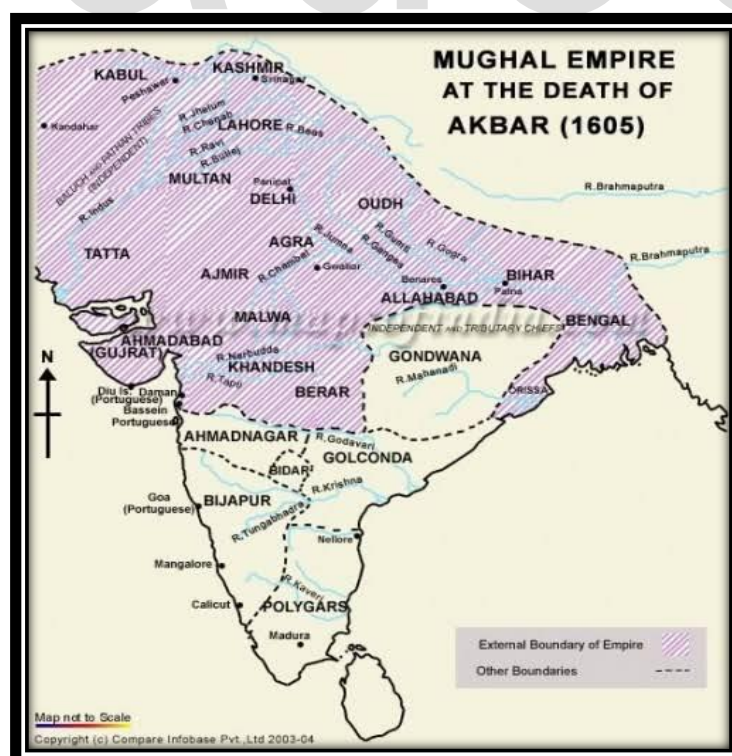


CHAPTER 7: AKBAR

Akbar was only thirteen in 1556 when his father died, and he was proclaimed the king. Humayun did not have the time to strengthen Mughal power in northern India. This job was left to Akbar. Bairam Khan took care until Akbar came of age. When Akbar came of age, he decided to end the regency of Bairam Khan and took over the government.

AKBAR'S CAMPAIGNS

- The first conflict came with Hemu. The battle was fought at Pampat between Bairam Khan and Hemu. Hemu was defeated, and Akbar reoccupied Delhi.
- Having established himself at Delhi and Agra, he decided to extend Mughal power to other parts of the country. He proceeded to conquer various important towns and forts such as Gwalior, Ajmer and Jaunpur.
- He also annexed the kingdom of Malwa. This brought him into the neighbourhood of the Rajput kingdoms.
- Akbar was keen to have friendly relations with the Rajputs. One of the ways in which he did this was to enter marriage alliance between his family and various Rajput royal families.
- He conquered Gujarat. This was important because the revenue from the overseas trade of Gujarat now came to the Mughal empire.
- By 1595, Kashmir, Sind, Orissa, central India, and Qandahar (in Afghanistan) were conquered. The northern part of India was under Mughal control.
- To control Deccan, a campaign had begun against the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. The Mughals annexed Khandesh, Berar and parts of the kingdom of Ahmadnagar. The



Follow us on
Telegram



Gradeup
PCS & Other
State Exams



Gradeup: PCS & State Exams
137K subscribers

Subscribe Now



Mughal empire now extended as far as the Godavari river in the Deccan. Akbar was the emperor of the larger part of India.

ADMINISTRATION UNDER AKBAR

- Mughal administration was a mixture of the existing Indian system and Mughals borrowed some ideas from Central Asia and Persia.
- One of the most important features of the administration was the **Mansabdari system**. Every noble, officer or civil servant was given a rank or a mansab and he was known as a mansabdar. The rank was valued in terms of a certain number of mounted soldiers. The ranks normally given to officers and nobles were valued from 10 to 5,000. The rank was held only by the officer during his lifetime. His son could not inherit the rank. The troops maintained by the mansabdar could be used by the emperor whenever he wished.
- The emperor ruled with the help of the **wazir and the bakshi**. The wazir looked after the revenue administration and the bakshi looked after military organization.
- The most powerful person was still the emperor. There was a chief steward (**khan-i-saman**) who attended to the royal household. The chief qazi held the highest position amongst the judges.
- Another officer kept a record of all the charitable grants and donations made by the Mughal administration.
- The emperor also took advice from others. Generally, he would call them to the **Diwan-i-Khas** (hall of private audience) or his private apartments and consult them. He was available to his subjects in the large audience hall called the **Diwan-i-am** (hall of public audience).
- **Division of empire:**
 - The Mughal empire was divided into several **subas or provinces**. The pattern of administration at the capital was repeated in each suba. During the reign of Akbar, there were fifteen subas.
 - Every suba was divided into several **sarkars** and they were further divided into **parganas**. A group of villages made one **parganas**.
- **Officers of provinces:**
 - The governor of the province, the **subadar**, looked after the administration.
 - The **diwan** kept revenue records.
 - The **bakshi** sent regular news report to the capital and attended to needs of the army in suba.
 - **Kotwal** was the officer in charge of town administration. Police stations are still sometimes called the kotwali. Another job which the kotwal did was to keep a register of all the persons living in the neighbourhood, including visiting foreigners, and this made him into a kind of census officer.

THE INCOME OF THE STATE

- The Mughal government collected revenue from two sources—the land and trade.

- Most of the revenue was spent on paying the salary of the officers, although Akbar wanted to pay officers in cash but had to continue the old practice of land revenue grants, i.e., **Jagirs**.
- Akbar wanted detailed information on the produce and revenue of his empire. This had to be done in order also to check the amount of revenue which was being sent to the government. The state took one-third of the produce and preferred if the revenue was paid in money. **Raja Todar Mal** was asked to make an estimate of the land revenue. When this had been done, a careful record was kept.

LITERATURE AND THE FINE ARTS

- Akbar never learnt to read or write, but he was familiar with the best books and he spent many hours educating himself.
- He did this by having the books read to him and by discussing ideas with a variety of philosophers, scholars, and writers. Among his close friends with whom he had long discussions, were two brothers—**Abul Fazl and Faizi**. Abul Fazl wrote a book, **Akbarnama** (the life of Akbar) of which, a section is the famous **Ain-i-Akbari**. This section deals with the laws and the revenue system of the empire and describes the condition of the country.
- **Faizi** was a poet and wrote in Persian. The official language of the Mughal empire was Persian; therefore, most of the educated people, especially those who were working in the government knew Persian.
- Akbar encouraged the translation into Persian of important works in Sanskrit. The entire text of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana was translated at this time and Abul Fazl wrote the preface to the Persian text. There were many scholars who wrote biographies of the various Sultans and kings in Sanskrit and received large donations from these rulers.
- Akbar's court had a famous singer, Tansen. Tansen enriched the Hindustani school of music by making additions in the style of singing many of the ragas.
- There were also several painters at the emperors' court, who painted beautiful miniature paintings to illustrate the books in his library.
- Persian books were written in a variety of beautiful Persian scripts, such as the Nastaliq. The Devanagari script was being commonly used for books in Sanskrit and Hindi.

ARCHITECTURE

- Akbar built a new capital at the city of Fatehpur Sikri near Agra because this was where, the Sufi saint Salim Chisti lived, and Akbar had great respect for him.
- At Fatehpur, Akbar built his magnificent palaces and pavilions in red sandstone. The architecture at Fatehpur Sikri is an excellent blending of Persian, Central Asian and various Indian styles. The same is true of the tomb which Akbar had built for his father Humayun, at Delhi.



- Architectural style in this period had more Indian features than the earlier tombs, but also because it is placed in the middle of a large, well laid out garden. The entrance to the whole area is through a massive gateway, which is a monument. The garden and the gateway are to be found in all Mughal style tombs.
- Mughal architecture at this time took many features from earlier Indian styles, such as square brackets at the entrances, the design of the caves, etc.

AKBAR 'S RELIGIOUS POLICY

One of the buildings at Fatehpur, Sikri, was known as the Ibadat Khana, where the emperor held discussions on religion. After all these discussions, Akbar suggested a new religious path (not a new religion though). This religious path was later referred to as the **Din-i-ilahi**.

- He declared himself a spiritual guide to his people.
- He favoured peace and non-violence. He discouraged the killing of animals and encouraged people to not consume meat, at least for some days in a year.
- He disapproved cruel punishments for his subjects.
- He strongly disapproved Sati for women.
- He also introduced the veneration of sun, light and water in his ritual.
- Those who accepted him as their spiritual guide vowed to sacrifice their property, their honour, and life for the emperor.