

# The Medieval Suba of Bihar : Formation, Consolidation and Expansion

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## Abstract:

*In the regional history of medieval India, Bihar occupies an imperative place. An attempt has been made to trace the historical geography of Bihar, from 1580-1733. The idea of politically unifying different areas of Bihar can be traced back to the period of Sher Shah. However, Bihar did not have an independent identity and till 1580 it was usually denoted by the term “Bengal”. The strategic importance of this region was realized by Akbar and in 1580 Bihar was made one of the twelve Suba of Mughal empire, with an independent identity and was always placed under important subedars who were often of royal blood. The article traces the process of formation, consolidation and expansion of suba of Bihar from Akbar to later Mughals. The Mughal rulers in this process had to face different types of challenges from time to time. Under the incompetent later Mughal rulers, the independent status of the suba was eroded in 1733 and once again it was added to Bengal.*

**Keywords:** Vihar, Suba, Sarkar, Pargana, Mahal, Mughals, Afghans, Subedars, Zamindars, Teliagarhi, Jungle tarai.

Before the age of sixteen Mahajanapada, it is mentioned in the Buddhist literature, that the eastern territory of Bihar consisted of Videha, Karusha, Pundra, Magadha, Anga and Vaisali.<sup>1</sup> Of these, Videha and Karusha roughly represented the territory of North and South Bihar, respectively. The term “Bihar” came to be used for the territory in the Persian sources during the medieval period owing to the presence of a large number of monasteries (Viharas) at Odantpuri (modern Bihar Sharif). Initially, under the Sultans of Delhi, it signified territory south of the river Ganga. However, under the Mughals, the name was accepted for the entire territory on both sides of the river. An attempt has been made in this article to trace the process of creation of the independent suba of Bihar, which commenced towards the last quarter of the sixteenth century under the Mughals.

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