

NCERT Solutions Class 8 Social Science

(Exploring Society India and Beyond)

Chapter 2 Reshaping India's Political Map

Question Answer (In-Text)

The big Questions (page 21)

Question 1. How did foreign invasions and the rise of new dynasties reshape India's political boundaries during this period?

Answer: Foreign invasions and the rise of new dynasties reshaped India's political boundaries during the medieval period (11th to 17th century A.D.). Turkic-Afghan invasions from the 11th century led to the Delhi Sultanate in 1192, fragmenting northwestern kingdoms. Babur's victory at Panipat in 1526 established the Mughal Empire, which unified much of India. New dynasties like Vijayanagara in the 14th century and the Bahmani Sultanate emerged in the southern part of India, resisting Delhi's control. Regional powers such as the Ahoms in the north east of India and Rajputs (mostly in current state of Rajasthan) maintained autonomy, creating a fragmented political map. Timur's invasion in 1398 weakened the Sultanate, while Mughal expansion under Akbar and Aurangzeb reached its peak but faced rebellions, resulting in fluid and contested boundaries.

Question 2. How did Indian society respond to invasions? How did India's economy adapt during times of political instability?

Answer: Indian society showed strong resistance to invasions. The Vijayanagara Empire, the Ahoms in the Battle of Saraighat in 1671, and the Rajputs in the Battle of Haldighati in 1576 all stood firm and preserved their regional identities. The Sikh Khalsa, formed in 1699, also defied Mughal power. Communities rebuilt temples and brought different cultures together. India's economy adjusted during political troubles. Despite of political instability, Indian economy continued to prosper due to many factors. Agriculture stayed strong through good irrigation systems. Trade moved well through ports like Calicut and Surat, helped by the hundi system for safe money transfer. Temples ran local economies. Artisans made textiles and weapons. Though heavy taxes hurt peasants, the spread-out systems of rule helped keep the economy stable.

Question 3. What impact did this period have on the lives of the people?

Answer: This period brought both hardship and growth to the lives of the people. Heavy taxes, sometimes reaching up to half the produce, along with repeated plunder, left peasants poor and caused famines in many areas. At the same time, trade and crafts continued to do well, though the profits mostly reached the wealthy classes. Culturally, the era saw great achievement. The temples of Vijayanagara, Mughal buildings like the Taj Mahal, and Sikh religious texts added richness to Indian heritage, even as iconoclasm and jizya brought pain to many. Figures like Rani Durgavati, Maharana Pratap, and Guru Tegh



Bahadur stood as symbols of resistance and courage. Villages held on to their local rule, and strong community bonds helped people adapt to changing and often unstable times.

Let's Explore

Question 1. Looking at Fig. 2.6, why do you think Ala-ud-din Khilji called himself 'the second Alexander'? (Page 26)



Answer: Ala-ud-din Khilji called himself 'the second Alexander' on his coin to show his ambition and military strength. He wanted to compare his conquests across north and central India and his defence against his Mongol invasions to Alexander the Great's achievements in building a vast empire.

Question 2. What kind of resources do you think were needed to maintain an army and wage war in those days? Discuss in groups the various types of expenditure involved, from weapons or food for soldiers to animals used in warfare, road construction, etc. (Page 26)

Answer: Maintaining an army in those days required a wide range of resources. Weapons such as swords, bows, and later gunpowder artillery were essential for combat. Soldiers' and animals needed a steady supply of food, including grain and other provisions. Animals like horses, elephants, and camels were important for both transport and fighting. Good infrastructure, including roads and bridges, was necessary to allow armies to move quickly and efficiently. Financing the army came from taxes imposed on common people and plunder from military campaigns, which paid for soldiers' salaries, equipment, and fortifications. In addition, skilled artisans were needed to produce weapons, and labourers supported logistics and construction work.

Question 3. Why do you think such locations were chosen for many of the medieval forts? Discuss pros and cons. (Hint: think of issues of strategy, security, vulnerability, etc.) (Page 31)

Answer: Medieval forts like Kumbhalgarh were built in strategic locations such as the Aravalli hills for several reasons.

The elevated terrain offered natural defence, better visibility for surveillance, and made it difficult for enemies to access. Surrounding forests provided resources. However, the isolation made it hard to get quick reinforcements, and the steep terrain complicated supply lines and construction.



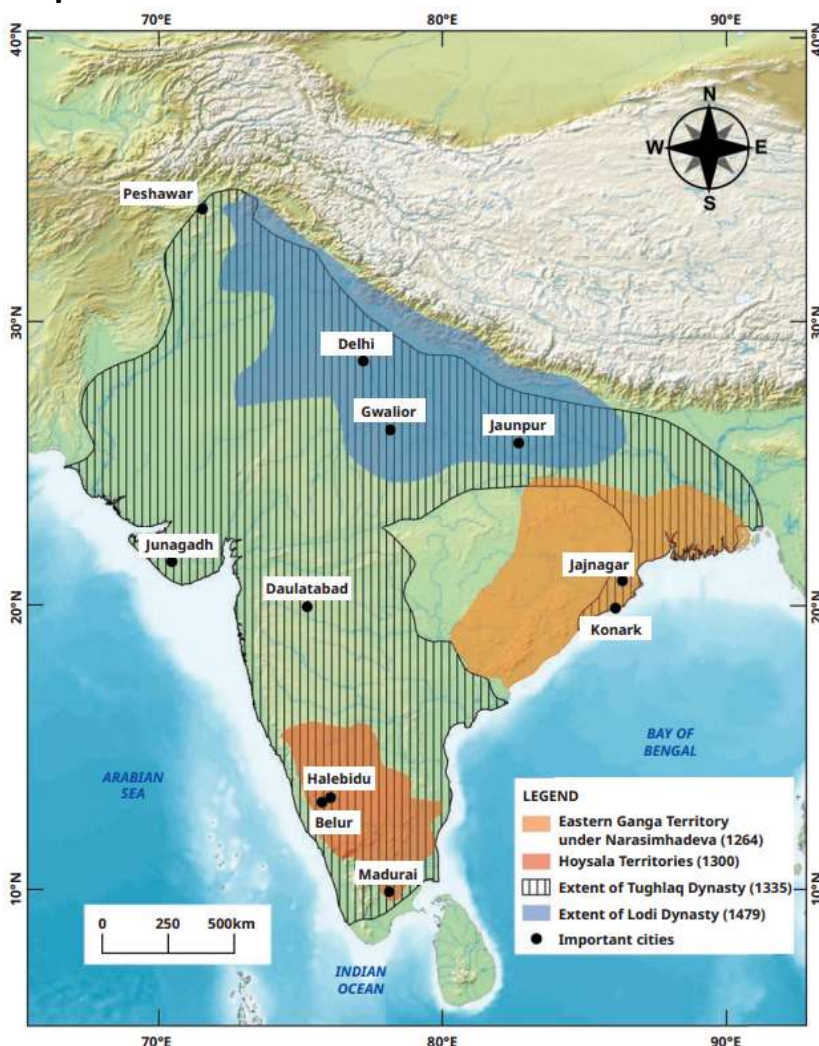
Question 4. In Fig. below, what elements do you observe? What do they tell you about life then? (Hint: observe the weapons, the animals, the activities.) (Page 35)



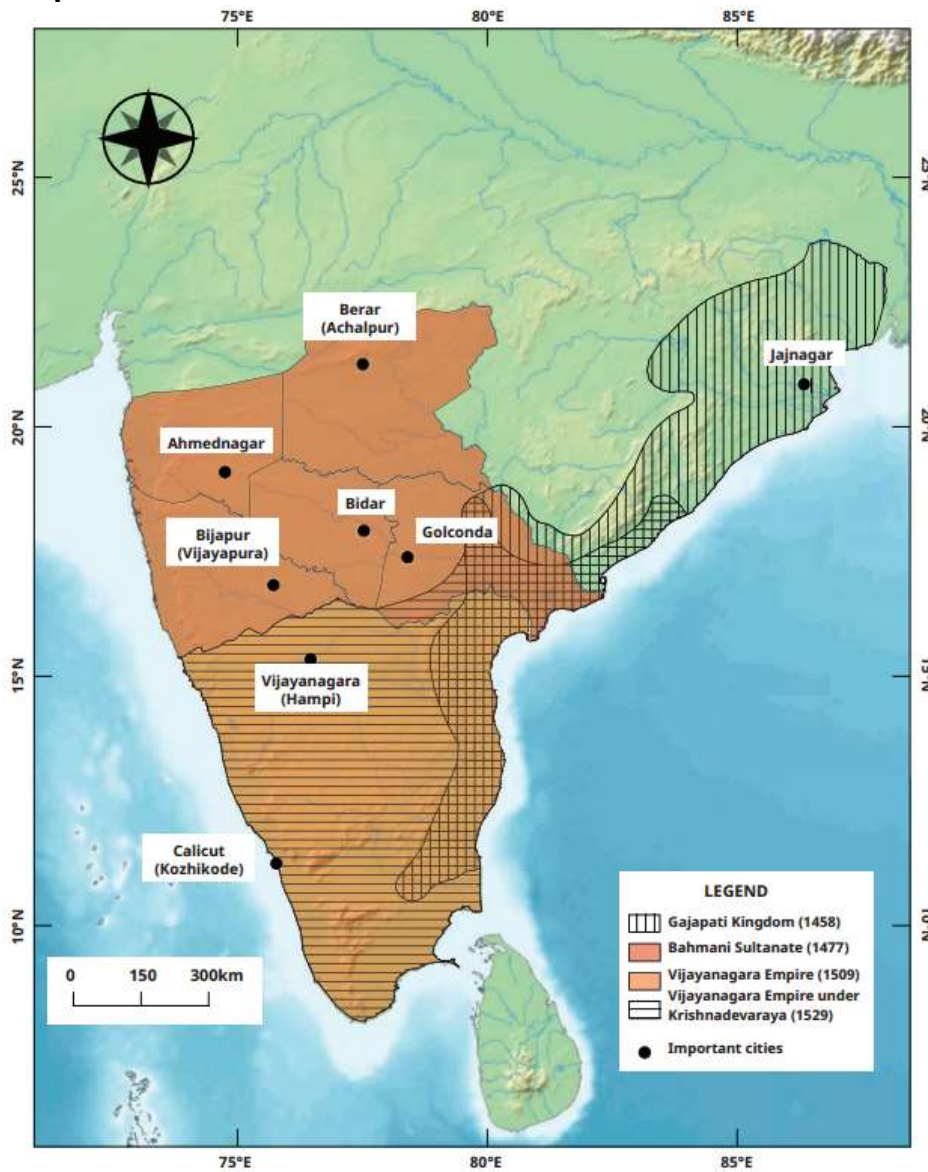
Answer: In above figure from the Vitthala temple shows warriors swords, spears, and shields, along with horses, and battle scenes. These elements show a society that valued warfare, where animals played an integral role in fighting and transport, reflecting a vibrant, conflict- driven culture.

Question 5. Compare the maps in Figs. 2.3, 2.12 and 2.16. What differences do you notice? What is the 'reshaping' that has occurred? (Page 41)

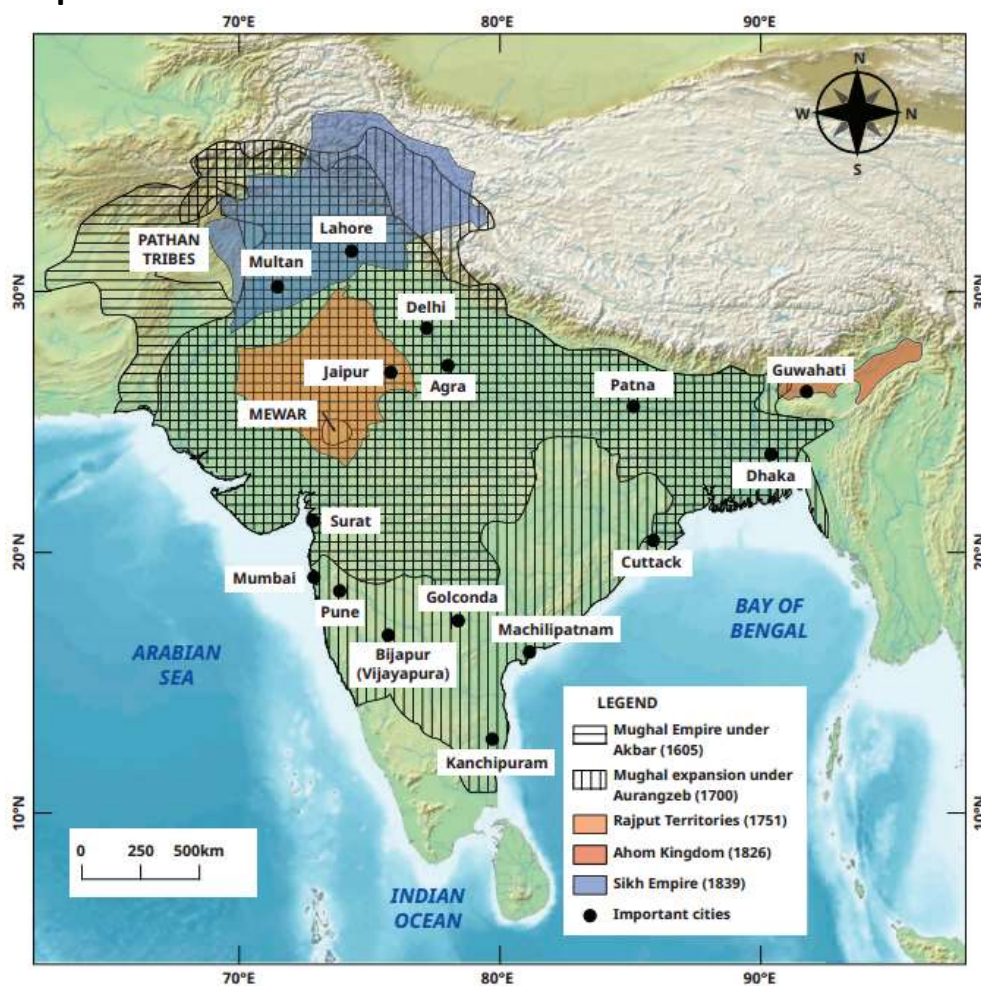
Map - 1.



Map – 2



Map – 3



Answer: The maps show clear differences over time. Fig. 2.3 displays the Delhi Sultanate's control mainly over northern India between the 13th and 15th centuries, while southern and eastern regions remained under independent kingdoms like the Hoysalas and Eastern Gangas. Fig. 2.12 illustrates the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire dominating the south, the Bahmani Sultanate ruling the Deccan, and the Gajapati kingdom in the east, reflecting a period of regional fragmentation.

Fig. 2.16 shows the Mughal Empire expanding to cover most of India during the reigns of Akbar and Aurangzeb, although some regional powers such as the Sikhs in northwestern tip and the Rajputs continued to resist. The reshaping that occurred involved a shift from the Delhi Sultanate's mainly northern focus, to the emergence of strong southern and eastern powers like Vijayanagara and the Gajapatis, followed by the near-unification of India under the Mughals, influenced by invasions, regional resistance, and the rise of new dynasties.

Question 6. In his last letters to two of his sons, Aurangzeb wrote, "I came alone and am going away alone. I know not who I am and what I have been doing. ... I have not done well for the country and the people, and of the future there is no hope. I was helpless [in life] and I am departing helpless." What do these words tell us about Aurangzeb? How do you feel about them? (Page 45)

Answer: Aurangzeb's letters reveal regret as he imprisoned his father, killed his brothers for the throne and killed several thousands of people during his brutal rule. During his last years, all wrong doings done by him including mass destruction of schools, temples, cities

and loots must have reflected to him, that's why he mentioned that he had NOT done well for the country and the people. Besides his regret, letters also reflects his loneliness during his last days of life and negative impact on society at that time due to his atrocious rule and policies.

Question 7. Discuss in class how the paik system affected the daily lives of the people in the Ahom kingdom, both in terms of challenges and benefits, and helped the king manage both the army and the economy. (Page 48)

Answer: The paik system gave every able-bodied man land rights in return for labour or military service. This helped provide economic stability and ensured the king had a ready workforce and army without the need for permanent soldiers, saving costs. However, the mandatory service also disrupted daily life and put pressure on families due to the demands of labour. Overall, the system allowed the Ahom rulers to build important infrastructure like roads and canals and maintain strong defence forces, such as in the Battle of Saraighat in 1671, which made the kingdom's economy and military more efficient.

Question 8. How did the Ahoms use the rivers, hills, and forests of Assam to their advantage? Can you think of ways in which the geography helped them build defences and fight wars? (Page 49)

Answer: The Ahoms used Assam's dense forests, hills, and rivers (Brahmaputra) for guerrilla tactics and ambushes, especially in the battle of Saraighat in 1671. The geography provided natural barriers and hiding spots for troops, while river routes helped in defences. This made it difficult for enemies to navigate, launch attacks, and maintain their supply lines.

Think About It

Question 1. Why do we use the term 'image' rather than common terms like 'idol' or 'icon'? The latter two terms are considered pejorative in the context of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, whose orthodox sects condemn 'idolatry' or the worship of 'idols' or 'icons'.

India's classical texts used words like murti, vigraha, pratima, rupa, etc., to designate images, often statues, used for worship in temples or homes. In English, 'image' is a neutral term. (Page 28)

Answer: The term 'image' is used because 'idol' and 'icon' have negative meanings in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which condemn idolatry. Indian classical texts use neutral words like murti or pratima for statues used in worship, so 'image' is a neutral term that avoids connotations and respects the cultural context.

Question 2. During the time of the Tughlaqs, the Musunuri Nayakas, Telugu chieftains, rallied over 75 more chieftains of the region, formed a confederacy that defeated smaller provinces, formed a confederacy that defeated the Delhi Sultanate forces, and expelled Muhammad bin Tughlaq's army from Warangal (present-day Telangana) around 1330-1336. Do you think it would have been an easy task to bring together 75 leaders in those days? (Page 29)



Answer: Bringing together as many as 75 chieftains in the 14th century would have a difficult task due to regional rivalries, poor communication, and different political interests. Munsuri Nayakas managed to do so, shows strong leadership, common goals against the Delhi Sultanate, and the ability to form strategic alliances.

Question 3. Have you noticed the term pati in titles like ‘Gajapati’? Pati means ‘lord’ or ‘master’ and was commonly used by many ruling dynasties of this period to signify power and stature. The Vijayanagara kings were called ‘Narapati.’, the Bahmani Sultanate rulers ‘Ashwapati’, and the Maratha rulers ‘Chhatrapati’ – each title reflecting different aspects of kingship and power. Can you guess what these three terms might mean? (Page 32)

Answer: The use of the term pati in royal titles reflected different aspects of kingship and power. Narapati, used by the Vijayanagara rulers, meant “lord of men” and emphasised their rule over people. The Bahmani Sultanate rulers were called Ashwapati, or “lord of horses,” which highlighted the strength of their cavalry. The Maratha rulers used the title Chhatrapati, meaning “supreme sovereign,” to signify their paramount authority.

Question 4. What strikes you in Babur’s impressions of India? Discuss in groups. (Page 37)

Answer: Babur’s impressions of India show that he felt out of place in a new land. He missed the cooler climate and culture of Central Asia but was struck by India’s rich resources including masses of gold and silver, busy markets, and skilled craftspeople. Although he criticised some things, like the unfamiliar food and lifestyle, he also noticed the land’s beauty and wealth. His views reflect both his homesickness and his eye for India’s strengths.

Question 5. Why do you think Akbar employed different strategies to expand his empire, while the earlier rulers of Delhi relied mostly on military might? (Page 40)

Answer: Akbar employed different strategies like diplomacy, marriage alliances, and sulh-i-kul (religious tolerance) because he understood that ruling a diverse empire needed more than just force. Earlier Delhi sultans mostly depended on military power, which led to instability and rebellion. Akbar learned from this and chose methods that won the loyalty of groups like the Rajputs, making his empire more stable and united.

Question 6. We saw above that Delhi sultans’ average reign lasted about nine years. This figure becomes 27 years in the case of Mughal emperors up to Aurangzeb; and 16 years if we consider all Mughal rulers, up to the end of the empire in the 19th century. What do you make of these numbers of years of reign? (Page 43)

Answer: The Delhi sultans’ average reign of 9 years reflects the political instability and frequent violent successions during their time. In contrast, the Mughal emperors ruled longer 27 years on average up to Aurangzeb, which shows they had better administration, planning and alliances. But when later Mughal rulers are included, the average falls to 16 years, showing the empire became weaker and less stable over time.



Question 7. Why do you think Guru Tegh Bahadur endured torture rather than convert? Why did he think his sacrifice would make a difference? (Page 52)

Answer: Guru Tegh Bahadur endured torture to uphold religious freedom and protect Kashmiri Pandits, believing his martyrdom would inspire resistance against Mughal oppression.

Question 8. What values did the Sikh Gurus and the Khalsa embody? (Page 52)

Answer: The Sikh Gurus and the Khalsa embodied values of courage, justice, equality, and selfless service. They stood for defending religious freedom, fighting oppression, and protecting the weak, while promoting unity and moral strength among their followers.

Question 9. How are they relevant in today's world? (Page 52)

Answer: These values are important today because they teach us to treat everyone fairly, respect differences, and help others, which helps build a better and peaceful world.

Question Answer (Exercise)

NCERT Questions and Activities (Page 59)

Question 1. Compare the political strategies of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals. What similarities and differences existed between them?

Answer: Both the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire used military power to expand their rule. They fought battles, raided cities, and collected taxes like jizya and land revenue to support their armies. However, their methods of governing were quite different. The Delhi Sultans mostly relied on force and used the iqta system, where land was given to nobles in return for military service. This often caused instability, with frequent power struggles and short reigns on average, only around nine years per sultan.

The Mughals, especially under Emperor Akbar, followed a more stable and thoughtful approach. They used diplomacy, made marriage alliances, and promoted religious tolerance through the idea of sulh-i-kul (peace with all). Akbar also introduced the mansabdari system to manage his officials and army better. This led to longer and more peaceful reigns — Mughal emperors ruled for about 27 years on average until Aurangzeb..So, while both relied on war and taxes, the Mughals had a more organised and lasting way of ruling the empire.

Question 2. Why did kingdoms like the Vijayanagara Empire and the Ahom Kingdom manage to resist conquest for a longer time compared to others? What geographical, military, and social factors contributed to their success?

Answer: Kingdoms like the Vijayanagara Empire and the Ahom Kingdom were able to resist conquest for a longer time due to a mix of geographical advantages, strong military tactics, and social unity. The Vijayanagara Empire benefited from the natural protection of Hampi's rocky and hilly terrain, which made it hard for enemies to attack. Under rulers like



Krishnadevaraya, they built a strong army and maintained unity through support for religion and culture, especially by building temples and encouraging literature.

On the other hand, the Ahom Kingdom in Assam used its dense forests, rivers, and hills to its advantage. They relied on guerrilla tactics and deep knowledge of the land to defeat larger invading forces, as seen in the famous Battle of Saraighat in 1671. Their paik system also helped build a flexible army by requiring every man to serve when needed. Both kingdoms had strong local support, which gave them social strength and stability. So, their geography, clever military planning, and strong community bonds helped them stay independent for longer than many others.

Question 3. Imagine you are a scholar in the court of Akbar or Krishnadevaraya. Write a letter to a friend describing the politics, trade, culture, and society you are witnessing.

Answer: Dear Friend,

I hope you are well. I want to share with you about life here in Vijayanagara under our great king, Krishnadevaraya. The empire is very strong and powerful, ruling much of the Deccan. The king is not only a brave leader but also a supporter of arts and learning. He encourages poets and scholars, and he even wrote a famous poem himself. Our city is full of beautiful temples, palaces, gardens, and busy markets. It is said to be as large and lovely as Rome. Many traders come from different places to buy and sell goods here.

Life in the city is full of energy and wealth. But after Krishnadevaraya passed away in 1529, things have become difficult. In 1565, a group of enemies fought against us and defeated our army in the Battle of Talikota. They destroyed many parts of our city, including temples and homes, and this has made life hard for many people. Now the empire is breaking into smaller parts, ruled by local leaders called Nayakas. Still, the memory of Krishnadevaraya's rule and the glory of Vijayanagara remain strong in our hearts.

Yours sincerely,
(Scholar's name)

Question 4. How come Akbar, a ruthless conqueror in his young days, grew tolerant and benevolent after some years? What could have led to such a change?

Answer: When Akbar became emperor at the young age of 13, he was a fierce and ruthless leader focused on conquest and military power. Early in his reign, he showed great brutality, such as during the long siege of Chittor where many lives were lost and the survivors faced harsh treatment. However, over time, Akbar's attitude began to change. Through his interactions with people of different faiths, his marriage alliances with Rajput princesses, and the influence of scholars in his court, he gradually adopted a more tolerant and inclusive approach.

He abolished the jizya tax on non-Muslims and promoted the policy of sulh-i-kul, meaning 'peace with all,' which encouraged religious tolerance and harmony. Akbar realised that ruling through respect and cooperation brought greater stability and unity to his vast



empire than ruling through fear alone. This change was also influenced by his personal reflections, as recorded by his court historian Abul Fazl, where Akbar admitted that forcing others to convert to Islam religion was wrong and unlikely to last. Thus, Akbar evolved from a harsh conqueror into a wise and benevolent ruler who valued peace and diversity.

Question 5. What might have happened if the Vijayanagara Empire had won the Battle of Talikota? Imagine and describe how it could have changed the political and cultural history of south India.

Answer: If the Vijayanagara Empire had won the Battle of Talikota in 1565, the history of South India could have been very different. The empire would have stayed strong and united, likely continuing to grow its power over the Deccan and beyond. This victory might have stopped the empire from breaking into smaller Nayaka states, helping Vijayanagara remain a powerful kingdom for much longer. Politically, a strong Vijayanagara could have stood firm against invasions from the Deccan Sultanates and even challenged northern powers like the Mughals, possibly changing the balance of power in India.

Culturally, the golden age under Krishnadevaraya might have lasted longer, bringing even greater growth in art, literature, and temple building. Poets, scholars, and religious centres would have continued to receive support, helping to keep cultural unity strong across the region. Temples and cities like Vijayanagara could have grown larger and more beautiful, attracting traders, artists, and pilgrims from far and wide. Overall, a Vijayanagara victory at Talikota might have turned South India into a leading political and cultural force for many centuries.

Question 6. Many values promoted by early Sikh-ism, including equality, seva, and justice, remain relevant today. Select one of these values and discuss how it remains relevant in contemporary society.

Answer: Equality, as promoted by early Sikhism, is a value that remains strongly relevant in today's world. Guru Nanak's teachings about the oneness of God (Ik Onkar) and the equal worth of all people challenged the deep social divisions of his time, such as caste and religious discrimination. Later Sikh Gurus continued this belief, not only through their words but also their actions — for example, Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life defending the rights of Kashmiri Pandits to practise their faith freely. This shows that Sikhism stood firmly for the dignity and equality of all, regardless of religion or background.

In today's diverse and often divided societies, the values of equality, seva and justice help promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. It encourages us to treat everyone fairly, support those who face injustice, and build communities based on shared humanity. Whether in schools, workplaces, or daily life, the Sikh belief in equality reminds us to stand up for others and live with compassion and integrity.



Question 7.

Imagine you are a trader in a port city (Surat, Calicut or Hooghly). Describe the scenes you see as regards goods, people you trade with, movement of ships, etc.

Answer: As a trader in the thriving port city of Surat, I witness scenes of great energy and wealth each day. Ships arrive from far-off places like Persia, Arabia, and Central Asia, bringing goods such as silk, horses, and metals. In return, we export Indian cotton textiles, spices, jewellery, and crafted items made by local artisans. The port is filled with busy labourers unloading cargo, while markets nearby bustle with merchants and buyers.

Trade is made smoother by the hundi system, allowing money to be transferred safely without carrying coins across borders. Many foreign merchants have even settled here, adding to the diversity and liveliness of the city. The temples around not only serve religious purposes but also support trade by offering credit and building public facilities. Despite political changes in the region, the economy of Surat remains vibrant and full of opportunity.

