

Sher Shah Suri



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Biography

- **Reign**- 17 May 1540 – 22 May 1545
- **Born**- 1486, Sasaram, Rohtas District, India
- **Died**- 22 May, 1545, Kalinjar Fort, Bundelkhand
- **Full Name**- Farid Khan
- **Parents**- Mian Hasan Khan Sur
- **Spouse**- Rani Shah
- **Children**- Islam Shah Suri, Adil Khan
- **Predecessor**- Humayun
- **Successor**- Islam Shah Suri
- **Religion**- Islam
- **Burial**- Sher Shah Suri Tomb, Sasaram




Early Life

Sher Shah was the son of Hasan Khan, a jagirdar of Sasaram in Bihar. He was one of the eight sons of Mian Hassan Khan Suri, a prominent figure in the government of Bahlul Khan Lodi. Originally known as Farid Khan, he was given the title of Sher Khan after he single handed killed a tiger. His grandfather Ibrahim Khan Sur was a land Lord in Narnaul are and represented Delhi rulers of that period. Mazar of Ibrahim Khan Sur still stands as a monument in Narnaul.



Sher Shah Suri's Empire





Sher Shah going for a battle

Conquering Bihar and Bengal

Farid Khan started his service under Bahar Khan Lohani, the Mughal Governor of Bihar. Because of his valor, Bahar Khan rewarded him the title *Sher Khan (Tiger Lord)*. After the death of Bahar Khan, Sher Khan became the regent ruler of the minor Sultan, Jalal Khan. Later sensing the growth of Sher Shah's power in Bihar, Jalal sought assistance of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah, the independent Sultan of Bengal. Ghiyasuddin sent an army under General Ibrahim Khan. But, Sher Khan defeated the force at the battle of Surajgarh in 1534. Thus he achieved complete control of Bihar. In 1538, Sher Khan attacked Bengal and defeated Ghiyashuddin Shah. But he could not capture the kingdom because of sudden expedition of Emperor Humayun. In 1539, Sher Khan faced Humayun in the battle of Chausa. He forced Humayun out of India. Assuming the title *Sher Shah*, he ascended the throne of Delhi.



Battle of Sammel

In 1543, Sher Shah Suri set out against Rajputana with a huge force of 80,000 cavalry. With an army of 50,000 cavalry, Maldeo Rathore advanced to face Sher Shah's army. Instead of marching to the enemy's capital Sher Shah halted in the village of Sammel in the pargana of Jaitaran, ninety kilometers east of Jodhpur. After one month, Sher Shah's position became critical owing to the difficulties of food supplies for his huge army. To resolve this situation, Sher Shah resorted to a cunning ploy. One evening, he dropped forged letters near the Maldeo's camp in such a way that they were sure to be intercepted. These letters indicated, falsely, that some of Maldeo's army commanders were promising assistance to Sher Shah. This caused great consternation to Maldeo, who immediately suspected his commanders of disloyalty. Maldeo left for Jodhpur with his own men, abandoning his commanders to their fate.



Battle of Sammel

After that Maldeo's innocent generals Jaita and Kunpa fought with the just 20,000 men against an enemy force of 80,000 men. In the ensuing battle of Sammel, Sher Shah emerged victorious, but several of his generals lost their lives and his army suffered heavy losses. Sher Shah is said to have commented that "for a few grains of bajra I almost lost the entire kingdom of Hindustan." After this victory, Sher Shah's general Khavass Khan took possession of Jodhpur and occupied the territory of Marwar from Ajmer to Mount Abu in 1544. But by July, Maldeo reoccupied his lost territories.

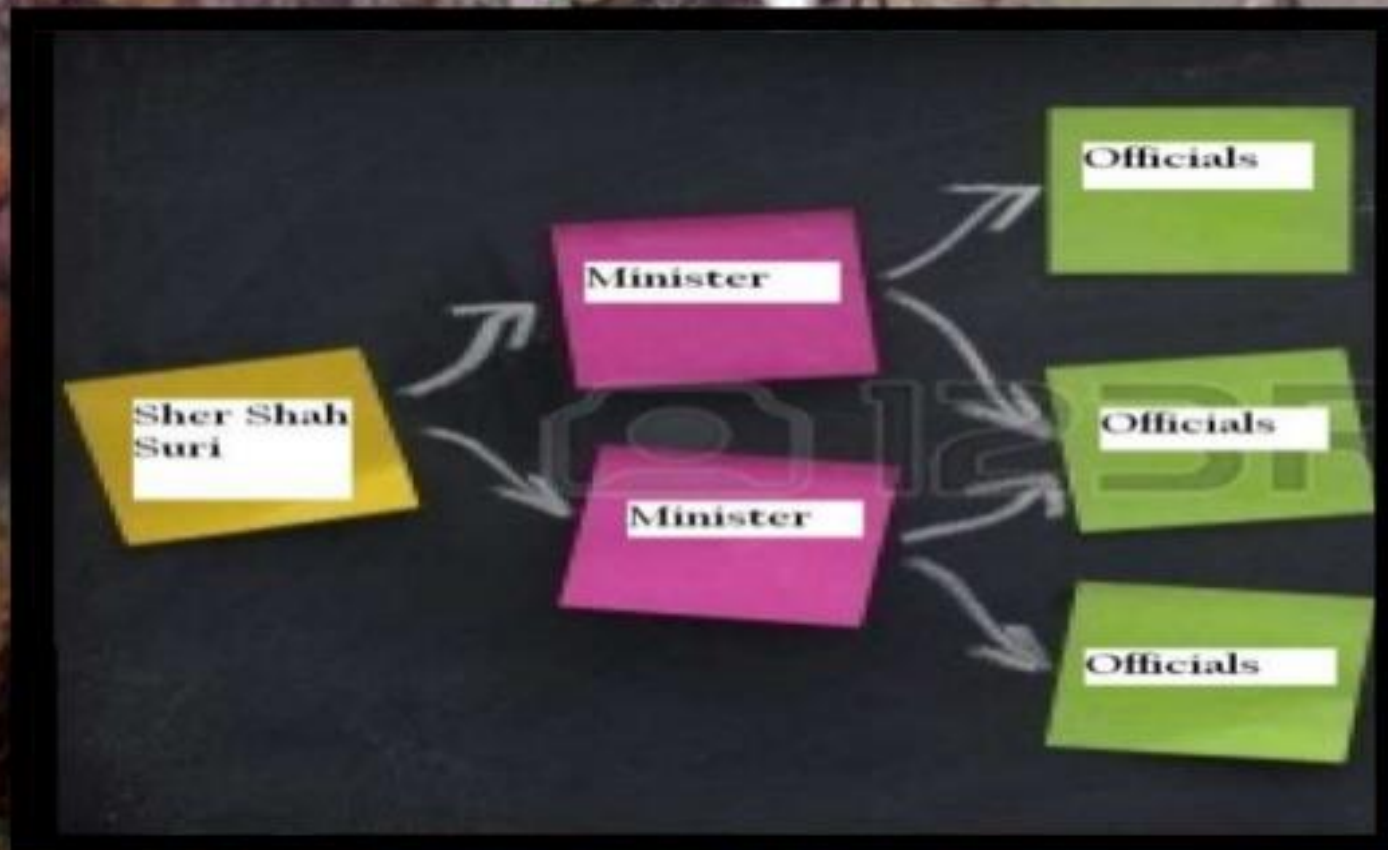


Administration

Sher Shah was a brilliant organizer, both in military and civil affairs. He based his administration on the principle of a welfare state and introduced many reforms. The administration in his Sher Shah' rule was in two types. They are:-

1. Central Administration
2. Provincial Administration

Central Administration



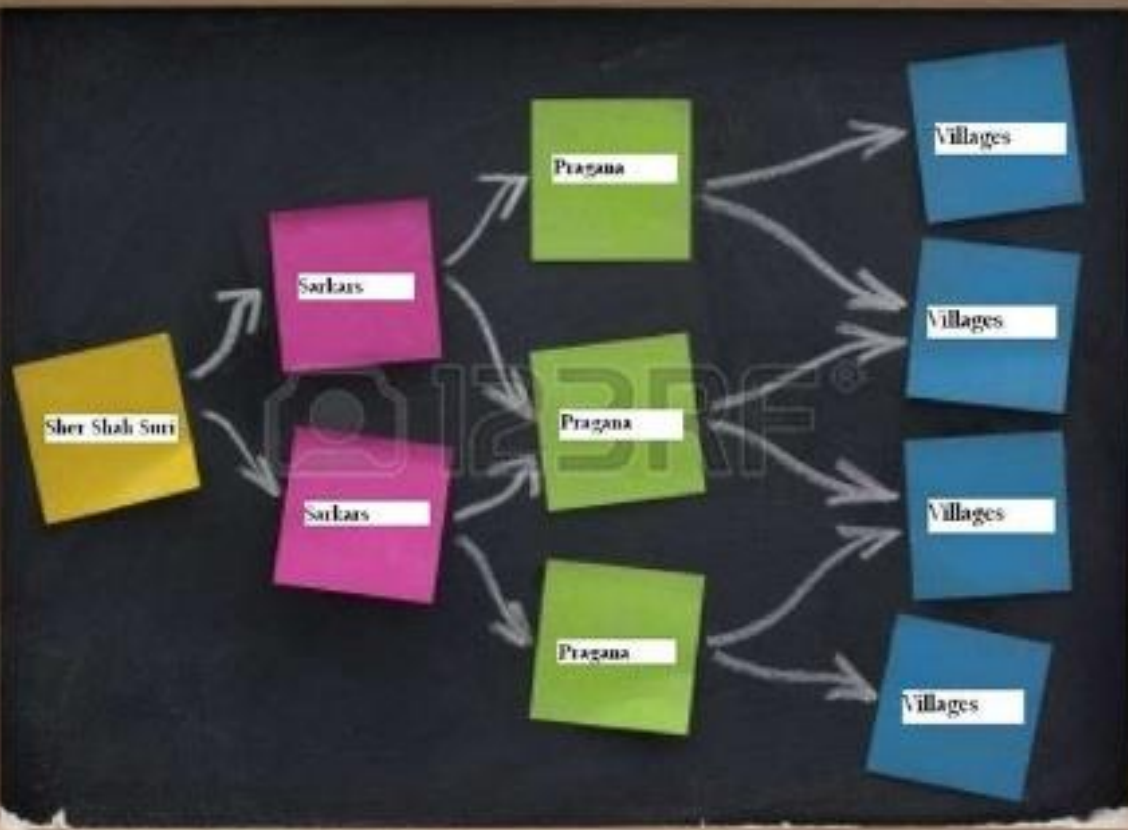
Central Administration

Sher Shah was the supreme head of the central administration. He divided the government into several departments. Each department was under the charge of a minister, assisted by other officials. Sher Shah was always very active. He went on regular tours of inspection and set up an efficient spy system.

Sher Shah
Suri Stamp
issued in the
15th century



Provincial Administration





Provincial Administration

Sher Shah divided the empire into 47 provinces or sarkars. Each province was further subdivided into districts or parganas. Each pargana was made up of a number of villages. Each sarkar was placed under an Afghan chief. In every pargana there were several officials whose work was supervised by the shiqdar-i-shiqdaran and the munsif-i-munsifan. The shiqdar was responsible for law and order and the general administration and the munsif looked after the collection of revenue and civil cases.

Military Organization

Sher Shah established a large standing army and introduced measures to make it disciplined, efficient and strong. He took personal interest in the appointment and training of soldiers. The salaries of the soldiers and officers were fixed according to their skill and ability. Alauddin Khilji's system of branding horses called bagh and maintaining a descriptive roll of the soldiers called chehra were revived. The army was subdivided into many units and each unit was placed under a commander. Garrisons were set up in different parts of the empire. The cavalry and infantry were highly trained, disciplined and were equipped with artillery.

Sher Shah Suri's
army equipped
with artillery



Communication System

Sher Shah built an excellent network of roads to facilitate the quick movement of officials and troops throughout the empire, to promote trade and commerce, and to make travelling easier and comfortable. The **Grand Trunk Road** was the longest and most important of the four major roads that he built. It connected Sonargaon (Bengal) in the east to Peshawar in the north-west. Shady trees were planted on both sides of the road and rest houses (sarais) and wells were built at regular intervals for travellers and merchants. The sarais were also used as dak chaukis. Two horsemen were kept ready at each post house to carry royal mail to different parts of the country.

Grand Trunk
Road



Trade & Commerce

The construction of roads and sarais greatly helped the growth of trade and commerce. To give trade a further boost, all duties, except two, were abolished. The first duty was levied when the goods were brought into the country and the second was levied when the goods were sold. Sher Shah instructed his officials to treat the merchants well and look after their interests. The zamindars and the village headman were made responsible for the safety of the trader's life and property in their respective regions. New weights and measures were introduced. Coins of gold, silver and copper of uniform standard were introduced. The silver coin called rupia issued by Sher Shah was so well made that it remained a standard coin for centuries after his death.

Coins
issued by
Sher Shah
Suri



Law & Order

The background of the slide is a historical painting. It shows a central figure, presumably Sher Shah Suri, riding a white horse. He is wearing a red turban and a light-colored tunic, and he holds a long spear. He is surrounded by other soldiers on horseback, some in armor. In the foreground, a defeated enemy lies on the ground, with a sword and a helmet nearby. The scene is set in a hilly, outdoor environment.

Sher Shah was a staunch believer in justice. Everyone was treated equally. The criminal law was harsh and punishments were severe. This was done to deter people from committing crimes. The village headmen and local chieftains were made responsible for any crime that took place in their area. They were severely punished if they failed to track down a robber or a murderer. The methods he used were harsh but effective.



Revenue System

Sher Shah's greatest achievement was his revenue system. Several reforms were introduced to improve the existing system. The land was carefully surveyed and measured every year and the average produce on the basis of its fertility. One third of this was to be paid as tax in cash or kind. The land was divided into three types- good, bad and middling on the basis of fertility. Sher Shah insisted on lenient assessment but strict collection of taxes. Taxes were reduced and loans were granted if the crops were damaged during war or if they failed due to natural calamities such as drought or flood. The jagir system was discouraged and the system of patta or agreement was introduced. Thus, the mutual rights and duties of the peasants and the government were clearly defined. The conditions of the peasants improved, cultivation increased and the royal treasury was assured of a steady and regular flow of funds.

Religious Policy



Sher Shah followed a policy of religious tolerance and appointed Hindus to high posts of trust and responsibility. One of his ablest generals was Brahmajit Gaur. Raja Todar Mal, one of the nine gems in Akbar's court, began his career under Sher Shah. Large amounts of money were given in charity to both Hindus and Muslims.

Literature & Architecture

Sher Shah found time to pursue his interest in the arts and learning by patronizing a number of scholars in his court. Sher Shah was also a great builder. He built a magnificent fort at Rohtasgarh and some buildings in the Purana Qila (Old Fort) at Delhi. He beautiful mosque inside the old fort is considered to be an excellent specimen of Indo-Islamic architecture. He also planned and built his own tomb at Sasaram in Bihar. It is built on a high platform in the middle of a lake.

Rohtasgarh Fort



Death

Sher Shah
Suri's Tomb



Sher Shah is believed to have died from a gunpowder explosion during the siege of Kalinjar Fort on 22 May 1545, while fighting against the Chandel Rajputs. His death has also been claimed to have been caused by a fire in his store room. Sher Shah Suri was succeeded by his son, Jalal Khan who took the title of Islam Shah Suri. His mausoleum, the Sher Shah Suri Tomb (122 ft high) stands in the middle of an artificial lake at Sasaram, a town that stands on the Grand Trunk Road.

