Chapter 3

Resistance and Resilience (1000–1700 CE)



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The Big Questions

1. *How did Indian rulers use resistance and alliances to safeguard their lands?*
2. *What factors contributed to the resilience of different kingdoms and communities during this period?*
3. *How did the Bhakti tradition foster a sense of solidarity?*
4. *How did the expansion of agriculture, trade, and commerce keep the economy sound?*

The period between 1000 CE and 1700 CE witnessed profound political, social, and cultural changes. The Indian subcontinent experienced repeated invasions and wars accompanied by religious discrimination and social distress. Regional powers frequently resisted invaders who were making inroads into their territories. This resistance took both military and cultural forms. Nonetheless, this period manifested the resilience of the Indian civilisation, which safeguarded its core ideas and values. Indian society not only defended itself from external threats but also preserved its traditions. In this chapter, we will see how resistance and resilience shaped this period of Indian history.

Let us begin by understanding the meaning of resistance and resilience in the context of the period under study and how they are interconnected.

Resilience refers to the capacity to, survive and adapt in challenging situations, including times of political unrest and instability. It is also about how communities and groups across diverse regions respond to challenges and opportunities. This capacity to absorb and adapt to hardship while preserving inherited socio-cultural and spiritual traditions can also be understood as resilience. The idea of India's resilient spirit extends beyond political and military spheres.

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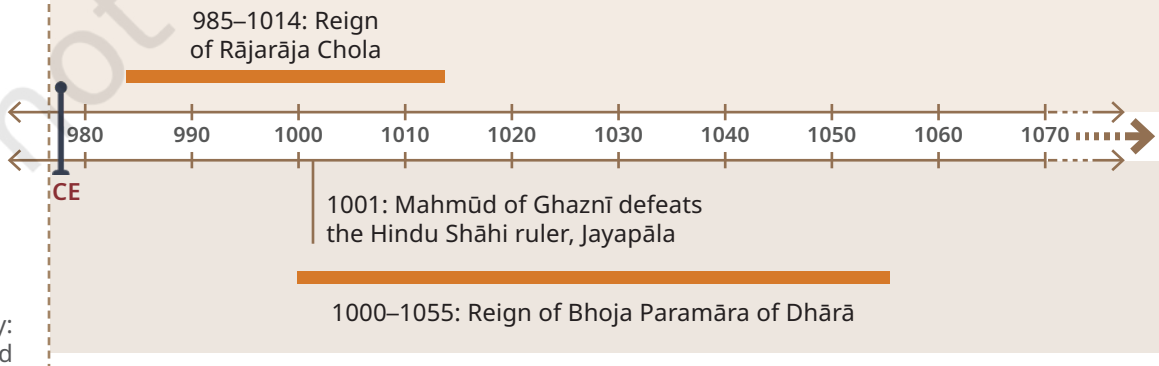
For instance, rulers and communities restored places of worship, modified customs to suit changing circumstances and, in many regions, established lasting patterns of coexistence across religious and cultural lines.

Resistance means actively opposing or challenging a force, authority, or threat in order to protect political power, territory, interests, or cultural and spiritual identity. Resistance may take the form of warfare, alliances, diplomacy, negotiation, or other political actions.

Resistance and resilience are, in fact, closely linked. Resilience is the backbone of resistance. While a political cause or leadership provides the condition for resistance, the ability to endure comes from resilience. Together, resistance and resilience help explain how Indian society sustained itself through different ages, particularly the period under study. This period is characterised by both conflict and cooperation, rather than being merely a story of invasion and resistance.

Safeguarding Sovereignty: Resistance, Alliances, and Confederacies

From the 7th century onwards, the Indian subcontinent witnessed successive phases of invasions driven by territorial expansion and religious motives. It may also be noted that the surplus agrarian produce of the fertile plains fed by perennial river systems contributed to the people's economic well-being and also became a major reason for the invasions. Against this backdrop, let us examine instances of resistance, as well as the strategic alliances and confederacies that emerged in these centuries at both the regional and pan-Indian level.



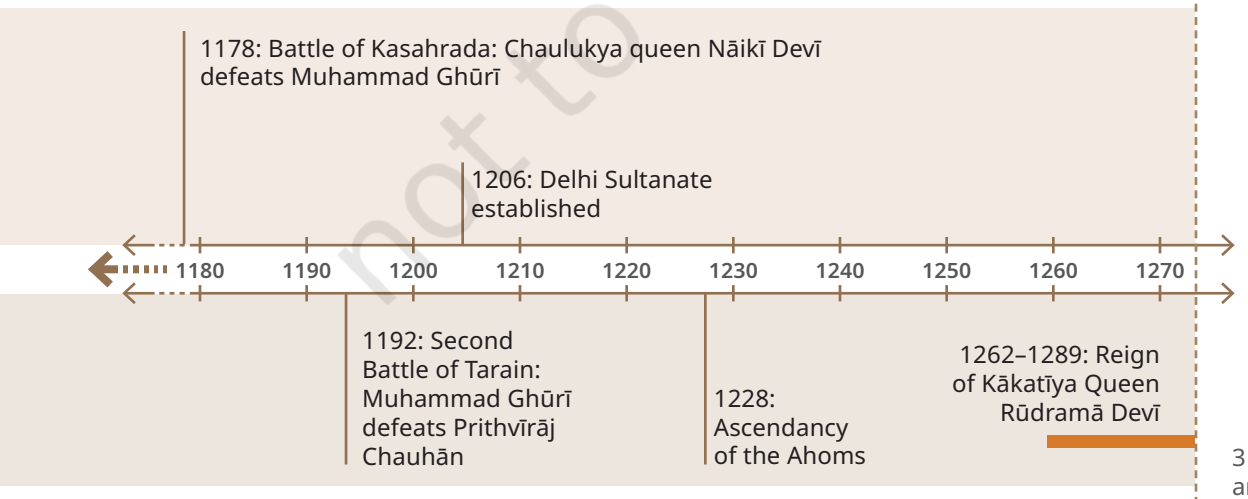
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From the mid-7th century, Arab forces launched invasions by sea and land. These early invaders were confronted and repulsed by Indian rulers across the Deccan, Malwa, Kashmir, and Rajasthan. Mahmūd, the Sultan of Ghaznī (in present-day Afghanistan and northeastern Iran), launched his first invasion in 1001 against Jayapāla of the Hindu Shāhi dynasty. During the 11th and 12th centuries, rulers of the Hindu Shāhi kingdom, and the Chandellas, Solankīs, and Chauhāns opposed and fought against the Turkish invaders. In 1178, Queen Nāikī Devi of the Chaulukya kingdom defeated Muhammad Ghurī at Kasahrada, near Mount Abu. In northern India, some powers, such as the Chauhāns, Gahaḍavālas, and Senas, however came under Turkic control towards the end of the 12th century, even as Gujarat, Malwa, and Bundelkhand under the Chandellas put up stiff resistance for about a hundred years thereafter. The Turks failed to conquer present-day Odisha, and parts of present-day Assam. Several states of Rajputana, in particular, remained centres of sustained resistance throughout the period under study. Thus, during the 11th and 12th centuries, northern and western India bore the brunt of Turkish invasions, while peninsular India remained free from Turkic control.

LET'S RECALL

You may recall learning about the invasions of Mahmūd of Ghaznī and Muhammad Ghūrī in the 11th and 12th centuries, covered in Grade 7 Social Science textbook. These invasions had seriously disrupted the political, social, and religious fabric of the Indian subcontinent.





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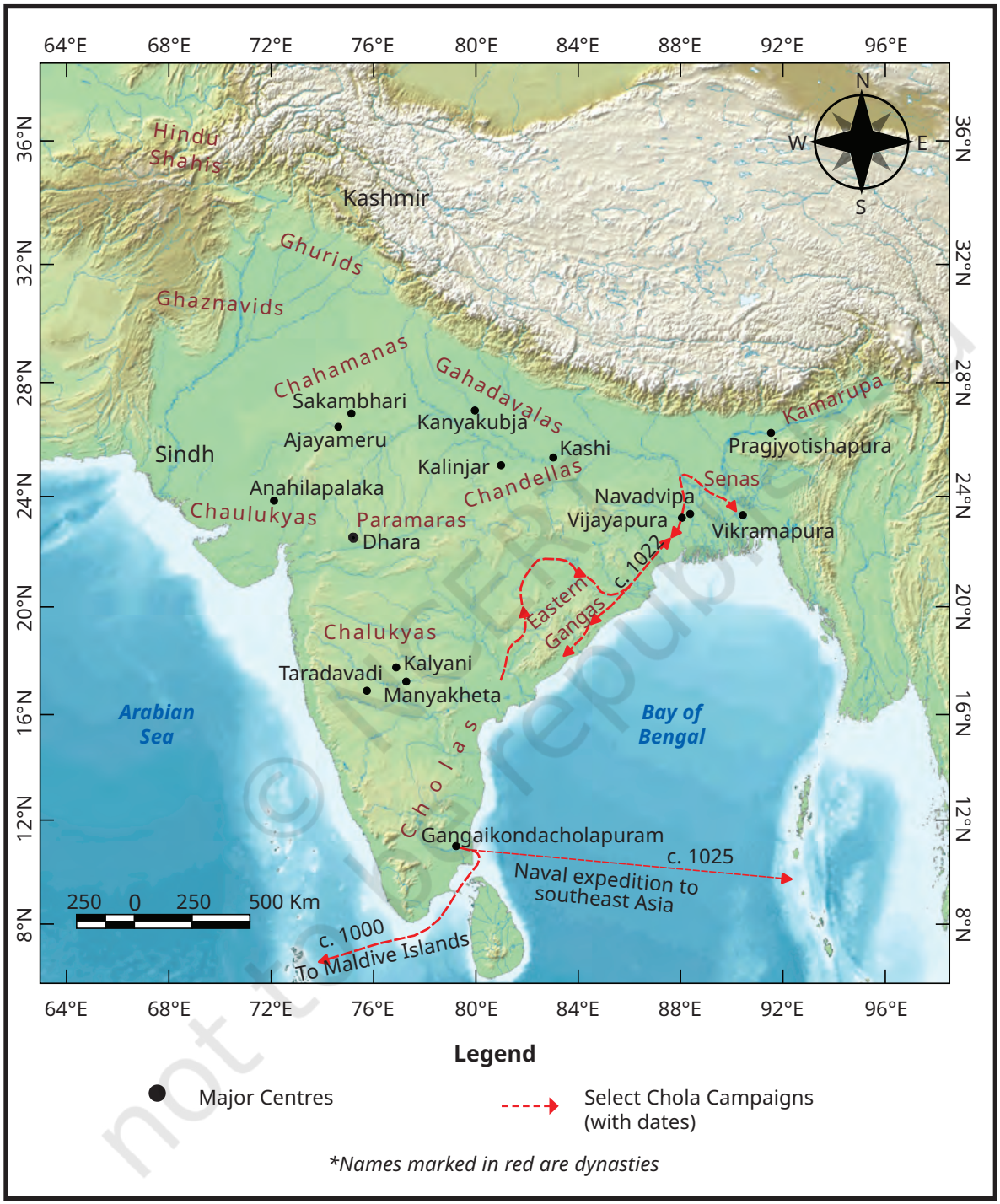


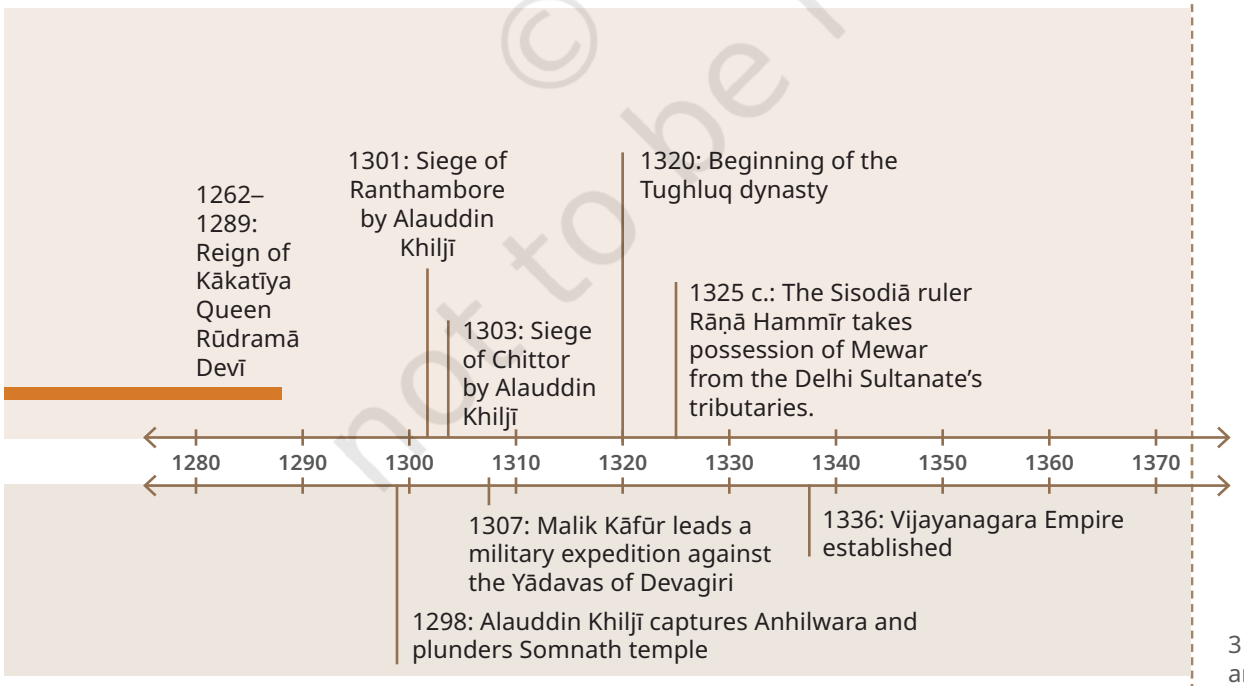
Fig. 3.1. Some political kingdoms of Indian subcontinent in the 11th and 12th centuries

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Rajput Dynasties: Confederacies and Resistance (1200–1500 CE)

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206 was a turning point in Indian history. The new state introduced administrative practices that led to greater centralisation of authority. For example, the *iqta* system, under which territories were assigned to military commanders in lieu of salaries, became a mechanism for land revenue collection and a system that increased the burden on the peasantry. Furthermore, during their military campaigns for territorial expansion, the forces of the Sultanate demolished sites sacred to the local communities. This led to stiff resistance from several kingdoms and chieftains. Therefore, resistance throughout the Delhi Sultanate was fuelled by both political factors and the determination to preserve socio-cultural continuity. For instance, the Yādava dynasty of western Deccan (Devagiri), several Rajput dynasties of present-day Rajasthan, the Kākatīya rulers of eastern Deccan (Warangal), and the Hoysālas of present-day Karnataka repeatedly resisted the Sultans of Delhi. These states played an important role in checking the expansion of the Sultanate.

Over the years and under different Sultans, the Delhi Sultanate faced opposition and defiance from several states and regions including Mewar, Gwalior, Malwa, Awadh, Etawah, Ajmer, Jalore, Kalinjar, and Kannauj.



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Rajput–Mughal Dynamics: Politics and Complexities of Rule (1500–1700 CE)

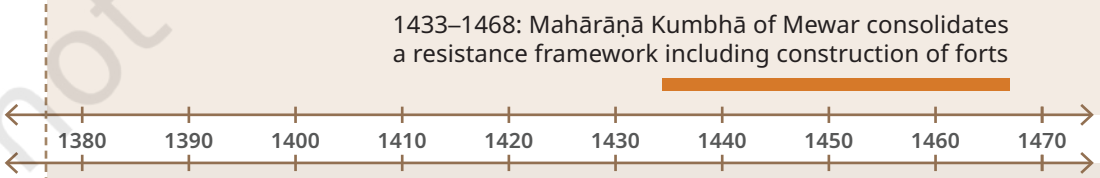
In the early 1500s, the weakening and subsequent decline of the Delhi Sultanate under its last ruler, Ibrāhim Lodī, opened the door to two parallel developments. First, Zahiruddin Muhammad, also known as Bābur, from Central Asia launched an invasion on India. Second, Indian rulers began to assert their own authority. In 1526, Bābur defeated the Lodi forces in the First Battle of Panipat, bringing the Sultanate to an end. In 1527, Rāṇā Sangrām Singh I, popularly known as Rāṇā Sāngā, of Mewar led a Rajput confederacy against Bābur in the Battle of Khanua. The battle ended in favour of Bābur and is seen as an important turning point in Indian history.

Mansab: It means 'rank' or 'office', and its holders were known as mansabdars. Akbar introduced the mansabdari system, which combined military organisation with civil administration. It established a clear hierarchy among the nobility and helped strengthen imperial control.

As Mughal rule consolidated its power, relations between the Rajputs and the Mughals evolved over time, shaped by strategic considerations. Some Rajput kingdoms such as Mewar, maintained stiff resistance to Mughal authority, while others like the Kachhwāha Rajputs of Amber, negotiated cooperative relationships. The Mughals, for their part, had a strong incentive to collaborate with the Rajputs—they needed the Rajputs' military might, their loyalty as well as their administrative strength to consolidate and stabilise the Mughal Empire. Towards this end, the Mughals integrated some of the Rajputs into the empire through the grant of **mansabs** and other understandings.

Mewar's Resistance against Mughals

Akbar attacked the kingdom of Mewar and laid siege to the fort at Chittor in 1567–1568. The Mughal army paid a heavy price in the campaign. Under Rāṇā Udai Singh, the Rajputs put up a stiff resistance for more than five months before the fort was captured



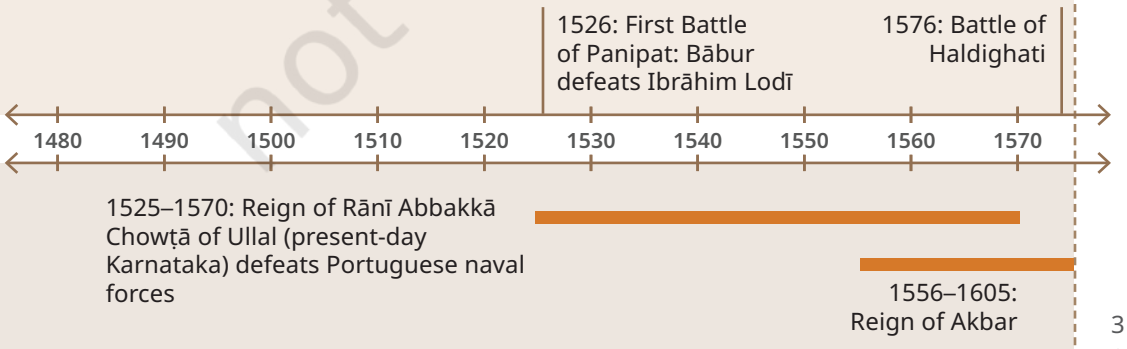
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Fig. 3.2. A painting depicting the Battle of Haldighati

by the Mughals. By this time, Akbar had already concluded several successful campaigns and the empire was at the peak of its power. In a strategic move, Rāṇā Udai Singh retreated to the Aravalli Hills along with a large number of his subjects.

In 1576, Akbar launched another attack on Mewar. This time, Mahārāṇā Pratāp, the son and successor of Rāṇā Udai Singh, fought against Mughal forces in the Battle of Haldighati. Continuing his fierce resistance, Mahārāṇā Pratāp modified his military strategy and adopted guerrilla warfare. He used the rugged Aravalli terrain to his advantage and conducted surprise attacks, raids, and ambushes on the Mughal forces and their networks. He continued to resist and eventually reclaimed most of his ancestral territories in the 1580s.



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The Battle of Dewair fought near Udaipur in 1582 was significant as it resulted in the collapse of key Mughal military outposts in Mewar and helped Mahārāṇā Pratāp reclaim control over Mewar.

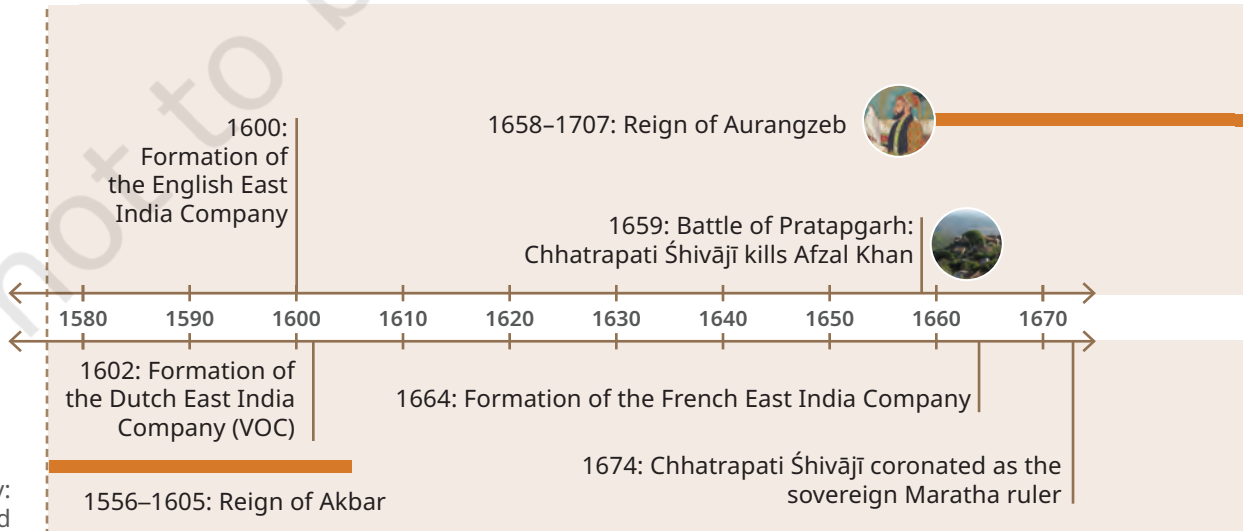
Mahārāṇā Pratāp's son and successor, Mahārāṇā Amar Singh, continued Mewar's tradition of military resistance against the Mughals. Jahāngīr made military advances towards Mewar in 1605, 1608, and 1609. But each attempt was countered by a strong and organised resistance from the Rajputs. Eventually, the Mughals were compelled to acknowledge Mewar's distinct political position.



Fig. 3.3. Victory memorial in Dewair, Rajasthan



Fig. 3.4. A 19th century miniature painting of Mahārāṇā Pratāp



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On one hand Mewar continued its defiance in the form of a strong, organised, and determined resistance, and on the other hand, the Mughal state began to recognise and appreciate Mewar's unique geo-political position with trade routes leading to the major port of Surat. Needing peace with the rulers of Mewar more than ever, the Mughals were eventually compelled to negotiate a treaty. Under the terms of the treaty, Mewar leadership was exempted from personal attendance at the Mughal court, thus clearly acknowledging Mewar's continued autonomy.

LET'S RECALL

Do you remember reading about the Battle of Haldighati in your Grade 8 textbook? You may recall that the Bhil community provided crucial, tactical, and logistical support to Mahārāṇā Pratāp in his resistance against the Mughals. Their extensive knowledge of the Aravalli terrain, expertise in guerrilla warfare, skills in archery, role as guides, and above all, their bravery strengthened Mewar's resistance. This enduring alliance was later commemorated in Mewar's state emblem (Coat of Arms), which depicts a Rajput warrior and a Bhil warrior with the local deity Eklingji (Shiva) shown at the centre.



Fig. 3.5. Mewar's Coat of Arms





1658–1707: Reign of Aurangzeb



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LET'S EXPLORE

After the death of Mahārāṇā Pratāp, renowned poet Dursā Arhā gave a vivid account of Mahārāṇā Pratāp in the following lines:

> *O Pratap, you kept your horses unbranded, your head unbowed, your fame untarnished. You were strong enough to carry on your work against heavy odds. You never participated in the Nauroz festival, nor did you mount guard for the imperial presence during Jharokha Darshan. You attained a very high place in this world.*

Fig. 3.6. Source: Rawat Saraswat, Dursā Arhā (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1983)



Identify any two specific actions mentioned in the text which show that Mahārāṇā Pratāp maintained his independence from the Mughal court.

DON'T MISS OUT



Other Rajput rulers like Kānhaḍa Deva Chauhān (Jalore), Rāṇā Hammīra Deva (Ranthambore), Rāṇā Kumbhā (Mewar), and Rāo Surjan Hāḍā (Bundi) put up a strong resistance at different points of time.

The Ahom Kingdom: Centuries of Endurance

The Ahom kingdom of Assam maintained its political independence for almost six centuries (1228–1826) and successfully resisted several invasions and attempts at annexation. The military strategy of the Ahoms relied on exploiting the local terrain rather than engaging in direct confrontation. Ahom commanders possessed detailed knowledge of Assam's forests, river systems, and monsoon cycles, which invading forces generally lacked. Despite repeated attempts by the Mughals to annex the Brahmaputra valley, the Ahoms successfully defended their territories against Mughal invasion.

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Fig. 3.7. A monument at Guwahati, Assam commemorating the Battle of Saraighat

The first Ahom–Mughal clash took place in 1615 near Samdhara. Mughal forces under Abu Bakr made early gains but were soon compelled to retreat. By 1616, the Ahoms had recovered the lost territory, setting a pattern that would recur over the next sixty years. In 1662, Mīr Jumlā captured the Ahom capital, Garhgaon. Subsequently, a treaty was imposed on King Jayadhvaj Singha. However, the king defied the Mughals and renounced the treaty within a year of the Mughal withdrawal, and the Ahoms retained their independence.

A decisive check on Mughal ambitions in the region came in 1671, when the Ahom commander Lachit Borphukan defeated a Mughal fleet at the Battle of Saraighat, securing the Brahmaputra as an effective territorial boundary. The Ahoms' successful resistance against the might of the Mughal empire is a remarkable story of bravery, pride, and endurance.

Ahom endurance rested on a combination of strategic alliance-building, guerrilla tactics, Assam's challenging geography, and the *Paik* system (about which you have read in Grade 8) of military-administrative organisation. The Ahom navy also played a key role, using light, fast boats, called *bāchārī*, built specifically for river warfare, which gave them an advantage over Mughal fleets.



Fig. 3.8. Model of a bāchārī boat

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Fig. 3.9. An aerial view of Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire

Vijayanagara Empire: Resilience against Expansion

Resistance to foreign invasions was not confined to northern India. In the Deccan and beyond, the expanding campaigns of the Delhi Sultanate steadily weakened the older kingdoms of the south. Malik Kāfūr, Alauddin Khiljī's general, attacked major cities and temples, including those at Warangal, Belur, and Madurai. Later, Muhammad bin Tughlaq's rise to power extended the Sultanate's influence even farther south, ultimately contributing to the decline of the Pandya Kingdom and the eventual emergence of a new sultanate territory known as the Madurai Sultanate.

It was against this backdrop that the Vijayanagara Empire rose in 1336 to check the expansion of the Sultanate into peninsular India. Harihara and Bukkā established the independent kingdom of Vijayanagara—meaning 'City of Victory'—located near present-day Hampi, Karnataka. The region's geography, including a formidable river and rugged, rocky terrain, provided Vijayanagara with a strong natural defence and a secure base for military operations. They made determined efforts to defend and expand their state's frontiers. The empire gradually expanded by annexing territory south of the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers and became one of the richest and most influential states, encouraging the flourishing of literature in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Sanskrit. Vijayanagara's capital city became a centre of trade, culture, and political power in southern India.

During Bukkā's reign, Vijayanagara made major territorial gains, including the subjugation of the Madurai Sultanate and the annexation of Arcot. In 1342, the ageing Hoysāla king Vīra Ballāla III

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fought the Madurai Sultanate, resulting in the Battle of Kannanur, which was a pivotal episode in this struggle. However, the Sultan launched a surprise counter-attack and executed the Hoysāla ruler. For almost four decades, Vijayanagara wrestled with the Sultans of Madurai. Later, the campaign against Madurai Sultanate was led by Kumāra Kampana, the son of Bukkā. He killed the Sultan and brought the Sultanate of Madurai to an end. Kumāra Kampana also reinstated the divine images in the Rajasimheshwara Temple at Kanchipuram and the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam.

LET'S RECALL

In Grade 8, Part I, you have read about how the Vijayanagara Empire reached its peak in the 16th century, under its celebrated ruler, Kṛiṣhṇadevarāya, who expanded and secured the empire's dominance over the Deccan. Under his rule, the empire achieved both military power and cultural glory. Kṛiṣhṇadevarāya provided grants to many temples, including Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and the Vitthala temple in his own capital Vijayanagara, which had many grand temples, palaces and other buildings. After winning many wars against his neighbours, Kṛiṣhṇadevarāya died of illness in 1529.



Decades later, the Vijayanagara army was defeated at the Battle of Talikota in 1565 by an alliance of the Deccan sultanates. In the aftermath, the city of Vijayanagara was sacked and largely abandoned, while the empire gradually fragmented. Several of its territories came under the rule of smaller Nāyaka kingdoms.

DON'T MISS OUT

By the end of the 16th century, the Vijayanagara Empire had split into smaller kingdoms ruled by the Nāyakas. They also continued the tradition of resistance—not always through military action, but sometimes through bold acts of defiance aimed at Mughal authority. An interesting account is of Muthu Vīrappa Nāyak III of Madurai. Local tradition holds that the Mughal emperor would dispatch a royal slipper to rulers as a symbol of imperial supremacy and domination. Recipient rulers were expected to receive the slipper ceremonially at the borders of their territories and pay tribute. When the slipper arrived at the borders of Madurai, Muthu Vīrappa Nāyak refused to observe this protocol. In an act of defiance against

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this ritual of subordination, he refused to meet the procession at the border, compelling the Mughal emissary to carry the token right up to the palace hall. Even then, Muthu Vīrappa Nāyak refused to bow before the slipper. Instead, he forced the Mughal representatives to place it on the floor, put his own foot inside it, and mockingly asked why the Badshah had not sent a matching pair. He then had the messengers expelled from his kingdom.





Fig. 3.10. A painting of Chhatrapati Śhivājī with his personal guards

Marathas: The Quest for Swarājya

The Marathas were a formidable force in the Deccan particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries. The establishment of an independent Maratha state in 1674 is closely associated with the rise of Chhatrapati Śhivājī. The Marathas had been involved in the region's political affairs for centuries. Their knowledge of the Deccan's complex geography and landscape, along with their bravery and martial abilities, made them a formidable force in both administrative and military affairs.

LET'S RECALL

You have already learnt about the foundation of Maratha power and the rise of Chhatrapati Śhivājī in your Grade 8 textbook, Part I. Think back to his struggle and the ways in which he built and strengthened his kingdom. What do you remember about the strategies and institutions that helped the Marathas establish their power?



Over time, the Marathas emerged as a prominent political and military force in India. In the Maratha state, territorial control and sovereignty were closely linked to the idea of *swarājya*, or self-rule. Chhatrapati Śhivājī is regarded as one of the earliest proponents of

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the spirit of *Swarājya*—the idea of an independent, self-governing territory free from external control.

As you have read in your Grade 8 textbook, the Marathas fought many battles against the Mughals and other powers. The prolonged warfare exhausted the Mughal Empire economically and politically, to the point that Aurangzeb spent more than two decades in the Deccan in an attempt to control the region and subdue Maratha resistance. As political boundaries shifted constantly, the Marathas relied on strategic alliances to extend their control over diverse territories. Through these alliances, they built a vast network of tributary relationships that extended their influence far beyond the areas under their direct rule. The key to the success of the Marathas was their bravery and military skills.

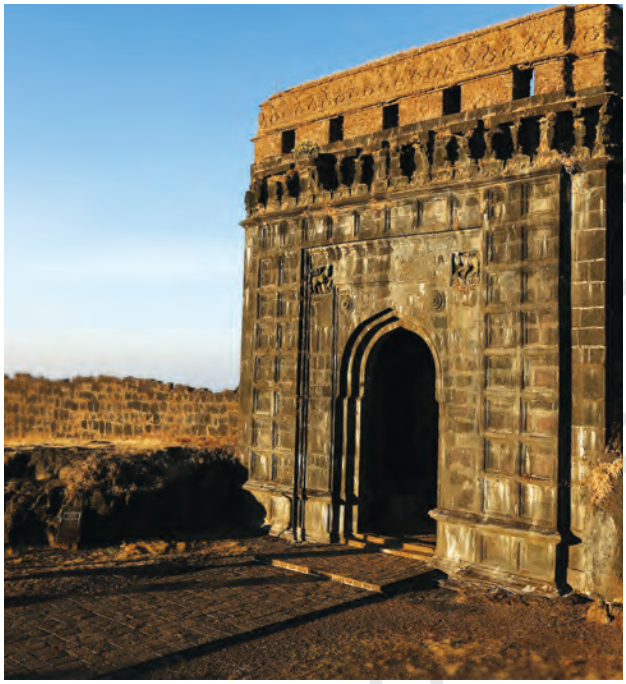


Fig. 3.11. Raigad fort



Fig. 3.12. Sinhagad fort

The Marathas strategically built forts such as Raigad and Sinhagad which played a crucial role in resistance against the Mughals. The Maratha territories were characterised by hills and deep valleys. Maratha forts, therefore, functioned as strategic nuclei for guerrilla warfare. This network of forts enabled the Marathas to launch swift attacks from different directions and provided safe retreats. Different types of forts were constructed to serve distinct purposes, and while some functioned as advanced outposts, those on the frontiers served

as fallback capitals to avoid total defeat. Many formed part of the wider defensive network, and most were designed to withstand prolonged sieges. Forts also served as centres of administration and judicial authority. Strong defences, water sources, and armouries provided resilience and self-sufficiency, enabling the Marathas to sustain prolonged resistance during sieges.

DON'T MISS OUT

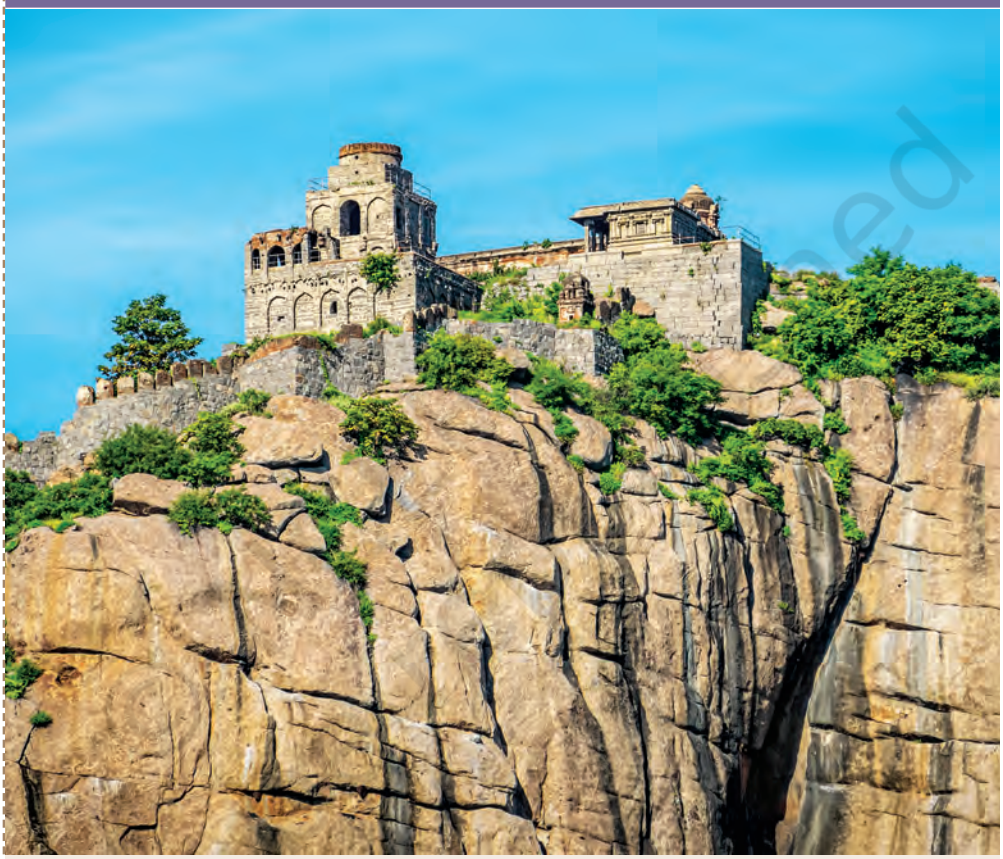


Fig. 3.13. Gingee Fort or Senji Fort in Tamil Nadu

The Fort of Senji, or Gingee, is situated in the Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. It is considered a marvel of military and civil engineering and military architecture. One of its gateways is said to have been designed so that a small contingent of soldiers could defend it against an army of ten thousand. The fort came under the control of several powers, including the Vijayanagara Nayakas, Bijapuri Sultans, Mughals, Marathas, French, and English. Its changing control also highlights the fort's strategic importance and centrality to the political affairs of the region.

In 2025, the Fort was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee in Paris.



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Fig. 3.14. Some political dynasties in the Indian subcontinent in the 17th century

The Sikhs: A Story of Spiritual and Political Resilience

A major spiritual movement was founded by Guru Nānak in the late 15th century which later came to be known as Sikhism. It emphasised devotion to one God, social equality, and the rejection of rituals. Under Guru Nānak and his successors, the Sikh community expanded and flourished across the subcontinent, particularly in the Punjab, Sindh, and Gangetic plains. During this period, Punjab was largely under the Lodī Sultans and later under the Mughals. It was a fertile, densely populated region, with a large peasant population.

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Fig. 3.15. A 19th century image of Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar

Due to the growing socio-cultural influence of the Sikh Gurus, the Mughal state increasingly intervened in their affairs from the beginning of the 17th century. As the Guru's influence was increasing, Jahāngīr ordered the execution of Guru Arjan Dev (the fifth Sikh guru) on the pretext of the Guru's alleged support to Jahāngīr's rebellious son, Khusrau Mirza. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev marked a significant turning point in the history of the Sikhs and contributed to a gradual shift in their organisational and political orientation. Later, Guru Hargobind (the sixth Sikh Guru) was detained by Jahāngīr in Gwalior Fort. During this period, the Sikhs visited Gwalior in large numbers and paid their respects to the Guru from outside the fortress. In 1675, Aurangzeb ordered the execution of Guru Tegh Bahādur, the ninth Sikh Guru. The martyrdom proved a turning point in Indian history. The brutality of the Mughal state against the Sikh Gurus particularly Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahādur, and the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh has few comparisons in history. The valour and sacrifice of the Gurus for the cause of the faith became the defining features of Sikhism. Beyond political motivations, the act was also deeply rooted in the rigid religious and discriminatory practices of the Mughals. The martyrdom of the Sikh Gurus to uphold their faith and principles firmed the conviction of the Sikhs that persecution had to be met with firm resistance and resilience. Such persecution and political pressure could only be countered through collective organisation, and armed resistance as and when required. Many armed conflicts took place between the Sikhs and the Mughals. Guru Hargobind established the *Akāl Takht*, a seat of temporal authority, to administer justice and address matters of governance. Scholars suggest that the establishment of the *Akāl Takht* was intended, in part, to counter Mughal political dominance.

The concept of *mīrī-pīrī* became vital in this context, representing the Guru's authority over both spiritual (*pīrī*) and worldly (*mīrī*) affairs. In Amritsar, the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) represented spiritual authority (*pīrī*), while temporal power (*mīrī*) was represented by the *Akāl Takht*. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh established and developed a

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Sikh order known as the Khalsa. The Khalsa adopted a distinct martial code in response to the changing socio-political environment. Through this process, spiritual identity became closely intertwined with the pursuit of political identity.

Due to sustained Mughal hostility, including the execution of Guru Gobind Singh's sons, the Sikhs organised themselves into armed groups known as *misals* to defend themselves and the territories through military and administrative structures (Eventually, these *misals* became a network of confederacies that united the Sikhs against the Mughals.). In this process, many people from peasant communities became soldiers and fought against Mughals in Punjab.

Jat Resistance

During the 17th century, the Jats, a farming community from Ganga–Yamuna Doab were burdened with heavy taxes and exploitation by Mughals. These economic hardships combined with Aurangzeb's religious policies led to growing resentment amongst the Jats. In 1669, under the leadership of Gokul Jat, they rebelled against the Mughal Empire. Mughal forces struggled for many months to suppress the uprising.

However, the Jats continued their resistance. In 1686, they took advantage of Aurangzeb's prolonged military campaigns in the Deccan and rebelled once again under the leadership of the *zamindars* of Sinsani and Sogar. The Mughals sent several armies to suppress the rebellion, leading to a long and fierce struggle in which both sides suffered heavy losses. By 1691, the Mughals had gained the upper hand. Yet, the Jat resistance continued.

DON'T MISS OUT

Niccolao Manucci, an Italian traveller, wrote an extensive account about India during his journey (17th century) including descriptions of Jat resistance against the Mughals.



Bhakti Tradition: Affirmation of the Spirit of Resilience

India underwent a profound transformation in its religious and spiritual landscape between the 11th and 17th centuries. Bhakti—a tradition of personal devotion to the divine—was expressed through devotional

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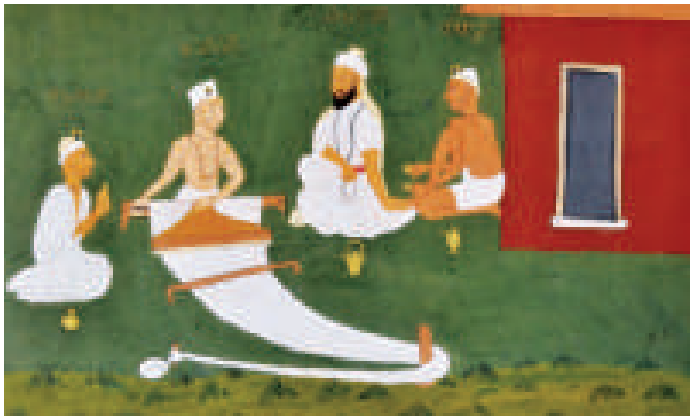


Fig. 3.16. Saint Kabīr with Nāmdeva, Rāidās, and Pipājī, Jaipur, early 19th century

hymns composed in local languages. From the 7th century onwards, the rise and expansion of Bhakti in peninsular India shaped social, religious, and political life. Bhakti tradition emphasised inclusivity, socio-religious equality, simplicity, and connecting with people's everyday life. For instance, Eknāth composed in Marathi and propagated a devotional path that was accessible to all without dependence on institutions.



LET'S EXPLORE

Explore the contributions of the Nayanar saints (devotees of Śhiva) like Karaikal Ammaiyar and the Alvar saints (devotees of Viṣhṇu) like Andal to the spread of the Bhakti tradition in peninsular India. Discuss their teachings and devotional practices and the ways in which they connected with people through their hymns.



DON'T MISS OUT

Bhakti saints sang divine lores in different languages, but the unifying factor was devotion to the ultimate reality.

From the 14th century onwards, a strong wave of Bhakti spread across northern India. Rāmānanda, a prominent saint of this period, helped bridge the Bhakti traditions of southern and northern India. The tradition developed into two broad streams—*Nirguṇa bhakti*, devoted to a formless divine, and *Saguṇa bhakti*, centred on a divine with attributes. One of the remarkable features of the Bhakti tradition was the diverse social and cultural background of its saints.

The Bhakti tradition not only provided a spiritual refuge, but also played a role in preserving and transmitting core cultural traditions. When the construction of temples faced restrictions or existing temples were being destroyed, devotees could turn to non-material forms of worship, such as *nām kīrtan* (the recitation of the divine Name). This made devotional practice less dependent on

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physical structures that could be destroyed. Bhakti flourished through local songs and community participation (*satsang*), making it accessible to wider sections of society and more difficult to suppress. For instance, Sankardev composed the *Kīrtana Ghosha,* a highly respected work that remains central to present-day Vaishnava traditions.



Fig. 3.17. King Pratap Rudra of Odisha bowing to Chaitanya Mahāprabhu

Bhakti saints such as Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Guru Nānak used community singing to bridge social divides. Community singing, or *sankīrtan*, drew large gatherings and fostered a shared sense of community and collective emotion among devotees. In some instances, it also became an act of defiance. For example, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu led public *sankīrtan* in Bengal to protest against restrictions imposed by a Qazi on devotional practices. In Rajasthan, religious orders such as the Dādu Panth and Niranjani Sampradāya provided a form of stability. Some of them even maintained standing armies of warrior ascetics to protect trade routes, facilitate the movement of saints, and provide educational and medical services.

DON'T MISS OUT

The widespread popularity of Indian literature also strengthened social resilience over time. The two great epics, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, were translated into many regional languages. Tulsidas, a well-known Bhakti saint from northern India, composed the *Rāmcharitmānas* in Awadhi, a widely spoken variety of Hindi in the Awadh region of present-day Uttar Pradesh. By doing so, he brought the story of Rāma into households across the region. The work played a transformative role in the Bhakti tradition by making the spiritual knowledge and teachings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* accessible to wider sections of society.



The Bhakti tradition's emphasis on equality and inclusion gradually encouraged greater participation of women. Many rose to prominence as saints, coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. They expressed their spirituality through devotional hymns composed in their own languages. The use of local languages strengthened shared identities and fostered a sense of solidarity.

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DON'T MISS OUT



Fig. 3.18. A stamp commemorating Atukuri Molla

Atukuri Molla, a Telugu poet, composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Telugu, now known as the *Molla Rāmāyaṇam.* Her father was a potter in Gopavaram, a village in Badvel Mandal, Andhra Pradesh. She also recited the *Rāmāyaṇa* at the court of Kṛiṣhṇadevarāya.



Some Bhakti saints left their homes and devoted themselves entirely to the divine. Akkā Mahādevi (from present-day Karnataka) and Lāl Ded (from present-day Kashmir), both Shaivites, renounced worldly comforts and attachments, living as ascetics. In contrast, Bahināi, a saint from Maharashtra, fulfilled her familial duties while following the path of devotion to the deity Vithoba.

Northern and Central Region

- Lāl Ded
- Guru Nānak
- Rāmānanda
- Kabīr
- Mīrābāī
- Rāidāsa
- Vallabhāchārya
- Sūrdās
- Tulsīdās

Eastern Region

- Jayadeva
- Chaitanya Mahāprabhu
- Krittibāsa
- Mādhava Kandalī
- Sankardev

Southern Region

- Basavannā
- Mādhavāchārya
- Annamāchārya
- Pothanā
- Poonthanam Namboothiri

Western Region

- Ekanātha
- Jñānadeva
- Muktābāī
- Nāmadeva
- Janābāī
- Chokhamelā
- Narasimha Mehtā
- Bhalana
- Pīpājī
- Tukārām

Fig. 3.19. Some prominent Bhakti Saints from 12th–17th centuries

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LET'S MAP

On a map of India, locate and label the present-day states associated with the saints mentioned in the above infographic. Also, find and mark a saint from your own state who is not on the list. Are you familiar with any songs, poems, or verses composed by these saints? Share with the class and explain what it means or what you like about it.



THINK ABOUT IT

***Vakh* (*vachan* or saying) of Lāl Ded**

To learn the scriptures is easy, to live them, hard.
The search for the Real is no simple matter.
Deep in my looking, the last words vanished.
Joyous and silent, the waking that met me there.

Fig. 3.20. Translation of a vakh composed by Lāl Ded



Lāl Ded says that it is 'easy' to learn scriptures but 'hard' to live them. What is the difference between knowing a rule and actually following it? Can you give an example from your daily life?

During this period, many devotees from diverse backgrounds contributed to the Bhakti traditions. Syed Ibrāhim Khān, popularly known as Raskhān, from present-day Uttar Pradesh, wrote in Braj and is known for his compositions like *Prem Vāṭikā* and *Sujān Raskhān*. Abdul Rahīm Khān-i-Khāna, popularly known as Rahīm, a Mughal military commander, wrote poetry in Braj to express his devotion to Kṛiṣhṇa. Bibi Lachimar (of Turkish origin) devoted herself to the Bhakti of Viṣhṇu.

DON'T MISS OUT

Worship of goddesses was a long-standing tradition in India, and during the period under study, kings continued to invoke goddesses such as Kālī, Durgā, Bhavānī, and other forms of Shakti as protectors in times of conflict. Annamarājā, ruler of Bastar kingdom, is believed to have received his sword from Mānikyadevī (Danteśhvarī), while Kumāra Kampana was believed to have used a goddess-given sword against the Sultanate forces at Madurai. Similarly, Śhivājī is also believed to have received a sword from the goddess Tuljā Bhavānī to resist the Mughals.



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Fig. 3.21. A Mughal painting depicting Akbar worshipping the Sun

Sulh-i-Kul

During the later part of Akbar's reign, the philosophy of *Sulh-i-kul* was adopted as a state policy. It represented 'peace with all', 'universal toleration', or 'absolute peace'. This policy had political implications, as it appears to have been intended to secure the support of political powers other than Muslims. Over time, Akbar also began to distance himself from certain orthodox elements and adopted practices that included reverence for the Sun. The Mughal state adopted a relatively inclusive approach during the later part of his reign.

Within the Indian religious, spiritual, and philosophical landscape, the Bhakti tradition emerged as a transformative force. It spread across the Indian subcontinent, taking distinct forms in different regions and social contexts. It played a crucial role in shaping and preserving India's spiritual landscape and social fabric.

DON'T MISS OUT

Sufism began to expand in the subcontinent with the arrival of the Turks. It was a mystical dimension of Islam that generally adopted a comparatively liberal outlook towards the world. It emerged in West Asia as a form of spiritual response to the worldly orientation of some *Ulema* (Islamic theologians and jurists) and the orthodoxy of *Shariat* (Muslim jurisprudence and law). Sufism spread through various orders, or *silsilahs*. During the Delhi Sultanate, the Chishti and Suhrawardi orders became prominent, while under the Mughals, the Qaddiriyya and Naqshbandiya orders gained importance. Sufi *khanqahs* (hospices) and shrines developed as centres of popular religious life and also played a role in social and political affairs. Sufis also contributed to the spread of Islam. In India, Sufis adopted many local practices to connect with the wider population, including using Indian languages such as Hindavi and Bengali. Some Sufis also incorporated yogic practices, such as *prāṇāyāma*, known in Persian as *habs-i-dam*.



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Temples: The Resilience of Sacred Sites

Temples functioned as central pillars of the region's socio-economic and political life. These religious institutions evolved into major economic hubs that managed extensive land grants, provided employment to hundreds of specialised workers, and served as financial institutions for local traders. Rulers used temple patronage to strengthen their political legitimacy. Beyond their spiritual and religious functions, temples facilitated social integration and served as centres of education and culture, where artistic traditions such as Bharatanatyam and many other art forms were preserved. They also exercised quasi-judicial authority, collecting local taxes and administering legal penalties.

Temples also served as sources of legitimacy for political authority. The deities of these temples were regarded as protectors of the state and its people. In some cases, the deity was regarded as the ruler, while the actual ruler governed as the deity's deputy. For example, the Gajapati rulers of Odisha called themselves the *Rauta* (deputy) of Jagannath. Similarly, the Kachhwāhā rulers of Jaipur governed on behalf of Govindadevajī, while the Rajput rulers of Kota regarded themselves as representatives of Rāma.

Temples in India also functioned as significant economic institutions. They provided employment to a wide range of groups, including architects, artisans, sculptors, priests, musicians, and administrative staff. As substantial landholders, temples received donations, endowments, and land grants, often given as acts of



Fig. 3.22. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam

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Fig. 3.23. Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur

religious merit. The Brihadeeswara (Rajarajeshvara) temple at Thanjavur exemplifies this, having received extensive donations of gold, ornaments, and vessels. This wealth enabled temples to support irrigation works and agrarian development, reinforcing their role in economy and the society. Temples also extended credit to cultivators, village assemblies, and merchant groups. This convergence of economic and religious activity contributed to the emergence of temple towns such as Thanjavur, Kanchipuram, and Puri, as prominent urban centres.

Between the 7th and 13th centuries, temple construction proliferated across the subcontinent under the patronage of various dynasties. However, from the 11th century onwards, we begin to see many instances of temple destruction, particularly during the Ghaznavid and Ghurid invasions. From the 12th century onwards, many temples and *maṭhs* were not only plundered or destroyed, but mosques were also sometimes constructed on the same sites.

While there were instances of the destruction of sacred sites, local rulers, merchant guilds, and religious communities actively maintained and restored temples during this period, allowing sacred centres to continue functioning. Local rulers who negotiated alliances with the central authority were generally allowed to build major structures. A royal temple built by Vīra Someśhvara at Kannanur, an earlier Hoysāla regional capital, was converted into a

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Fig. 3.24. Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi

mosque under the Sultanate rule before being restored as a temple by Kumāra Kampana. Further examples of temple construction and restoration include the reconstruction of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple by Toḍar Mal, revenue officer of Akbar, and Rājā Mān Singh, chief of the Rajput Kachhwāha family (the temple was later demolished during the reign of Aurangzeb. The present temple was built by Ahilyābāī Holkar adjacent to the original site in 1780). The latter also patronised the construction of the Govind Devji Temple at Vrindavan, one of the largest temples built in northern India during this period. The Bundela king, Vīr Singh, patronised the construction of the new Keshav Dev Temple at Mathura.

From the 16th century onwards, a shift can also be seen in the design and location of Indian temples. Temples built during this period were often situated in less visible locations, along narrow lanes, with entrances that did not open onto main streets. Many lacked the conventional appearance of temples, and instead, resembled ordinary houses. Detailed exteriors became less common, and tall *shikharas* were frequently avoided. This pattern is captured in the term 'havelī temple', used by some historians to describe temples constructed in the style of *havelī* residences.

It reflects how communities adapted temple architecture to avoid destruction. Such examples can be found in Delhi, Varanasi, and Rajasthan, including the Jagat Shiromani Temple.

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The Jagat Shiromani Temple, also known as Mīrābāī Temple, was built by Queen Kanakwati, wife of Mān Singh I, in Amer. The temple is dedicated to Kṛiṣhṇa and Mīrābāī.



Fig. 3.25. Jagat Shiromani Temple, Amer

DON'T MISS OUT

Jagat Singh challenged the Mughal authorities through his architectural projects. In addition to fortifying Chittor, he built a large Jagdish temple near his palace in Udaipur. Scholars suggest that the temple was a religious and political response to the Jama Masjid constructed by Shah Jahan in Delhi.



Fig. 3.26. Jama Masjid, Delhi



Fig. 3.27. Jagdish temple, Udaipur



Indian Economy: Agriculture, Trading Networks, and Merchant Communities

The expansion of the agrarian economy and the gradual proliferation of centres of artisanal and craft production were significant developments of the early second millennium CE.

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The main source of state income was land revenue, and the expanding frontiers of empires resulted in an increase in the area under cultivation. Over time, the collection of land revenue became increasingly strict and exploitative at various levels of administration. For example, during the reigns of Alauddin Khiljī and Mohammad bin Tughlaq, the land tax was raised to as much as 50 per cent of total agricultural production, in addition to other taxes. Moreover, the Sultans of Delhi, and later the Mughals had limited role in maritime trade. Their concerns regarding coastal areas and port cities were largely confined to political and military matters and, to some extent, the collection of customs duties. As a result, coastal areas and their commerce remained largely in the hands of regional power holders and local communities.

Irrigation technologies such as rope pulleys, spinning wheel, and Persian wheel were widely used by local populations, resulting in enhanced agricultural and economic output. In the Vijayanagara Empire, agricultural production varied greatly in both form and scale. Consequently, irrigation systems ranged from extensive canal networks to small rain-fed patches of land. A defining feature of the Vijayanagara economy was its investment in small-scale irrigation.

DON'T MISS OUT

During this era *hunḍī* was widely used as a financial instrument and can be compared in some respects to modern bank cheques. It functioned as a bill of exchange, facilitating large-scale commercial transactions without the need to carry large amounts of currency. It was also a trusted means of secured long-distance remittance. *Hunḍīs* were operated through networks of money-changers known as *sarrāfs* and their agents, called *gumasthas*.



Fig. 3.28. A hunḍī stamped by the Bank of Bengal, Agra, with a denomination of one rupee and eight annas



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THINK ABOUT IT

What do you think made *hunḍī* a safer and more convenient choice than physically transporting money across long distances?



Fig. 3.29. A painting of a sarrāf or money changer

In addition to agricultural expansion, the period witnessed significant growth in trade and commerce. India's inland regions were connected to trade routes in Central Asia, facilitating a substantial flow of goods and artisanal knowledge, much of it carried by large groups of traders known as caravans. Inland trade networks expanded alongside the growth of urban centres. Local trading communities such as the *banjārās*, along with revenue-collecting officials, played a crucial role in connecting rural regions with urban centres.

From the 13th century onwards, seaborne trade grew significantly, with trading networks linking western India to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Gradually, India became a major centre of the Indian Ocean trading network, with the eastern Mediterranean and China forming its vital axes until the arrival of Europeans in the subcontinent.

DON'T MISS OUT

Kṛiṣhṇadevarāya, the Vijayanagara ruler, greatly emphasised in his *Amukthamālyadā* the importance of oceanic trade, maintenance of ports, and fair treatment of foreign traders. He writes,

> *Manage your ports well, and let commerce increase in horses, elephants, and gems, pearls, and sandal-paste. When drought, sickness, and calamity make foreigners seek refuge in your lands, shelter them in keeping with their station. Give out gardens, yards, and mines to those whom you wish to favour...*



Fig. 3.30. A translated excerpt from the Amukthamālyadā

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The World of the Indian Ocean: Continuity and Change

With the turn of the 16th century, two major developments occurred—the arrival of Europeans for trading ventures and the Mughal conquest of northern India. The Europeans, particularly the Portuguese, and the Mughals entered an already established economic system in which local institutions and networks played a crucial role. The Portuguese attempted to establish greater control over oceanic trade and commerce, while the Mughals sought to centralise control over the land revenue system. European involvement, which began with the Portuguese and was later followed by the Dutch, English, Danes, and French, developed into a complex system of interactions between European trading companies and Indian merchant networks. Subsequently, the Indian subcontinent became a major global intersection of commerce and cross-cultural exchange.

Simultaneously, new merchant groups emerged in coastal and hinterland areas. They controlled wealth, production system, supply chains, and at the same time, funded states and supported their political allies. The peasantry was involved in the production of raw materials, while weavers, dyers, bleachers, and other groups were working regularly to ready the deliveries of cotton textiles. Before the 15th century, the Indian Ocean trading network had a huge presence of Arab, Chinese, and Indian merchants. In subsequent centuries, Gujarati merchants in particular emerged as significant



Fig. 3.31. A painting of a woman weaver

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beneficiaries of the changing commercial order. Alongside them, numerous merchant groups flourished in Malabar, Coromandel, and Bengal, adapting to the growing influence and competition of the British, Dutch, and French.

These merchant groups were not merely involved in the buying and selling of goods, but were closely connected to the political economy, facilitating and financing trade. Indian merchants functioned as traders, shippers, bankers, money-changers, brokers, *dubhaśhīs* (interpreters and translators), diplomats, and bureaucrats.

Mercantile activities were not limited to a few, select communities. For instance, *vellalār*, who were traditionally agriculturists and pastoralists, participated in the Indian Ocean trading network in various capacities. From the 16th century onwards, many peasant groups began to participate actively in commerce. Some of them even learnt new languages, including Portuguese, French, English, and Persian, to facilitate their commercial activities.

THINK ABOUT IT



Identify some cultural and economic pillars that exist in any community (places of faith, traditions, business, and trade, etc.). How do you think these contribute to resilience within a society facing invasions/external pressures?

Between 1000 and 1700 CE, despite frequent invasions, shifts in political authority, and unrest, the Indian economy remained dynamic. The economy was driven by adaptations of agricultural innovations and irrigation systems, markets, powerful merchant groups, advanced financial instruments like the *hunḍī*, and India's pivotal position in transcontinental Indian Ocean trade. This economic strength contributed to resilience and stability, giving people the resources they needed to resist politically and culturally. Thus, this period is best understood as a complex interplay of conflict and cooperation, defined by the deep interconnection between resistance and resilience. The Rajputs, Ahoms, Vijayanagara rulers, Marathas, Sikhs, and Jats, including many others, consistently defended their lands and identities. To safeguard their sovereignty, they used a strategic mix of direct military resistance, highly adaptive guerrilla warfare, knowledge of local terrains, diplomacy, and alliances.

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The resilience of Indian civilisation extended far beyond the battlefield to preserve its socio-cultural continuity.

Before we move on...



- Resilience is the ability of individuals, communities, and societies to endure difficulties, adapt to changing circumstances, and sustain their way of life despite challenges.
- Cultural traditions, shared beliefs, community support, knowledge, and economic resources can strengthen resilience.
- Resistance means actively opposing or challenging a force, authority, or threat, in order to protect political power, territory, interests, or cultural identity.
- Resistance may take the form of warfare, alliances, diplomacy, negotiation, or other political actions.
- The Bhakti tradition demonstrated resilience by adapting devotional practices, using local languages, encouraging community participation, and preserving traditions even when circumstances changed.
- Economic strength, through agriculture, irrigation, markets, merchant networks, financial practices, and trade, also contributed to resilience by providing resources that helped communities withstand periods of instability.
- The period from 1000 to 1700 CE was not simply a story of invasions and battles. It was also a story of how people resisted threats, adapted to changing circumstances, preserved their cultural identities, and built new forms of cooperation and exchange.

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Questions and activities



1. Choose the most appropriate answer.

   Resistance and resilience are closely connected because:

   a. Resistance always involves warfare.

   b. Resilience enables communities to endure difficulties and sustain resistance.

c. Resistance is possible only when a kingdom has a large army.

d. Resilient societies avoid all forms of conflict.

2. Why and how did groups such as the Sikhs, Marathas, and Rajputs assert their political power and identity during periods of changing political authority?

3. Why did some Rajput rulers decide to negotiate alliances with the Mughal power?

4. Imagine a market in a port town of India such as Surat, Masulipatnam, or Puducherry. You are a foreign trader from Italy or France and want to make a deal of cotton textiles. How would you secure the product in the local market? Whose help would you seek and what kind of challenges would you face in terms of language, quality of product, prices of commodities, etc.?

5. Watch any video at the given link (*https:// www.indianculture.gov.in/forts-of-india/tales-of-forts*) and analyse the various functions of forts and fortresses. How did rulers perceive the importance of forts in terms of strategic concerns.

6. What architectural changes occurred in temple construction during the period under study? How do these changes reflect upon the resilient nature of Indian civilisation?

7. A kingdom has limited military resources but possesses fertile agricultural land, strong local support, and detailed knowledge of its terrain.

   Explain two ways in which these resources could contribute to the kingdom's resilience when faced with a threat.

8. Consider the following statement:

   "A tradition becomes more resilient when people can carry it with them."

   Do you agree? Explain using examples from the Bhakti tradition.

9. Voices from the Past

   Choose any two of the following and write a short first-person account explaining what resilience means from that person's perspective:

   - A Bhakti saint
   - A Rajput soldier

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- An Ahom commander
- A Maratha administrator
- A merchant
- A Jat leader

10. Design a Fort

You are a military architect advising a ruler.

Draw a simple, labelled plan of a fort that includes the following:

- Residential complex
- Defensive walls
- Water source
- Food storage
- Escape route
- Watchtower
- Administrative area

Now, write a few sentences explaining how your design would help the kingdom withstand a long siege.

Notes

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