

1. Medieval Bengal (1204–1757 CE):

A. Delhi Sultanate (1204–1338):

- **Bakhtiyar Khalji (1204–1206):** Initiated Muslim rule in Bengal; his period was marked by revolts and chaos.
- **Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaj Khalji (1212–1227):** Strengthened Bengal's administration, promoted Islamic education and culture, and established a naval force.
- **Mamluk Rule (1227–1338):** Characterized by frequent rebellions; Bengal was ruled as a province under the Delhi Sultanate.

B. Independent Sultanate (1338–1538):

- **Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (1338–1349):** Declared independence in Sonargaon and expanded territory to Chittagong.
- **Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (1342–1358):** Unified Bengal and introduced a distinct Bengali identity; patronized architecture and cultural activities.
- **Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493–1519):** Regarded as the best Sultan of Bengal. Promoted Hindu-Muslim unity, expanded the territory, and fostered literature, art, and architecture. His reign is termed the “Golden Era” of independent Bengal.
- **End of Sultanate Rule:** Sher Shah Suri's conquest in 1538 marked the end of the independent Sultanate.

C. Mughal Rule, Subadari, and Nawabi (1571–1757):

- **Subadari Rule:** Mughals divided Bengal into administrative provinces (Subas). Key Subadars like Islam Khan Chisti and Shayesta Khan consolidated Mughal control.
- **Nawabi Rule:**
 - **Murshid Kuli Khan (1700–1727):** Established hereditary Nawabi rule and promoted trade and commerce.
 - **Sirajuddaula (1756–1757):** His defeat at the Battle of Plassey (1757) marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of British rule in Bengal.

2. Social, Economic, and Cultural Life in Medieval Bengal:

Social Structure:

- **Muslim Society:** Hierarchical with Sayeds and Ulemas in high positions. Sufis and saints influenced culture and religion. Conversion to Islam blended Hindu traditions with Islamic practices.
- **Hindu Society:** Caste-driven with Brahmins holding religious authority. Practices like Satidaha and Kaulinyo were prevalent.

Economy:

- Predominantly agricultural; crops included rice, jute, sugarcane, and silk.
- Bengal became a hub for textile (e.g., Muslin), sugar, and boat-making industries.
- Ports like Chittagong and Sonargaon facilitated trade with Europe and Asia.

Culture and Religion:

- Architecture flourished with structures like Adina Mosque, Sixty Dome Mosque (UNESCO World Heritage), and Lalbagh Fort.
- Islamic and Hindu festivals coexisted; literary works in Bengali, Persian, and Sanskrit thrived.

Bara-Bhuiyans: A Historical Overview

Definition:

The term *Bara-Bhuiyans* refers to twelve territorial landholders or zamindars who resisted Mughal expansion during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. These leaders ruled independently or semi-independently, often opposing the Mughal Empire.

Origin of the Term:

The term "Bara-Bhuiyan" denotes "twelve territorial landholders." The specific identity of the twelve varied, with historical records listing slightly more than twelve names in different contexts.

Resistance to Mughals:

- The Bara-Bhuiyans lacked central control, acting independently in their territories.
- They collectively or individually resisted Mughal campaigns in Bengal, particularly in the region of Bhati.
- Key historical works, including *Akbarnama* by Abul Fazl and *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* by Mirza Nathan, document their resistance and leadership.

Key Figures in the Akbarnama:

1. Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala
2. Ibrahim Naral
3. Karimdad Musazai
4. Majlis Dilwar
5. Majlis Pratap
6. Kedar Rai
7. Sher Khan
8. Bahadur Ghazi
9. Tila Ghazi
10. Chand Ghazi
11. Sultan Ghazi
12. Selim Ghazi
13. Qasim Ghazi

Key Figures in the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi:

1. Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala
2. Alaul Khan
3. Abdullah Khan
4. Mahmud Khan
5. Bahadur Ghazi
6. Sona Ghazi
7. Anwar Ghazi
8. Shaikh Pir
9. Mirza Mumin
10. Madhav Rai
11. Binode Rai
12. Pahlwan
13. Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi

Significance:

The Bara-Bhuiyans symbolize local resistance and patriotism against Mughal imperialism. Despite being known as twelve landholders, historical records often include their leaders, resulting in lists with thirteen names.