

B.A. 2nd Semester, History

UNIT III: ADMINISTRATION OF THE VIJAYNAGAR EMPIRE AND BAHAMANI KINGDOM

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A. **Vijaynagar Empire:** Vijaynagar Empire gradually developed a centralized administration with all its branches carefully organised. With the expansion of the empire its rulers organised the administration with efficiency to remove the disorders that had prevailed during the periods of war and facilitate the pursuits of peaceful activities in various fields.

King: The king was the head of all power in the Vijaynagar State. He was the authority in civil, military as well as judicial affairs and also often intervened to settle social disputes. He ruled with an eye towards dharma. Along with running the army and the administration the king was engaged in taking up public works for the welfare of the people and in transforming forest into fields for agriculture, facilitating trade with foreign countries. He was assisted in the task of administration by his council of ministers. The administration of the Vijaynagar Empire was divided into:

i. **Central Government:** Comprised of the Imperial Councils, council of ministers and the secretariat

Imperial Council: Imperial council was a big institution. The Nayaks of the provinces, the feudal lords, political leaders, scholars, poets, artists and traders were included in it. Even the foreign ambassadors were invited to attend it. The work of the imperial council was mainly ceremonial and not administrative.

Council of Ministers: The king was assisted in the task of administration by a council of ministers appointed by him. The ministers adopted the title 'Dand Nayak' which meant 'the chief of administration'. The members maintained soldiers and during battles supplied them to the king.

Secretariat: Abdur Razzaq and Nuniz refer to the existence of a sort of secretariat at Vijaynagar. Besides the minister, the other officers of the state were the chief treasurer, the custodian of the jewels, an officer who was to look after the commercial interest of the state, the prefect of the police, who was responsible for the prevention of crime and maintenance of order in the city, the chief master of the horse and subordinate officers like the 'bhats' who sang the praise of the king, the betel bearers or personal attendants of the king, the calendar makers, the engravers and the composer of inscriptions.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION: The Empire was divided for administrative purposes into several provinces such as **Rajya, Mandala** and **Chavadi**, which again was sub-divided into

venthe- A territorial division higher than a nadu,

nadu- A territorial division higher than a village,

sima- A portion of land comprising several fields village and

sthala- A territorial division higher than a parru, which was again higher than a nadu,.

Each province was under a viceroy, nayaka or naik, who might be a member of the royal house or an influential noble of the State, or some descendants of the old ruling families. Each viceroy exercised civil, military and judicial powers within his jurisdiction, but he was required to submit regular accounts of the income and expenditures of his charge to the central government and render military aid in times of need. Further he was liable to severe punishment by the king if he proved to be a traitor or oppressed the people, and his estate could be confiscated to the state if he made default in sending one-third of his income to the king.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION:

- The Vijaynagar rulers inherited and continued to maintain a healthy and vigorous system of local administration with the village as the lowest unit. Each village was a self sufficient unit.
- The village assembly conducted the administration of the area, through its hereditary officers like the **senateova** or the village accountant, the **talara** or the village watchman or the commandant, the **begara** or the superintendent of forced labour and others.
- These village officers were paid by grants of land or a portion of agricultural produce.
- The king maintained a link with the village administration through his officer called **Mahanayakacharya**(inspectors of the activities of gram sabha) who exercised a general supervision over it,.
- gram was the smallest unit of administration and Gram sabha was the institution of village administration.
- Gram sabha protected the welfare of the villages and land of the villages against outsiders, collect taxes for the government. if the people were unable to pay the taxes, the sabha confiscated their land.

LAND REVENUE:

- Land revenue known as **sist**, was the principal source of income of the Vijaynagar State.
- It had an efficient system of land revenue administration, under three heads for the purpose of assessments' to be paid by the tenants. i. Wet land, ii. Dry land, and iii. Land with gardens.
- Assessment was fixed at one-sixth of the produce and increased it to some extent.
- The Vijaynagar rulers adopted the "principle of differential taxation", that is, levied taxes according to the relative fertility of the lands.

- Besides the land tax, the ryots had to pay other kinds of taxes like grazing tax, marriage tax etc.
- other source of income of the State were the revenue from customs duties; tolls on roads, revenue from gardening and plantations; and taxes levied on dealers in goods of common consumption, Manufacturers and craftsmen, potters, washermen, shoemakers, barbers, mendicants, temples and prostitutes. Taxes were paid both in cash and kind.

JUDICIARY:

- The king was the supreme judge, but there were regular courts and special judicial officers for the administration of justice.
- Disputes were settled by the State officials with the co-operation of the local bodies.
- Severe punishment was inflicted on guilty persons.
- Penalties were chiefly of four kinds- fines, confiscation of property, ordeals and death.
- Death or mutilation was the punishment of crimes like thefts, adultery and treason. Sometimes criminals were cast down before the feet of an elephant, that they may be killed by its knees, trunk and tusks.

MILITARY: The rulers of Vijaynagar had a carefully organised military departments called '**Kandachara**', under the control of the **Dandanayaka or Dannayaka**(commander –in-chief) who was assisted by a staff of minor officials.

- The State maintained a large and efficient army, reinforced by auxiliary forces of the feudatories and nobles.
- The several component parts of the army were the infantry, recruited from people of different classes and creeds, occasionally even including Muslims; the cavalry, strengthened by the recruitment of good horses from Ormuz through the Portuguese; elephants; camels; and artillery.

THE AMARA NAYAKA SYSTEM: the 'amara' is believed to have been derived from a Sanskrit word *samara*, meaning battle or war. It was a major political innovation of the Vijayanagara Empire.

- the *amara-nayakas* were military commanders who were given territories to govern by the *raya*.
- They collected taxes and other dues from peasants, craftsperson's and traders in the area.
- They retained part of the revenue for personal use and for maintaining a stipulated contingent of horses and elephants. .
- The *amara-nayakas* sent tribute to the king annually and personally appeared in the royal court with gifts to express their loyalty.

THE AYAGAR SYSTEM: The ayagars were village servants or functionaries and constituted of groups of families. These were headmen (reddi or gauda, maniyam), accountant (karnam senabhova) and watchmen (talaiyari).

- According to this, every village was a separate unit and its affairs were conducted by a team of 12 functionaries who were collectively known as the 'ayagars'.
- They were granted tax-free lands (manya). Once granted, these Ayagars had a hereditary right over their offices.
- The Ayagars could also sell or mortgage their offices.
- The distinguishing feature of the Ayagar system is that special allocation of income from land and specific cash payments provided to village servants holding a particular office.

B. ADMINISTRATION UNDER BAHAMANI KINGDOM

The King and His council of Ministers: The Bahamani administration was modelled in the Islamic pattern. The king was the supreme power in the state; he was the ruler, judge, administrator, military leader, sometimes even his own authority. Although the king was the supreme power in theory, in practice he depended on the advice of his ministers in deciding state policy.

Council of ministers: The chief minister was called ' vakil-us-Saltanate'. All orders issued by the king passed through him and bore his seal. The minister for finance was called 'Amir-i-Jumla'. The external affairs were called 'Nasir –i-Ashraf.

Administration:

- Allauddin Hasan Baman Shah divided his kingdom into four divisions called ' Tarafs' and each division was under a Tarafdar.
- When Mahmud Gawan became the prime minister he re-divided the kingdom into eight sarlaskarships in order to control the power of the tarafdars.
- Provinces or Atrafs were divided into Sarkars and Sarkars were divided into Paraganas for the convenience of administration.
- The lowest unit of the administration was the village and a pargana consisted of a number of villages

Military: The military department at the capital maintained its own army.

- The **amir-ul umara** was the commander of the army.
- The army mainly consisted of soldiers and cavalry. Elephants were also employed.
- The rulers maintained a large number of bodyguards known as **khassakhel**.
- Besides, there were *silahdars* who were in charge of the 'personal armoury of the king.
- The army was organised in the decimal basis.
- There were three grades of categories of commander, the **amir-ul umara** was the chief commander-in-chiefs whose rank was 1500 and under him were scores of commanders under the rank of 1000 and 500.
- The chief commander was paid through assignments or grants of jagirs.
- Another characteristic feature of the Bahmani army was the use of gunpowder that gave them military advantage.

Economy: Mahmud Gawan ordered for systematic measurement of land fixing the boundaries of the villages and towns.

- a. First, the income of the empire was ensured and became known in advance;
- b. secondly, it also curbed the corruption of the nobles to the minimum, thereby increasing the state income.

Revenue: Provinces of the kingdom were made over to the grandees for the upkeep of their quota of the army who collected land revenues and other taxes in their respective divisions, and were expected to pay a certain fixed amount to the royal treasury.

- The officer of the Parganas were helped by two officers, the Deshmukh and the Desai.
- Deshmukh was entrusted with the task of supervision of collection of the revenue, while desai was concern with keeping the accounts,
- The village was the last unit of administration in the kingdom, it has three officers namely **Patil** or headman of the village, **Kulkarni** or the accountant and the village watchman. These offices were hereditary.
- The village headman and accountant were remunerated by means of imam or rent free land and the office were known as watan in the case of the headman and miras for an accountant.
- Besides the headman there was an establishment which consisted of twelve artisans known as **Balutedars** in Maharashtra and the institution is known as **Barabalut**. The *Balutes* dues were to be paid by every farmer to each *balutedars*.