

## UNIT 4 MYSORE AND HYDERABAD

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this Unit is to:

- enable you to see the process in which the political formation of Mysore and Hyderabad evolved in the 18th century,
- show how this process was crucially different in the two regions, and
- indicate certain reasons as to why the two processes were different.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit we will take you to the situation in South India after the decline of the hegemony of the Mughals. Our focus will be on the emergence of the states of Mysore and Hyderabad. We will see here that in spite of the continuity of the earlier political institutions certain basic changes occur in the nature of the polities formed. This happened in different ways in Mysore and Hyderabad. While in Hyderabad the Mughal political institutions were weakened and used for regional consolidation, in Mysore on the other hand the Wodeyar dynasty was overthrown to form a stronger overhauled administration. Both the processes led initially to the consolidation of autonomy in the middle decades of the 18th century. That is the theme of this Unit. In both cases by the last decade of the 18th century the autonomy was eroded slowly (in Hyderabad) or violently terminated (in the case of Mysore) by the British.

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### 4.2 MYSORE

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The kingdom of Mysore lay south of Hyderabad. (see map 5). In the 18th century the rulers of Mysore, from the Wodeyars to Tipu Sultan, were to face the expansionist threat of the Marathas on the one hand and that of Hyderabad and Carnatic on the other, while the English were to exploit the situation to their advantage. One of the most well-known eighteenth century personalities is Tipu Sultan, almost a folk-hero

symbolising resistance to British aggrandisement and also an object of malignment in British accounts of their rise to power. Mysore was transformed from a viceroyalty of the Vijaynagar Empire into an autonomous state by the Wodeyar dynasty. It was left to Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan to establish Mysore as a major military power in the south of India. Haidar was of unaristocratic origin and hostile English contemporaries often termed him an usurper—this has influenced later historians. But he was an usurper in same sense as the **dalwai** or the prime minister, he replaced in Mysore was an usurper. The **dalwai** had reduced the titular Wodeyar king to a cipher and like the previous **dalwai**, Nanjraj, Haidar began as an official serving the state. He displayed his military genius in strengthening the army, in bringing under control the fiercely independent local chiefs or **poligars**, and in subjugating Bednove, Sunda, Seva, Canara and Guti. His greatest moment of triumph was when he chased the English troops within five miles of Madras and dictated a treaty in 1769. You will study further details of the military and diplomatic exploits of Haidar and Tipu Sultan in Block 3. In this Unit we shall study how Mysore was strengthened and established as a major regional power.

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### 4.3 WAR AND MILITARIZATION

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The significance of war and its companion militarization seems to go back further in the Mysore history. Burton Stein, in fact traces it back to the times of the historic Vijaynagar empire in 16th century. The Vijaynagar state was the first in South India to use fire arms in establishing its control over the local rajas and other external powers.

#### 4.3.1 The Local Chiefs

To understand as to why the early militarization in Mysore was necessary, it is important to understand the role played by the local chiefs. The local chiefs, mainly **poligars**, were descendants of the hunter-gatherers of the forests who had acquired military skills and local political leadership in the military service of the Vijaynagar empire. By the 18th century most of them had become powerful through two main factors — (a) the control of revenue and tribute from agriculture on their lands and (b) through the support of priests of the temples of their own community. This combined with the fact that the temples were also centres of trading activity made the local chiefs powerful forces who could affect the growth of any centralized state in Mysore. This further meant that a tussle of force and military might between Mysore and the **poligars** would be the determining factor in establishing a polity at Mysore.

#### 4.3.2 The 18th Century Thrusts

This tussle in 18th century was initiated by Chikkadeva-raja Wodeyar (1672-1704). Under him Mysore moved towards an unprecedented militarization. To sustain this increased military capacity he increased the general revenue collection by the state official and exempted lands held by his soldiers from revenue demands.

Haidar Ali, who had gradually worked up his way in the hierarchy of Mysore administration consolidated himself precisely with such tactics. He auctioned off large territories to ambitious warriors, who as tax farmers, pressed revenue demands upon the local chiefs. Haidar Ali refused these chiefs any claim to independence and if they resisted they were driven off their lands. By limiting the scope of these chiefs' activities, Haidar further eroded their local base. Tipu Sultan, his son, went further in the subjugation of the **poligars**. After expelling them he rented out their lands to either private individuals or government officials. Further, by insisting to pay a regular salary to his troops rather than pay them with spoils of war, Tipu was able to ensure that no vested interest could emerge in the army in a tie up with the local chiefs.

In certain respects Haidar and Tipu also tried to overcome certain weaknesses in the organisation of the army. There was an attempt to induce organizational discipline more strongly along European lines. For this French soldiers were recruited and used for training special troops. The French general De La Tour, whose detailed account of his service under Haidar is available to us, tells us that by 1761 the French personnel in the Mysore army had considerably increased. This must have helped in the training

of the infantry and the artillery. Secondly the European discipline attempted to conquer attitudes of hostility and ambivalence towards modern firearms and cannons as noted by Sanjay Subramaniam in the study of warfare in Wodeyar Mysore.



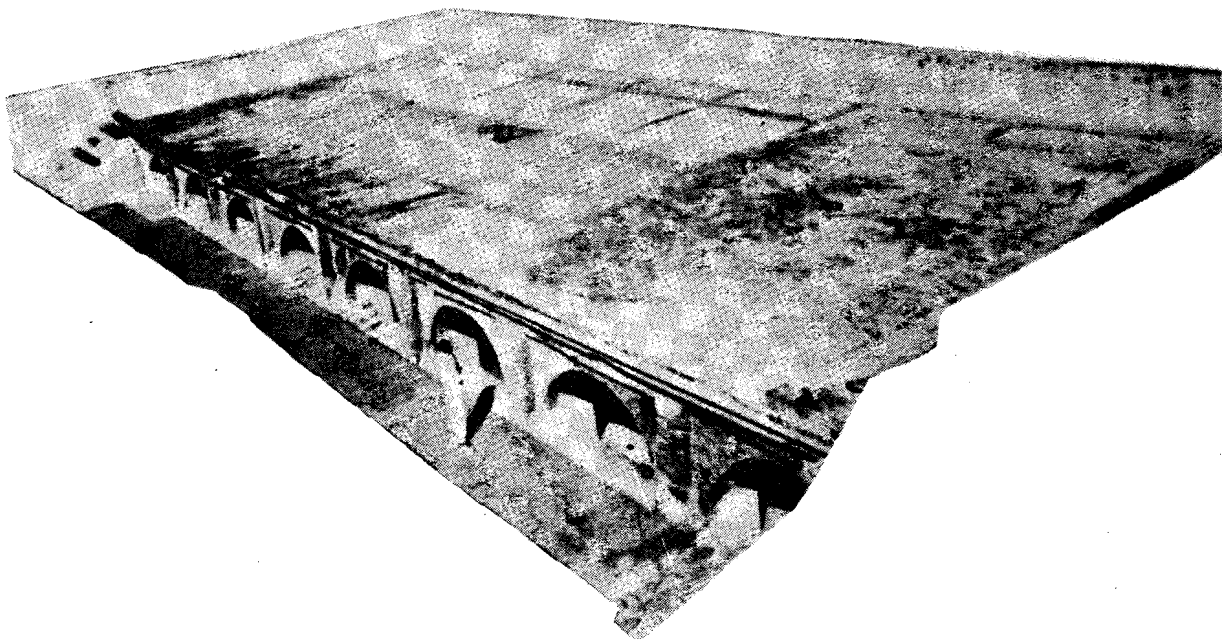
8. A war scene: The storming of Seringapatam

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#### 4.4 ADMINISTRATION

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Another achievement of Haidar and later Tipu was the consolidation of the apparatus of administration. In effect the older administration of the Wodeyars was retained



9. Seringapatam Jali

intact by Haidar and Tipu. The 18 departments of the administration ranging from military and revenue, to information were retained. Among the top officials individuals like Khande Rao, Venkatappa or Mir Sadik who had demonstrated their competence were retained inspite of political fluctuations. In fact changes were made only when these top officials were caught in cases of financial frauds. Thomas Munro was of the opinion that it was the scope offered by native ruler 'Hindu or Mussalman' for personal wealth and ambition which made the 'higher orders' prefer the native rulers rather than the 'humble mediocrity' of the company's service.

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## 4.5 FINANCE

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However, the distinguishing feature of the Mysore administration under Haidar and Tipu lay in building the base of their military-political authority by augmenting their financial resources for running the state. For this, both the merchant and the peasant, the twin movers of finance and production in 18th century Mysore had to be tackled.

### 4.5.1 Revenue from Land

Land were classified into various categories and the mode of assessment varied from one category to the other. **Ijara** land was leased on fixed rents to the peasants. On **hissa** land rent was assessed as a share of the produce. Further rent on watered land was paid in the form of a portion of the produce and on dry land in terms of money.

Land was sought to be kept under a system of survey and control combined with measures to encourage tillers by adequate relief and protection. A strong system of state control was evolved where an **amildar** controlled the revenue administration and **asufdar** looked after the legalities of rent disputes. Intermediaries were sought to be removed and a direct link between the interests of the state and the interests of the peasantry was sought to be established to maximise revenue for the state. Tipu took measures like denying revenue farming rights to main government officials to protect peasants against the revenue farmers.

The land revenue policy under Tipu even envisaged independent individual initiative to develop facilities for agriculture. Rent free land was gifted to individuals for the construction of irrigation and other infrastructure. Thus a class of people who could support agricultural development independently was sought to be created.

However, these measures were offset to a large extent by the practice of farming off lands and the jagir system whereby jagir was granted in perpetuity to a particular family. On the other hand the agricultural produce was by force of custom shared by entire village community. Here, as Nikhilesh Guha shows the majority of the share of produce was going to the dominant or upper castes who mostly performed ritual functions. So there was no way the agricultural surplus could be used to initiate development within the farming community. The cultivator was left without much resources for agricultural development.

Above all the state accorded priority to war. Marathas, Hyderabad, Carnatic and the English occupied the major attention of the Sultans. This meant, inevitably, a disproportionate rise in military expense and consequent rise in the revenue demand. Tipu for example, had raised his land revenue by 30% at the height of his defeats. No sustained agricultural development thus could be possible and forcing the cultivator to pay more was an inevitable consequence.

### 4.5.2 Revenue from Trade

Merchants had been playing an important role in the Mysore economy for the last couple of centuries. Linking the inland, external trade and revenue farming the significant amongst them held a portfolio of these diverse investments in trade and land. At the level of political operation they often used existing custom and traditional ties to get their interests protected amongst the rulers in power. Their intervention in land was significant enough. As Sanjay Subramaniam points out, that inspite of some of them being big revenue farmers the area under their cultivation prospered rather than declined. This indicated the importance they attached to land and the

significance of the trickling in of trade profits towards land. The prosperous merchants were then important actors in Mysore scene.

Tipu realised the importance of these traders and their trade. He appointed **asufs** to train officials to run trade centres established by him for keeping trade in control.

Trade capital was to be provided for these trade centres from the revenue collected by the state officials. Provision was made for accepting deposits of private persons as investment in the state trade with returns fixed around 35%. Private traders were allowed to participate here in sale of commodities thought to be beneficial to the state. Regular inspection of financial records of these centres was undertaken. Further, currency was strictly regulated.

However the dimension of the private traders' activities, in the context of the British domination of the sea trade, seems to have been perceived as a potential threat, perhaps in the form of alliance between the native merchants and the English. In 1785 he declared an embargo at his ports on the export of pepper, sandalwood and cardamoms. In 1788 he explicitly forbade trade with the English.

To sum up, Mysore in the 18th century was a polity consolidated under military might of Haidar and Tipu but under constant pressure from their own inability to evolve durable solutions to the forces which were held in check due to military strength. As a consequence we saw the potential which individuals within the polity had to make personal gains at the expense of the polity itself.

#### Check Your Progress 1

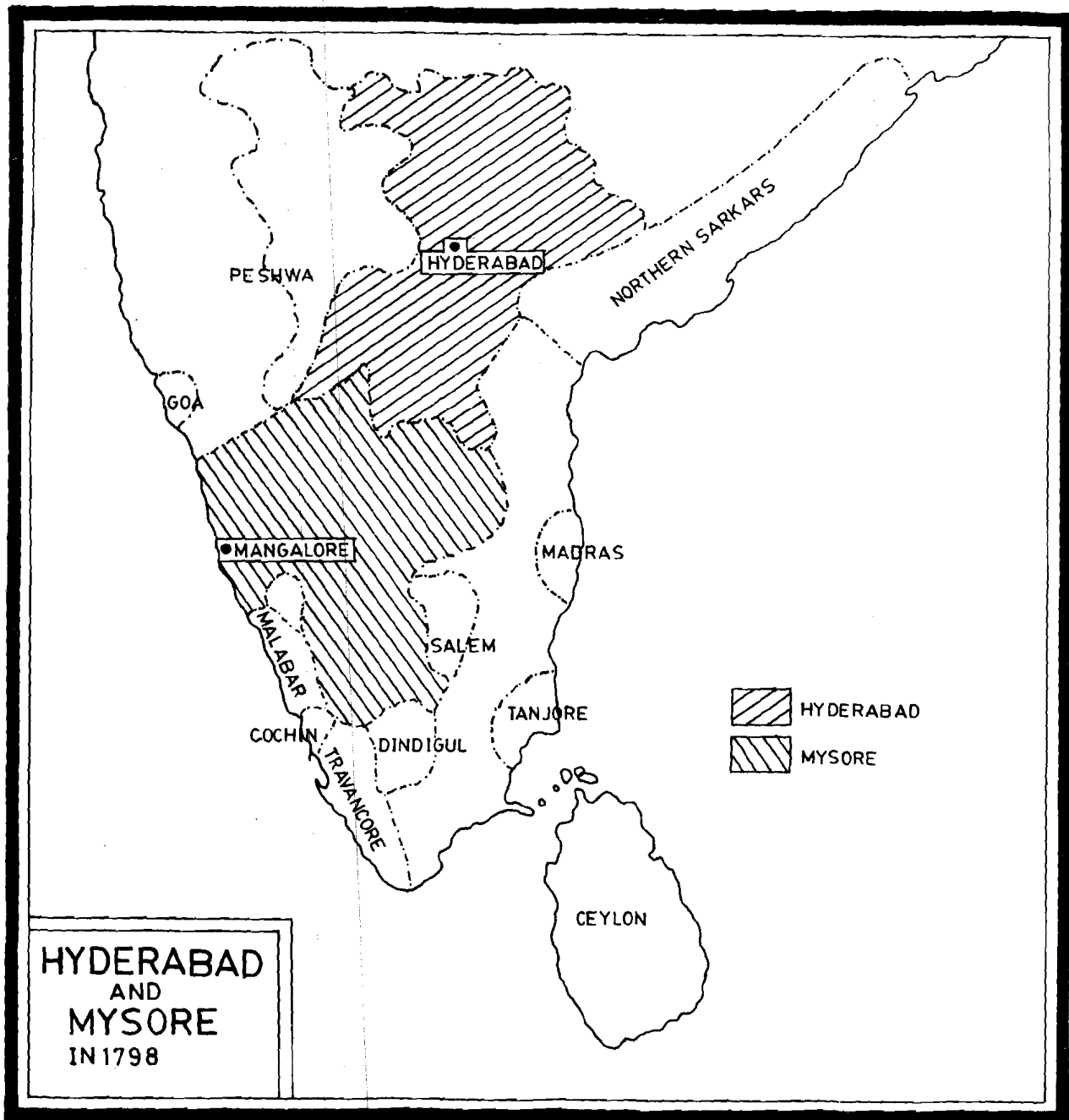
- 1) The local chiefs under Tipu
  - a) were freely asserting their authority
  - b) were kept completely under control
  - c) never existed
  - d) both a) and c)
  
- 2) War
  - a) was completely absent from the agenda of Mysore polity
  - b) was an important component of the techniques to establish Mysore polity
  - c) was to determine the balance of power between the local chiefs and the Mysore state in the 18th century
  - d) both b) and c)
  
- 3) Land revenue under Tipu
  - a) was mainly collected through revenue farmers
  - b) was mainly collected by government officials appointed by Tipu
  - c) tended to be collected by intermediaries
  - d) was not allowed to go into the hands of the Sultan
  
- 4) The profits of individual traders in Mysore
  - a) did trickle down to agriculture
  - b) never trickled down to agriculture
  - c) mainly went in the industry.
  - d) none of the above

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## 4.6 HYDERABAD

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Hyderabad polity seems to have followed a different kind of pattern from Mysore. Here the Mughal influence in the earlier days was more prominent. Normally during the days of Mughal empire the Subadar of Deccan was posted at Hyderabad. An attempt was made to introduce the Mughal administrative system (Read Unit 2 Sec. 2.2). In spite of continual Mughal-Maratha conflict and internal tensions this system served to highlight the order of Mughal empire in Deccan. However in the wake of the decline of the Mughal empire this system seems to have come into crisis.



Map 5

Nizam Asaf Jah was first appointed a subadar (in charge of province) by the Mughal emperor in 1713. But only after a military victory over his rival Mughal appointee in 1724 that he could take effective charge of the Deccan. After this period he stayed on in Deccan and went to the Mughal court only after leaving his appointee in charge. Subsequently, he removed the Mughal officials in Hyderabad and installed his own men. He also assumed the right of making treaties, wars and granting mansabas and titles. Now gradually the Mughal authority was reduced to a symbolic reading of Khutba etc. By the time of Nizam Ali Khan (1762-1803) Carnatic, Marathas and Mysore had all settled their territorial claims and some kind of a stable political pattern emerged in Hyderabad.

#### 4.6.1 Warfare and the Army

As elsewhere, the army was an important component of the polity that emerged in Hyderabad. The Nizam-ul-Mulk essentially followed a policy of allowing the existing jagirdari holdings. The military commanders and their troops were tied to the political system through their individual employer, mainly the nobles. Unlike Mysore, the local

chiefs authority in Hyderabad was allowed to remain in tact. Like in the Mughal army, the Hyderabad army too was maintained from the cash allowances drawn by the nobles from the Nizam's treasury.

The army was important to contain the Marathas, the Carnatic Nawab, Mysore or the English. However unlike Mysore, the thrust to gear up state finances directly for war seem to be definitely weaker than Mysore. Let us turn to the main source of finance—the land revenue system and see whether indeed there was a difference in emphasis in mobilising revenue for the state.

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## 4.7 LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

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The land revenue system in Hyderabad was different from Mysore in the sense that unlike Tipu and Haidar who made an attempt to directly control revenue through a huge bureaucracy, the rulers of Hyderabad allowed intermediaries to function.

M.A. Nayeem has noted the existence of *ijara* or revenue farming land. Secondly, there were a large number of *peshkush* zamindars whose lands were not officially assessed but required to give an annual tribute or *peshkush* on the basis of their own assessment records. Thirdly, Nayeem points out, that even where the zamindars and *deshpandes* (village chiefs) had to pay the land revenue assessed by the state, their consent was obtained.

While the revenue was supposed to be 50% of the produce, it was very rarely that this proportion was collected. The importance of intermediaries (between the state & land revenue payers) is established from the fact that the state's collection, i.e., *jan.abandi* was always lower than *Kamil* i.e., the assessment figure for revenue arrived at with the landlord's consent. As Nayeem shows, the difference between the two, i.e. *Kamil* and *Jama*, was the 'zamindar's share'. Secondly, from the documents on revenue of the Nizam period "we may conclude that the actual revenue too declined".

In Hyderabad jagirs or land grants for service to the state tended to become hereditary. While in Mysore there was an attempt to check this, in Hyderabad no serious measure to do so seems to have been taken. Moreover, the jagirdars (taking advantage of hereditary succession), became strong so that even in the context of declining actual revenue "the question of jagirdars receiving lesser revenue receipts from the jagirs assigned to them than the actual amount due to them, does not arise at all".

The land revenue administration in Hyderabad had officers under *amils* (provincial heads). Measures for regular assessment and survey were taken. Encouragement was given to the cultivator by the state policy of loans and reprieves.

However, all these features were undermined by the power and importance of intermediaries. We saw above that their role was decisive in the assessment and collection of revenue.

This in turn was to have important consequences in the shaping of Hyderabad polity under the Nizams. A network of intermediary interests on land seems to have existed which could be the political base for the competition to power and influence at the top.

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## 4.8 PATRONS AND CLIENTS

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Karen Leonard identifies loose "patron-client relationships" in the Hyderabad political system. The main patrons she identifies broadly as the Nizam and the powerful nobles. While the Nizam broadly maintained his hold, the circle of nobles around him changed from time to time.

The nobility in the Nizam's period did not have a uniform criteria for career advancement as under the Mughals. Personal relations with Nizam or military skills were becoming important. So to become powerful in Hyderabad, the mansab rank (as under Mughal system) did not prevent the rise of the noble. Many Zamindars or Jagirdars who could rally the smaller intermediaries behind them, could with a little military skill and diplomacy become powerful.

Earlier the ordered administrative hierarchy or formal land revenue regulations of the Mughals and restricted the scope of accumulating power and wealth. However now the institutional set up was weak enough to allow a straight away grab at the political stakes at the top.

#### 4.8.1 Vakils

Aiding this process of grabbing wealth and power was a network of intermediate clients called the **vakils**. These **vakils** acted as agents between Nizam and nobles, nobles and nobles and Nizam and outside powers. The **vakils** also provided opportunities for individuals within the huge and affluent establishments maintained by the Hyderabadi nobles.

The **vakils** normally acted on the basis of interests of individuals and were powerful only in so far as their patron was powerful. However switching of loyalties, for personal gain was common. In an atmosphere where no uniform criteria for career advancement existed, the **vakils** represented forces of individual initiative in the competition for power and wealth.

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### 4.9 THE LOCAL CHIEFS

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Unlike Mysore, the local chiefs under the Nizam continued to control their inherited land on the payment of tribute to the Nizam. Though they played the role of patrons like Nizams and his nobles, they were never fully integrated within the Hyderabad political system. Nor did their **vakils** maintain relationship with other rulers. The local chiefs did not even follow the life style of Hyderabad court and as such seemed content to remain out of the sphere of the court politics. However, they could become decisive individual factors when the Hyderabad court was weak.

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### 4.10 FINANCIAL AND MILITARY GROUPS

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Bankers; money-lenders and military commanders (usually mercenaries) played an important role in the political system of Hyderabad. They played a key role since they provided essential financial and military service. Their strength derived mainly from the community they came from and in contrast to the **vakils** they functioned as caste or community groups. Some of the main community or caste groups amongst the financial groups were the Agarwal and Marwaris while Afghans and Arabs were prominent military groups. By threatening to withdraw support and services these individuals and groups could at their level play an important role in the balance of the polity.

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### 4.11 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

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The administrative system seems to follow the trend of other aspects of the Hyderabad polity. The earlier Mughal institutions apparently continued but now allowing the consolidation of the vested interests, in the process allowing individuals to profit. The most illustrative is the case of the office of diwan who conducted most of the day to



day, affairs of the kingdom. Here instead of the diwan, the subordinate hereditary office of daftardars or the record keepers became more important. In the absence of salaried officials to conduct matters like revenue, these record keepers were able to exercise real control by deciding the amount of revenue by local deshpande or taluqdar and putting it on records. This allowed a lot of them also to make a huge amount of wealth.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) In Hyderabad the amount of revenue to be collected
  - a) was decided by the diwan
  - b) was decided by the Nizam
  - c) was decided by record keepers (daftardars) with the consent of deshpandes or local intermediaries
  - d) was decided by the people
  
- 2) The Vakils in Hyderabad were
  - a) prominent merchants
  - b) prominent soldiers
  - c) prominent men of arts
  - d) basically agents between various centres of power and influence
  
- 3) The rule of Nizam of Hyderabad after 1724
  - a) was completely under the Mughals
  - b) was symbolically under the Mughals
  - c) was completely under the French
  - d) was completely under the Portuguese
  
- 4) The local chiefs in Hyderabad
  - a) were completely subjugated by the Nizam
  - b) remained individual potentates
  - c) both b) and c)
  - d) never existed

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## 4.12 LET US SUM UP

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To sum up our look at the polities at Mysore demonstrated how in different ways weakly established or weakening institutions were allowing individuals to play a decisive role at different levels of the polity. In the process, Mysore emerged as a state which was in some respects through the military strength of Haidar and Tipu, able to establish a strong administration to overcome the inherent weakness of their institutional base. This to a certain extent restricted various individuals and forces but by no means finished them. Hyderabad on the other hand, allowed the vested interests in the administration to consolidate and through patron-client linkages from top to bottom established its polity.

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## 4.13 KEY WORDS

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**Portfolio investment:** In this unit indicates the diversity of investment made by the merchant capitalists.

**Revenue farmers:** Individuals to whom agricultural land allotted by a ruler in return of a fixed revenue demanded by the state.

**Patron:** A person who normally has the capacity to grant favours due to position or

influence. A client is the one who receives these favours and performs some service for the patron.

**Khutba:** Prayer for the emperor.

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#### **4.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES**

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**Check Your Progress 1**

1) (b) 2) (d) 3) (b) 4) (a)

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) (c) 2) (d) 3) (b) 4) (b)