bad. Then annual produce per bigha (sixty by sixty square yards of land) of land in the case of each crop and each category was determined. It was followed by the determination of average produce per bigha of land as a whole (including all the three categories-good, middle and bad) in the case of each crop. One third of the produce was fixed as the state's share.
- The government revenue could be paid either in cash or in kind, but the former was preferred. Each cultivator received from the state a patta (title deed) specifying the state demand that is the revenue that was required to pay. In return, he was to sign a qabooliyat (deed of agreement) indicating his assent to pay the amount of revenue mentioned. In addition to the land revenue each cultivator had to pay two charges: jaribana (surveyor's fee) and mahasilana (tax collector's fee). An additional cess of 2.5% had to be paid in kind.
- The grain, thus collected was stored in state granaries and sold at cheap prices at the time of famine or natural calamity. The most significant feature of his land revenue system was that it eliminated intermediaries for the purpose of collection of revenue.
- The government established direct contact with cultivators. That is why his land revenue system has been called ryotwari system or system of cultivators or ryots. Sher Shah gave clear instructions that leniency was to be shown at the time of assessment, but

not at the time of collection of revenue. He also passed orders that while the army was on the move, it was not to destroy the crops of the peasants. Loans were advanced to the peasants in case of damage to the crop caused by the soldiers, drought and natural calamities.

- The defects of the revenue system are as follows:
 - The share of the government was fixed at one-third of the average produce of the three kinds of land viz., good, middle and bad. The result was that the good land was undercharged while the bad land was overcharged.
 - The state demand of one – third of the produce together with fees of surveyors and collectors and the additional fees of 2.5% was fairly high.
 - The annual settlement caused inconvenience to the cultivators and also to state officials. The settlement of cash value of the share of government depended on correct information, proper inquiry and prompt reporting to and instruction from the Central government. Such a procedure was not quite dependable. It was likely to hold up the work of collection and cause great inconvenience to the collectors and cultivators.

Army

- Sher Shah had a large and well equipped army. The Afghans necessarily had predominance, while troops of other nationalities were also there. Sher Shah realised the importance of an efficient army. He therefore took personal interest in the recruitment of troops and fixing the salaries of individual soldiers.
- Sher Shah established a permanent standing army, which was paid partly in cash from the royal treasury and partly by grant of jagir.
- He revived the Alauddin Khilji's practice of branding horses to prevent corruption in the cavalry.
- He also maintained the descriptive roll of troopers so that no one could send a proxy at the time of military review or fighting.
- Corruption was checked to a great extent. He maintained strong discipline in the army and inflicted harsh punishments on those who violated the rules of conduct. Promotion of the troops depended on their merit.
- The army of Sher Shah was principally organized under four heads cavalry, infantry, artillery and elephants. Cavalry (horsemen) was the most important section of the army. The infantry (foot soldiers) was armed with muskets. Most of his soldiers were also fine archers. He possessed a large park of artillery in the capital. Sher Shah had 50,000 cavalry, 25,000 infantry, 5,000 war elephants and a huge artillery.
- Besides this there were contingents of troops posted at 47 important strategic places all over the kingdom. Each of these called a fauj was in charge of a faujdar.

Administration of Justice

- Sher Shah was adorned with jewels of justice and he often remarked, "Justice is the most excellent of religious right and it is approved both by the king of the infidels and the faithful". He did not spare even his near relatives if they resorted to any criminal deed.
- Village Panchayat was empowered to administer justice in the villages, in the Parganas were the Munsifs and in the Sarkars were the Chief Munsifs. They administered civil and revenue cases, while the Shiqdar and his chief in the Sarkar dealt with the criminal cases.



- In addition, there were courts of the Qazi and the mir-adl culminating in the highest courts of the chief Qazi. All higher officers and courts had full authority to hear appeals against the decisions arrived at by their junior counterparts.
- Above all was situated the king's court. The criminal law of the time was very hard and punishments were severe. The object of punishment was not to reform, but to set an example so that others may not do the same.

Roads and Sarais

For the purpose of imperial defence and for the convenience of the people Sher Shah connected the important places of his kingdom by a chain of excellent roads. He built four national highways:

- The Grand Trunk Road from Sonargaon, in Bengal to river Indus in the west.
- From Agra to Mandu
- From Agra to Jodhpur and Chittor
- From Lahore to Multan.

Along the roads were constructed not less than 1700 sarais for the convenience of the travellers. Separate arrangements were made for the Hindu's and Muslims. Shade trees were planted on both sides of the roads. The sarais provided suitable accommodation, cooking facilities and drinking water for the travellers. The sarais also served the purpose of Dak Chowkis for collections of news and postal services. At each sarai were stationed two horsemen to carry the royal mail in the up and down direction.

Intelligence Department

As mentioned above the sarais served as dak chowkis also. Sher Shah appointed an officer known as Daroga-i-Dak Chowki as the head of intelligence department. News writers and news carriers were employed by him to furnish important happenings in every part of his empire. News runners and spies were posted in all important towns to collect and transmit to the court important information. Much success of Sher Shah's administration was due to efficient spy system.

Currency and Tariff Reforms

An outstanding achievement of Sher Shah was in the field of currency reforms. On his accession he found the currency system was practically broken. Coins of all previous reigns were allowed to circulate as legal tender.

He sought to remove this confusion by abolishing all old currency and by issuing new coins; gold, silver and copper of fixed standard. The silver rupee and the copper dam had their subdivisions of halves, quarters, eighths and sixteenths. The ratio between the silver coins and various gold coins were fixed. To encourage trade and commerce in his empire Sher Shah abolished many duties which were charged on goods at different points. He laid down that only two duties should be charged for transport of goods.

Reforms were made to promote the growth of trade and commerce. In his entire empire, goods paid customs duty only at two places: goods produced in Bengal or imported from outside paid customs duty at the border of Bengal and Bihar at Sakrigali, and goods coming from West and Central Asia paid customs duty at the Indus. No one was allowed to levy customs at roads, ferries or towns anywhere else. The duty was paid a second time at the tune of sale.



Architecture Under Sher Shah

Sher Shah has left an indelible impress as a builder. The Purana Qila in Delhi is said to have been built by him and is considered to be “the most perfect of his buildings.” It is a good example of Indo-Islamic architecture. The best example of Sher Shah’s architecture is his own mausoleum at Sasaram in Bihar.

An Estimate of Sher Shah

Sher Shah is indeed a striking personality in the history of medieval India. He applied his indefatigable industry to the service of the state and his reforms were well calculated to secure the interests of the people. In fact the real significance of his reign lies in the fact that he embodied in himself those very qualities which are needed for building the nation state in India and he prepared the ground for the glorious Akbar regime in more ways than one. He is therefore been rightly called the forerunner of Akbar. Unfortunately, Sher Shah’s empire collapsed within a decade after his death and the Mughal regime was restored by Humayun whom he had forced to flee from India. This happened because the Afghans failed to preserve what Sher Shah left for them.

Fall of the Sur Dynasty

After the death of Sher Shah his son Islam Shah came to the throne in 1545. Though he did not inherit the qualities of his father, yet he kept his heritage intact for 8 years. After his death in October, 1553, the Sur dynasty began to disintegrate. The Afghan empire was partitioned and was ruled by three independent nobles namely Ibrahim Khan Sur in Delhi and Agra, Muhammad Adil Shah in the East and the Punjab under Sikander Shah.

The various provinces of Malwa, Rajputana, Bengal and Bundelkhand proclaimed independence. This political chaos provided Humayun with the needful opportunity to stage a comeback in India. Humayun defeated Sikander Sur, who succeeded Ibrahim Sur, in a battle near Sirhind in 1555 and occupied Delhi and Agra. The Second Afghan Empire like the first one once again fell to the tribal concepts and political intrigues of the Afghan nobility. The field was left to the Mughals and Akbar used every opportunity to retrieve the Mughal prestige and power.

