

MODULE-3
FORMATION OF MUGHAL EMPIRE
TOPIC- SHER SHAH SURI



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- Sher Shah Suri, whose original name was Farid was the founder of the Suri dynasty.
- Son of a petty jagirdar, neglected by his father and ill treated by his step-mother, he very successfully challenged the authority of Mughal emperor Humayun, drove him out of India and occupied the throne of Delhi.
- All this clearly demonstrates his extra-ordinary qualities of his hand, head and heart.
- Once again Sher Shah established the Afghan Empire which had been taken over by Babur.



- The intrigues of his mother compelled the young Farid Khan to leave Sasaram (Bihar), the jagir of his father.
- He went to Jaunpur for studies. In his studies, he so distinguished himself that the subedar of Jaunpur was greatly impressed.
- He helped him to become the administrator of his father's jagir which prospered by his efforts.
- His step-mother's jealousy forced him to search for another employment and he took service under Bahar Khan, the ruler of South Bihar, who gave him the title of Sher Khan for his bravery in killing a tiger single-handed.



- But the intrigues of his enemies compelled him to leave Bihar and join the camp of Babur in 1527.
- He rendered valuable help to Babur in the campaign against the Afghans in Bihar.
- In due course, Babur became suspicious of Sher Khan who soon slipped away.
- As his former master Bahar Khan, the ruler of South Bihar had died, he was made the guardian and regent of the minor son of the deceased.
- Slowly he started grabbing all the powers of the kingdom. Meanwhile the ruler of Chunar died and Sher Shah married his widow.
- This brought him the fort of Chunar and enormous wealth

Sher Shah's encounters with Humayun:



- (i) Encounter on the fort of Chunar and Sher Shah's diplomatic surrender.
- (ii) Battle of Chausa with Humayun and Sher Shah's victory.
- (iii) Battle of Kanauj and Sher Shah's decisive victory over Humayun.
- With the victory at Kanauj, Sher Shah became the ruler of Delhi.
- Agra, Sambhal and Gwalior etc., also came under his sway.
- This victory ended the rule of the Mughal dynasty for 15 years.



- Sher Shah's other conquests:
- (1) Battle at Surajgarh (1533):
- Sher Shah defeated the combined forces of the Lohani chiefs of Bihar and Mohamud Shah of Bengal at Surajgarh.
- With this victory, whole of Bihar came under Sher Shah.
- Dr. Qanungo has described the importance of this victory in these words, "If Sher Shah had not been victorious at Surajgarh, he would have never figured in the political sphere of India and would not have got an opportunity to compete with Humayun... for the founding of an empire."



- (2) Invasion of Bengal:
- Sher Shah plundered Bengal several times and by capturing Gaur, the capital of Bengal, forced Mohammad Shah to seek refuge with Humayun.



- Sher Shah's conquests after becoming the emperor of Delhi:
- **(i) Conquest of Punjab (1540-42):**
- Sher Shah immediately, after his accession to the throne conquered Punjab from Kamran, brother of Humayun.
- **(ii) Suppression of Khokhars (1542):**
- Sher Shah suppressed the turbulent Khokhars of the northern region of river Indus and Jhelum.
- **(iii) Conquest of Malwa (1542):**
- The ruler of Malwa had not helped Sher Shah in his struggle with Humayun. Therefore he attacked Malwa and annexed it to his empire.



- **(iv) Conquest of Raisin:**
- Sher Shah attacked Raisin – a Rajput principality and besieges it. Rajput ruler Purnamal entered into an agreement with Sher Shah that if he surrendered, his family would not be harmed. However Sher Shah did not honour this agreement. In the words of Dr. Ishwari Prasad, “Sher Shah behaved with him very cruelly.”
- **(v) conquest of Multan and Sind (1543) :**
- Sher Shah conquered and annexed these provinces into his empire.
- **(vi) Conquest of Mewar (1543-1545):**
- Sher Shah brought Marwar under his control by forged letters and sowing dissensions in the army of Maldev, the ruler of Mewar.
- **(viii) Conquest of Kalinjar (1545) and death of Sher Shah.** Sher Shah launched a fierce attack. He won but lost his life when he was grievously injured by the blast.

Sher Shah Suri's key achievements:



- **Introduction of an Effective Monetary System**
- Sher Shah introduced the tri-metal coinage system which later came to characterize the Mughal coinage system.
- He also minted a coin of silver which was termed the **Rupiya** that weighed 178 grains and was the precursor of the modern rupee.
- The same name is still used for the national currency in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Mauritius, Maldives, and Seychelles among other countries.



- **Development of Roadways**

- For military and trade movement, Sher Shah connected the important places of his kingdom by a network of excellent roads.
- The longest of these, called the **Sadak-e-Azam** or the "**Badshahi Sadak**" (renamed "Grand Trunk Road" by the British) survives till this day.
- This road is the longest highway of Asia and extends over 1500 Km from Sonargaon in Eastern Bengal to the Indus.
- All the roads were flanked by shade giving trees and there were **saraies** (traveler's inns) all along the routes.



- **Administrative Subdivision of Empire**
- The Sur empire was divided into forty-seven separate units called **sarkars(districts)**.
- Each sarkar was divided into small units called **the parganas** and each pargana was further subdivided into a number of **villages**.
- Like the sarkars, there were two chief officers **called a shiqdar (military officer) and Munsif (civilian judge)** who were assisted by other staff in the discharge-of their duties.
- Each pargana had its own administrative system with its own Amil, law keeper, treasurer and account keepers.
- Over the next higher administrative unit, the sarkar, were placed a Shiqdar-I-Shiqdaran and a Munsif-I-Munsifan to supervise the work of the pargana officers.
- To keep a tab on the performance of his officers, Sher shah had planned to rotate them across the empire every two or three years. Every branch of the administration was subject to Sher Shah's personal supervision.



- **Development of the First Postal System**
- The saraies developed along the road network also served as post offices.
- Sher Shah Suri established the foundations of a mounted post or horse courier system, wherein conveyance of letters was also extended to traders.
- This is the first known record of the Postal system of a kingdom being used for non-State purposes, i.e. for trade and business communication.



- **Administration of Justice:-**
- Sher Shah was adorned with Jewel of justice and he often times remarks, " 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.
- Like other medieval rulers Sher Shah sometimes decided cases in person.
- 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 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 the others may not do the same.

Land Revenue System of Sher Shah:



- Before Sher Shah, the land rent was realized from the peasants on the basis of estimated produce from the land but this system did not seem to be faultless as the produce was not constantly the same. It increased or decreased year after year.
- Sher Shah introduced a number of reforms in the fields of revenue. These are as follows.
- Sher Shah was the first Muslim ruler who got the whole of the land measured and fixed the land-tax on it on just and fair principles.
- The land of each peasant was measured first in “bighas” and then half of it was fixed as the land tax. According to J.P. More land in certain portions of the empire such as Multan the land tax was however one-fourth of the total produce



- ❑ The settlement made between the Govt. and the peasant in respect of the land revenue was always recorded. Every peasant was given as written document in which the share of the Govt. was clearly mentioned so that no unscrupulous officer might cheat the innocent peasant. This is known as '**Patta**'.
- ❑ Each and every peasant was given the option to pay the land-tax either in cash or in kind. The subjects of Sher Shah used to Kabul (Promise) that they should pay taxes in lieu of Patta.
- ❑ The peasants were required to credit the land-tax direct into the Govt. treasury, to be on the safe side, so that the collecting officers might not charge them any extra money.



- ❑ Strict orders had been issued to the revenue authorities that leniency might be shown while fixing the land tax, but strictness in the collection thereof should be the inevitable rule.
- ❑ But suitable subsidy was granted to the farmers in the time of drought, famine or floods from the royal treasury.
- ❑ Special orders were issued to soldiers that they should not damage the standing crops in any way. According to Abbas Khan, the cars of those soldiers, who disregarded these orders, were cut off. Even when Sher Shah led an expedition to the territory of his enemy, he was very particular about it that no harm shall come to the farmers in any way from the excesses of his soldiers.



- ❑ In case of damages compensation was granted to the former by the Govt.
- ❑ This arrangement of Sher Shah was as reasonable as was adopted not by Akbar only but was followed by the British Govt. also.
- ❑ The well-known Ryatwari System which has been in vague till now, was not founded by Akbar but by Sher Shah.